

MPH participates in drill

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Medical Park Hospital participated Tuesday in an emergency exercise to demonstrate how well emergency responders could work together during a terrorist attack involving anthrax.

The exercise was designed to help planners establish protocols, especially for the distribution of medicine to people who might be affected all over the state, according to an Arkansas Department of Health statement.

The exercise was performed to test the abilities of participating agencies to receive and rapidly distribute medication across the state using regional distribution centers, and it evaluated the hospitals' ability to understand the state's Mass Distribution Plan and carry it out with proper personnel, according to the ADH

It also tested communications systems and operational abilities, ADH said.

Some other participating organizations were the Arkansas National Guard, the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences School of Pharmacy, Acute Care Hospitals, the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management, and the ADH Emergency Medical Services Department, along with local law enforcement agencies.

Another important aspect of the exercise, according to the ADH, was to focus on the delivery of drugs stored at the Strategic National Stockpile location in Arkansas to eighty-six (86) participating hospitals in every part of the state as quickly as possible.

The Center for Disease Control's Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) has large amounts of medicine and medical supplies to protect the American public if there is a public health emergency (terrorist attack, flu outbreak, earthquake), according to the ADH.

The Arkansas National Guard actually delivered surplus antibiotics during the drill to regional distribution points for pickup by hospitals to show that real medications could be transported if an attack was to occur.

“Whether it's anthrax or Avian Influenza, the threat to the public is one that we must be prepared to meet with well-planned action,” Todd Lorenz, chief executive officer for Medical Park Hospital, said. “The opportunity to practice our response in a simulated exercise allows us to be as prepared as possible if events like these were to occur in Arkansas.”

--Stephanie Harris-Smith, Hope Star