

What is Madera County doing to Prepare to Respond to a Major Health Emergency?



With the threat of bioterrorism and a possible pandemic influenza, public health has been thrust into the new role of emergency response planning. Madera County Public Health Department (MCPHD) is meeting this challenge by coordinating with local and regional agencies to develop methods to strengthen our county's ability to respond and safeguard our community.

One of the first and important steps was bringing people to the table to share information and expertise and start the planning process. The Bioterrorism and Emergency Response Advisory Committee includes representatives from the Office of Emergency Services, Sheriff and Police Departments, Fire Departments, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Madera Community Hospital, Children's Hospital, schools, healthcare facilities and county departments.



1-POD Clinic
2-Drive Thru Clinic
3-Regional
Smallpox Tabletop



Mock disasters offer an excellent tool to train staff and determine what works and what needs improvement. MCPHD has participated in a number of exercises to test our abilities. Two different exercises, the *drive through flu clinic* and the *point of dispensing clinic (POD)* were developed to determine the best process to provide medications to the entire population of Madera County.

Children's Hospital hosted a regional tabletop exercise to determine how we would defuse a smallpox epidemic in the region. The hospitals, schools, EMS, fire and police worked together to mitigate a mock chemical contamination of students at John Adams Elementary School. Even our ability to communicate an urgent health message was tested when signs were posted at the businesses on every exit in Madera County along highway 99 to alert the public traveling through the county. Additional drills are planned for the future.



Another planning effort is directed at strengthening the readiness of the healthcare system. Funds have been used to purchase personal protective equipment, decontamination and communication equipment. Hospitals are also supplementing their training to include more on terrorism and disease detection and reporting. Plans are being developed to improve the health care system's ability to rapidly expand beyond normal services to meet the increased demand in the event of bioterrorism or other large-scale public health emergency or disaster.

Preparedness information for the community is posted on the county website at www.madera-county.com/. Look under the Public Health Department, Bioterrorism Preparedness Information. Emergency Preparedness Pocket guides are available in English and Spanish for distribution to the public.

Call us at 675-7893 or email me at bernie.smith@madera-county.com if you would like copies of the pocket guide or have any questions about bioterrorism and emergency response to an urgent health threat.



4-Children's Hospital disaster drill
5-Chowchilla High School crop duster crash