

# *fast* FACTS...

*about Sedgwick County Government*



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## *Sedgwick County Announces "FirstWatch" System*

Sedgwick County  
Health Department

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### *What is FirstWatch?*

FirstWatch is an early warning biosurveillance system designed to monitor the 9-1-1 and other public safety systems for abnormalities that may indicate a biological attack or other significant medical trends.

### *Is First Watch only for bioterrorism?*

FirstWatch has several components that make it useful for other symptomatic diseases as well. For instance, FirstWatch will be instrumental in early detection of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), West Nile Virus, and seasonal diseases like the flu. We can also identify other epidemiological and public safety trends such as the impact of weather systems.

### *Does FirstWatch only monitor Sedgwick County?*

No, FirstWatch is planned to be a regional system that allows us to share data with local, state and federal agencies as part of a regional, statewide or national real-time bioterrorism surveillance system. This is planned to also include Johnson County/Kansas City, Mo. and Oklahoma City and Tulsa, OK.

### *How Does FirstWatch know that there is a problem?*

FirstWatch scans the 9-1-1 and other public safety systems for symptoms of bioterrorism (such as nausea, vomiting, fever, skin rash and coma). FirstWatch then compares historical data to real time events to determine if a disease outbreak is occurring and warrants an investigation by the Health Department.

### *Who responds to FirstWatch alerts?*

The Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS) at the Sedgwick County Health Department is tasked with maintaining and responding to FirstWatch alerts. In the event of an alert, FirstWatch will notify the Health Department to determine the extent of the alert.

### *What should I do in the event of an alert?*

In most cases, a FirstWatch alert is nothing more than an indication of increased sickness symptoms resulting from diseases like the flu or West Nile Virus. In the event of a disease outbreak or bioterrorist attack, Sedgwick County will notify the public through the local media. To prepare for emergencies, please familiarize yourself with the mass pharmaceutical distribution sites located in your community. You can find those locations in the community services section of the Feist yellow pages and on the Sedgwick County Health Department's website [www.sedgwickcounty.org](http://www.sedgwickcounty.org).

Sedgwick County's "Ready To Respond" program helps citizens learn about preparing for emergencies. Information is available at [www.sedgwickcounty.org](http://www.sedgwickcounty.org) or by calling 660-9393.



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