



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Jim Doyle, Governor
Karen E. Timberlake, Secretary

Wisconsin Receives High Marks for Pandemic Flu Preparedness

By Karen Timberlake

Planning and preparing for emergencies is a continual process that requires the efforts of federal, state and local officials. In Wisconsin, we are fortunate to have dedicated partners that plan, test and exercise preparedness plans that cover a variety of emergencies, both man made and acts of nature. One of these emergencies that we plan for is a pandemic flu outbreak.

Recently, Wisconsin's hard work on disaster preparedness and pandemic flu planning has been recognized nationally. As a result, our counterparts in other states are modeling the success that Wisconsin has achieved.

Last December, the Trust for America's Health gave Wisconsin a perfect score on 10 key preparedness indicators. The report, *Ready or Not*, noted improvement in pandemic influenza planning, public risk communication, disease tracking and tactical communication. Wisconsin's State Laboratory of Hygiene was praised as "a first-class operation."

Also, an assessment done in 2008 led by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and submitted to U.S. Homeland Security ranked Wisconsin among the top states in the nation for pandemic flu preparedness

Both achievements reflect the hard work of state agencies, local government and the private sector. For example, receiving and distributing medications in a public health emergency requires an orchestrated ballet involving Federal strike teams, state health officials, Wisconsin's National Guard and State Patrol, local health departments, healthcare providers, distribution sites, and a volunteer medical support corps.

Public health, public safety and law enforcement professionals are planning with businesses, utilities, health care providers, education and community-service organizations to respond "as one" to emergencies.

This professionalism and can-do attitude not only helps us prepare for emergencies that have not yet occurred, but is also demonstrated by the response to real events that happen in our state now. Wisconsin's prompt response to last spring's large scale flooding emphasizes our progress. Thirty counties suffered closed highways, destroyed homes, contaminated wells, and disruption of business and tourism.

Throughout the crisis, local, state and federal officials worked together with each community to save lives, control damage, prevent disease and injury, supplement human services, and support economic relief. Intensive prior planning, training and drills helped shape this response. The lessons learned this time will further improve our response to the state's next emergency.

We will continue to work with our partners across the state to continue to prepare and test so that we can help serve the citizens of our state effectively. We also encourage you to think about what you can do in your home and community to prepare yourself.

President Eisenhower once said, "Plans are useless but planning is indispensable." Relationships and skills developed through plans and drills pay off in unexpected ways during any incident. We look forward to continuing to work with our partners on the federal, local and statewide level to help continue our preparation to help the citizens of our state when they are in need.

Karen Timberlake
Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Health Services

The mission of the Department of Health Services is to protect and promote the health and safety of the people of Wisconsin.