



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Emergency Medication Dispensing Exercise Conducted August 27 in Essex

Essex Alliance Church Partners with Health Department on
Public Health Preparedness

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ESSEX - The Essex Alliance Church partnered with the Vermont Department of Health during a medication dispensing exercise conducted on Monday, August 27.

The church received two calls when the Health Department first contacted them to serve in this capacity. One was the actual phone call, the other was the calling of its large congregation (1,500 to 1,800 people) to assist others in their community.

“Serving others,” said Christy Fay, human resources director for the church, “is our calling.” The church has trained volunteers for emergencies and is also a facility for school public safety and a site for the Red Cross.

The State of Vermont plans to safeguard and save as many lives as possible in the event of a bioterrorism attack or widespread outbreak of disease through its Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) program, a multi-agency coordinated response designed to distribute medications to protect the state’s population within 48 hours after an event.

The SNS is a federal asset that augments local medication supplies with a large, continuous quantity of medications and other essential emergency supplies.

“The ability to provide antibiotics to a large population in a short timeframe will be critically important,” said Chris Bell, director of public health preparedness for the Health Department. “We rely heavily on the support of local resources and the volunteers at the Essex Alliance Church clearly understand their role.”

Vermont learned a valuable lesson during Tropical Storm Irene, that regardless of past emergency response training at the state level by first-responders and multiple government agencies, it is the local response that helps drive the overall effectiveness of relief efforts. Monday’s exercise was an opportunity for the Health Department to exercise one part of its plan to set up a medication dispensing site.

The Health Department carries out its mission – to protect and promote the best health for all Vermonters – during public health emergencies with many different partners. At the state level, planning and response efforts are coordinated with Vermont Emergency Management. At the local level, the Health Department works through its District Offices with hospitals, the Red Cross, local EMS agencies, community emergency response teams, medical reserve corps and similar types of groups.

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