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SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS
COMMUNICATIONS

NEWS

CONTACT: SEDGWICK COUNTY COMMUNICATIONS 316-660-9370 FAX: 316-383-7509

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Contact: Kristi Zukovich
316-660-9370

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Citizen Support for Disaster Preparedness Sedgwick County Provides Infrastructure and Leadership for Potential Crises

(Sedgwick County, Kansas) -- In the three years since 9/11, the Sedgwick County Health Department has been increasing capacity for prepared, professional responses to potential public health emergencies. Public health emergencies can arise from natural or man-made threats, including terrorist threats.

Diligent efforts to secure State and Federal funding to prepare our community to respond to a mass casualty incident or supplement our emergency medical response systems have yielded over \$1 million to support infrastructure development, planning and organization of local and regional partners.

Our community is now a regional leader in public health preparedness. A few of the many endeavors to assure our safety and our ability to respond to emergencies include:

- Sedgwick County's Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS) which assures a strong local medical response if a terrorist attack, Public Health emergency or emergency disaster was to occur.

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- Neighborhood Distribution Centers have been established at designated facilities throughout Sedgwick County that would be able to quickly distribute pharmaceutical supplies to the public if needed.
- Countywide exercises have been conducted to test plans for mass casualty and mass pharmaceutical distribution response readiness.
- FirstWatch™ is now operational. FirstWatch™, is an early warning surveillance 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.
- A Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) unit in Sedgwick County is now organizing local, citizen volunteers trained to respond to health and medical situations in support of established local Public Health and emergency medical response systems.

The key to success is organized citizen involvement. How can citizens become involved and get prepared?

- Locate your Neighborhood Distribution Center by visiting the MMRS webpage at www.sedgwickcounty.org. If no internet access--look in SBC or Feist phone books and/or call MMRS Hotline: 660-5551
- Become an MRC volunteer— go online to submit a volunteer interest form
- Volunteers already participate in non-emergency situations. For example, the MRC volunteers are helping with the Aviation Festival later this month.
- Complete the MMRS Personal Preparedness cards and keep handy in your glove box, purse. These are available the MMRS webpage at www.sedgwickcounty.org.
- In the event of a Public Health emergency or biological exposure--tune into local media for further instructions--DO NOT CALL 911

"Preparedness funding combined with dedicated professionals leading our initiatives has resulted in better training, more equipment, and new opportunities for organized citizen mobilization," said Tom Winters, Chair of the Board of Sedgwick County Commissioners.

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