

MEDICAL DISASTER READINESS PLAN

THE PALM BEACH COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT WILL BE SCHEDULING A VOLUNTEER TRAINING SEMINAR FOR THE TOWN OF OCEAN RIDGE RESIDENT-VOLUNTEERS ONCE RECRUITMENT EFFORTS ARE COMPLETE.

Logistically this will take a lot of work and a sufficient number of volunteers, but it is all workable and something we should do. The Resident-Volunteers will receive first priority medications for themselves and their extended family and friends in the event of a biological event or bioterrorist episode.

The Town of Ocean Ridge has entered into an agreement with the State of Florida, to participate in the Medical Disaster Readiness Plan (MDRP). This will entail Town's becoming a Point of Distribution (POD) in the event of a bioterrorist attack. These PODS are being established in all major cities. In Palm Beach County, more than 35 residential communities (municipalities and Condo or Homeowners Associations) have or are in the process of entering into an Agreement with the Palm Beach County Health Department.

The Palm Beach County Health Department, under the guidance and direction of The Florida Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is establishing these PODS, in the event of a public health emergency, such as a bioterrorist attack of ANTHRAX. The infrastructure that will be created will be utilized to assist in the event of a Pan Flu outbreak (avian flu), or a radiological episode, or a Smallpox outbreak, or other biological event.

The catch phrase that seems to be prevalent at the meetings, is not "IF, BUT WHEN, WHERE, AND HOW a terrorist attack will occur. The Palm Beach County Health Department is recruiting 5,400 volunteers to staff 45 "public" PODS, where oral prophylactic (preventative) antibiotics will be distributed. Town residents and employees will be able to receive this 10-day supply for up to 15 family members or friends at our on-site POD. These medications are being stockpiled at a law enforcement sensitive location in the state and are ready for deployment in a timely manner. The distribution to each POD will under the supervision of Federal Marshals and our own Sheriff's Department.

The Town must provide resident-volunteers, without which the POD cannot be opened. The alternative to this would be residents going to a staging area and being bussed to a "public" POD for the medications.

The job descriptions for the resident volunteers vary, which includes: Greeter, Forms Distributor, Forms Triage, Acute Symptoms Screening, Medication Dispensing, Patient Traffic Control, Inventory Control and Reporting of medications dispensed, and the list goes on.

As you can see, not only are medical resident-volunteers needed, but a broad spectrum of resident-volunteers are as well. Medical members are important in this effort, including retired physicians, dentists, nurses and pharmacists. At least one licensed medical professional is required. The medications for an ANTHRAX episode are oral antibiotics (Doxycycline, Cipro, and Amoxicillin), so there are no hazardous materials and nothing requiring refrigeration.

Volunteers providing a service in this effort to the State of Florida are covered under Chapter 110 of Florida Statutes, as regards LIABILITY and WORKERS COMPENSATION.

The Palm Beach County Health Department will conduct a 90-minute training session here in Town, and all resident-volunteers must have previously filled out a VOLUNTEER SERVICES APPLICATION. These applications are available at Town Hall. Two personal references are required for each volunteer. The date and time of the training session will be announced once a cadre of resident-volunteers have been recruited.

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This is important. At the AMI Building in Boca Raton in 2001, 23 people were infected and five died. 32,000 people received prophylactic antibiotics; nationally. The Palm Beach County Health Department handled the dispensing of medication to the staff and their families and all visitors to that building within the prior two weeks. The Health Department stands ready to fulfill their mission - to save lives, and to prevent illness.

For further information, you may contact Terry Vinas at vinasfam@aol.com or call 561-329-1888

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