

NH DHHS Will Coordinate Statewide Drill of Strategic National Stockpile August 5–6 in Locations Across the State

Concord, NH – The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Emergency Services Unit will conduct an emergency exercise on August 5–6 to simulate a large-scale infectious disease outbreak, including deployment of the national Strategic National Stockpile. First responders, towns, healthcare facilities, and Public Health Networks will participate in the exercise, which will be led from Concord and will include activities in each of the 13 Regional Public Health Networks.

The exercise will focus on several capabilities: the ability of emergency medical services (EMS) to identify, triage, and decontaminate patients safely; the ability of hospitals to receive and decontaminate patients and to activate and receive chemical medical countermeasures as needed; and the ability of DHHS to expedite the movement of chemical medical countermeasures where they are needed to save lives.

“The reality is we cannot anticipate an infectious disease outbreak or natural disaster, so it is important that all first responders prepare for such events by simulating acquiring and distributing medications and supplies that prevent casualties in the event of a wide-spread disaster,” said Rick Cricenti, Director of the Emergency Services Unit at DHHS. “While we conduct small-scale drills and exercises all the time, this statewide exercise is unusual in its scope, duration, and reach. It has been a year in the planning and involves literally the entire State. Therefore, we want the public to know that if they see anything unusual, such as helicopters and trucks or gatherings of people in uniform, it is part of an exercise rather than the real thing.”

The Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) has medical supplies and medications that are available to states in the event of a disaster. These resources are provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and are located at undisclosed sites throughout the U.S. The purpose of this exercise is to ensure that those who will be involved know how to activate these assets and get them to the right place at the right time. Communication, logistics, transportation, and incident command structure will also be components of the drill.

Participating partners for the drill at Souhegan High School include: Amherst Fire Rescue / Emergency Management, Amherst Police, Amherst Health Officer, Souhegan CERT, Souhegan Explorers and Nashua’s Health Department.