



*Sedgwick County...
working for you*

FirstWatch™

What is FirstWatch™?

First Watch™ is an early warning biosurveillance system designed to monitor 9-1-1 and hospital emergency departments for abnormalities that may indicate a biological attack or other significant medical trends.

Is FirstWatch™ only for bioterrorism?

No, FirstWatch™ has several components that make it useful for symptomatic diseases. For instance, FirstWatch™ is instrumental in the early detection of pandemic influenza, gastrointestinal outbreaks, and seasonal respiratory illnesses, just to name a few. It can also identify other public safety events, such as chemical spills or fires.

Does FirstWatch™ only monitor Sedgwick County?

First Watch™ is currently deployed in close to 80 metro areas across the United States and Canada. It is designed to be a collaborative online tool that could allow Sedgwick County to share data with other local, state, and federal agencies as part of a regional, statewide, or national real-time bioterrorism or health surveillance system.

Other users in this region include: Johnson County, Kansas; Columbia/Boone County, Missouri; Independence, Missouri; Oklahoma City/Tulsa, Oklahoma; Des Moines/Davenport, Iowa.

How Does FirstWatch™ know that there is a problem?

First Watch™ scans 9-1-1 and hospital emergency departments for symptoms of bioterrorism (such as nausea, vomiting, fever, skin rash, and coma) and other public health concerns. FirstWatch™ then compares historical data to real-time events to determine if a disease outbreak is occurring and if it warrants an investigation by the Sedgwick County Health Department.

What happens when a FirstWatch™ alert occurs?

In most cases, a FirstWatch™ alert is nothing more than an indication of increased sickness symptoms resulting from diseases like influenza. In the event of a disease outbreak or bioterrorism attack, the public will be notified of the situation through local media.

Who responds to a FirstWatch™ alert?

The epidemiologists at the Sedgwick County Health Department maintain and respond to FirstWatch™ alerts. In the event of an alert, they will investigate the situation and take necessary actions to protect the health of those in our community.

For More Information:

For additional information, contact the Sedgwick County surveillance epidemiologist at 660-7348 or visit www.sedgwickcounty.org.