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Good afternoon, Chairman Bilirakis, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. On behalf of Dr. Frank Farmer, State Surgeon General, I want to thank you for allowing me to represent the Florida Department of Health on this most important matter here today. My name is Michael McHargue, Director of Public Health and Medical Planning and Response for the Bureau of Preparedness and Response of the Florida Department of Health. My role is the Emergency Coordinating Officer and lead for Emergency Support Function 8, Public Health and Medical, of the state of Florida. I work in concert with the State Emergency Response Team (SERT), which functions at the behest of Governor Rick Scott. As the lead for ESF8, I coordinate Health and Medical resources and capabilities as one of eighteen Emergency Support Functions of the Florida State Emergency Response Team. Integrated planning and response is critical to achieving successful outcomes. Though important, the health and medical countermeasures that are of interest to this committee are but one part of the total response required to address a threat of this type. The medical logistics structure, partnership, and process are the lifeblood of public protection.

Over the next few minutes, I hope to provide you with an overview of Florida's ongoing efforts in meeting the broad array of challenges that either impact the state on a regular basis, or that we sincerely hope to not have to confront.

### **State Level Overview**

Preparedness is founded on the principle of incremental, integrated and, simultaneous planning across all disciplines and layers of government – local, state and federal - for all types of hazards, and is accomplished in a continuous cycle of planning, equipping, training, and exercising, underpinned by evaluation at each phase. In Florida, preparedness is operationalized in three overlapping structures: public health, emergency management, and domestic security. As stated above, our preparedness is heavily reliant on the local, state, and federal partnerships necessary to span jurisdictions and to provide resources for incidents that might be deemed as catastrophic. Public health and medical preparedness is essential to ensuring that the Florida Department of Health's mission of protecting the health and safety of all residents and visitors to our state is achieved. Facilitating collaboration among the state's health care partners, including pre-hospital, hospital and medical practitioners, is critical in order to respond as a system of care. Florida's *Public Health and Health Care Preparedness Strategic Plan 2011-2013* goals, objectives, and strategies unifies the principles of the three structures and provides the direction for preparing the state's public health and medical system. This strategy is built upon the 37 national Target Capabilities.

## **Public Health System**

Public Health Preparedness is essential to achieving the Florida Department of Health's mission of protecting the health and safety of all residents and visitors to our state. Facilitating collaboration among the state's health care partners, including pre-hospital, hospital and medical practitioners, is critical to responding as a healthcare system. The Department of Health is structured as an integrated public health system with the county health departments being statutory entities under the direction of the state Department of Health. This structure enhances the integration and coordination between other local and state entities such as emergency management and domestic security.

## **Emergency Management Structure**

Chapter 252, Florida Statutes, establishes the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, and provides the framework through which the state of Florida prepares for, responds to, recovers from, and mitigates the impact of a wide variety of disasters that could adversely affect the health, safety and/or general welfare of residents and visitors to the state. It also provides guidance to state and local officials on procedures, organizational structure and responsibilities, and serves as a blueprint for an integrated and coordinated local, state and federal response. As a member state within FEMA Region IV, our plans and partnerships fully engage federal partners and assets.

## **Domestic Security Structure**

Florida has a dynamic interdisciplinary domestic security strategy which is founded on five goals:

1. **Prepare** for all hazards, natural or man-made, to include terrorism.
2. **Prevent**, preempt, and deter acts of terrorism.
3. **Protect** Florida's citizens, visitors, and critical infrastructure.
4. **Respond** in an immediate, effective, and coordinated manner, focused on the victims of the attack.
5. **Recover** quickly and restore our way of life following a terrorist act.

The framework for Florida's strategy is seven Regional Domestic Security Task Forces. From its inception, Florida's strategy has depended on the first responders to recommend what is needed and to prioritize implementation of planning, training and equipment projects through the domestic security structure.

## **Monitoring and Detection of the Threat**

The state has an ongoing and robust capability to identify the characteristics of a variety of chemical, biological, and radiological agents and their effects on the population. The ESSENCE syndromic surveillance system is operational in ¾ of all hospitals throughout the state, covering approximately 85% of all emergency department visits. This system is coupled real-time with regional epidemiologists working in disease control, as well as food and waterborne investigations.

Constant updating of the health care system occurs through the use of the Florida Department of Health Emergency Notification System (FDENS), as well as the EpiCom system, a state reporting and messaging board built along the structure of Epi-X, the CDC notification and update system for a variety of threats to our subject matter experts.

This system, coupled with local surveillance within the county health department structure, provides an ongoing framework for the response. To aid in the rapid identification of the threat agent, the state Laboratory Response Network (LRN) laboratory capability is available, coupled with a laboratory surge structure that utilizes both hospital and academic laboratory capability.

### **Populations Affected**

Due to the ongoing activities the state faces with natural disasters, the ongoing analysis of all populations, including vulnerable populations, has been a yearly activity since the storms of 2004. Every county has a profile developed that analyzes the age, race, indigence, medical status, and birth rates for the community. These data are coupled with environmental factors that may impact the community in any event. Florida possesses the capability to rapidly access, compile and depict these data using sophisticated GIS mapping, and can share the results of same using web-based communication, as well as, redundant mobile communications systems.

### **Evaluations and Recommendations for Countermeasures**

In the 2010 H1N1 pandemic, a series of advisory groups was used to provide clinical guidance on various aspects our state strategies and response. This has developed into the establishment of a Medical Advisory Group to assist both the Department and the SERT in:

- Evaluating CDC guidance for appropriateness to the state situation.
- Evaluation of contraindications in a mass prophylaxis event.
- Other issues as needed. In an event such as BioWatch, for example, the group would be evaluating the allocation and apportionment strategy.
- Provide both protective actions and the medical protocols.
- Make recommendations to protect first responders.

The state has broadened that capability by developing a key rapport with the Poison Control system to rapidly identify both the conditions within the state, as well as, serve as the key contact point for adverse reactions reported by the citizens.

### **Information Management Branch**

During the response deployments for H1N1, Haiti, then Deepwater Horizon, there was an increasing and diverse need for information. The proliferation of rumors and the expanding role of social media necessitated the development of this Branch in the Operations section of the Incident Management Structure. The Branch is assigned all of the messaging for the Department of Health and functions within the Joint Information Center (JIC) established by the State Emergency Response Team (SERT). As stated previously, the SERT is the vehicle that ensures the coordinated input and output of public information for Florida's citizens.

### **Points of Dispensing (POD) Strategy**

The Florida strategy provides that Points of Dispensing (POD) would be utilized for countermeasure dispensing in every county in the state. Local PODs have been established in both open and closed environments. Adaptation of the POD for issues related to radiation, for example, are incorporated into the current planning for the incident. Most recently, the H1N1 pandemic provided an opportunity to demonstrate Florida's POD Strategy statewide.

The H1N1 campaign highlighted two successes for the Florida plan. Forty-three of the sixty-seven counties provided school-based immunization clinics for students (an example of a closed POD). One of Florida's counties received a national award for the vaccine strategy within its school system. The second success was incorporating major pharmaceutical chains to dispense antiviral medication during the early days of the pandemic. This partnership, combined with distribution within the county health department system, led to increased access and availability.

## **Logistics Annex**

The Florida Department of Health's Emergency Operations Plan Logistics Support Annex integrates with the State Unified Logistics Plan to ensure that the flow of medical supplies, equipment, pharmaceuticals and auxiliary personnel is performed in a unified manner in cooperation with other state of Florida emergency response elements. Effective public health and medical logistics management ensures that all functions are executed in a unified manner in order to reduce costs and ensure the appropriate support actions are accomplished in a timely manner.

The scope of the Logistics Support Annex is to develop and coordinate a FDOH statewide strategy including operational objectives and tactical standard operating procedures for the procurement, receipt, storage, distribution, dispensing, and recovery of pharmaceuticals, medical supplies, and equipment in support of state-wide response activities.

Florida strategy for delivery systems incorporates a hub and spoke concept for delivery. The Department uses two main warehousing facilities, coupled with Receive, Stage and Store (RSS) sites strategically located throughout the state. The present format is being developed to establish a single drop point within the county and then redistribution to the POD sites. Given the unique nature of Florida's structure and communities, the apportionment of countermeasures will be a highly dynamic event.

Florida has provided personal protective equipment (PPE) to Advanced Life Support Pre-Hospital Emergency Medical Services (EMS) providers and acute care hospitals. A pre-defined standard PPE package was allocated based on the number of licensed vehicles for EMS providers and number of licensed beds for hospitals. Allocation to the agency level was determined through an assessment of current capacity and prioritized by the Regional Domestic Security Task Force, Health and Medical Committees. A minimum standard level of PPE has been established by the State Working Group for Preparedness, Health, Medical, Hospital, EMS Committee's Hospital Equipment Task Team. The current focus of PPE provision is on the sustainment and maintenance of PPE and the training required for using the PPE.

The state has deployed medical countermeasures during events such as antivirals, antibiotics (anthrax event in Palm Beach), vaccines, and PPE to the hospital and county school systems. Caches of ventilators and a concurrent strategy for them is part of the overall response continuum. Other key items presently part of the core distribution strategy include PPE and other protective measures from responders.

In terms of the pharmaceutical strategy, the caches held by the state are designed to be dispensed to the responders at the outset of the event, with the Strategic National Stockpile and Managed Inventory stockpiles then being apportioned to meet the civilian need.

## **Strategic National Stockpile (SNS)**

CDC's Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) is a national repository of antibiotics, chemical antidotes, antitoxins, vaccines, and other life-saving medications. During a public health emergency, state and local public health systems may be overwhelmed. SNS is designed to supplement and re-supply state and local public health agencies in the event of such an emergency.

Florida has a robust statewide SNS program with an emphasis on maintaining a ready Receipt, Staging & Storage (RSS) infrastructure which includes enhancement of current state plans and supporting documentation for receipt of SNS assets, development and conduct of training and exercise activities for state and federal partners.

The state has an on-line training program which allows Florida Department of Health staff, volunteers, and partner agencies an opportunity to learn the operations and management of the SNS program. The program, *Florida's Introduction to Strategic National Stockpile and Mass Dispensing*, [http://www.doh.state.fl.us/demo/php/FL\\_Mass\\_Dispensing.html](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/demo/php/FL_Mass_Dispensing.html) has trained over 3,000 people. The objectives of this course are: the scope and purpose of Florida's Strategic National Stockpile Program, the community's mass dispensing roles and responsibilities, the two primary methods of distributing and dispensing supplies, and how mass dispensing incidents are managed.

## **Cities Readiness Initiative (CRI)**

The Cities Readiness Initiative is a federal funding mechanism targeted at major U.S. cities to assist with preparedness activities related to the achievement of state and county SNS program goals.

- Florida's CRI program includes providing consistent guidance, feedback and evaluation to 14 CRI counties and 53 non-CRI counties via multiple venues.
- Provide technical assistance to 67 counties for planning development/refinement, training and exercise related to the SNS/CRI programs.
- Perform program monitoring, tracking and presenting project funding, program deliverables, and performance measures.

## **CHEMPACK**

CHEMPACK is a joint federal-state program designed to implement the forward placement of chemical nerve agent antidotes to state/local areas in order to reduce treatment response times. Placement of 108 CHEMPACK containers in the State of Florida was completed in November, 2007. The program is currently in sustainment phase.

In closing, the determination of the scope of the distribution of medical countermeasures is one best determined by the collective guidance of state and Federal subject matter experts. Once we receive this guidance, it is our mission to frame the structure to provide the appropriate countermeasure to the affected population. Given the recent events that affected the nation with influenza, to the broad range of services required for naturally occurring events, I feel that we have developed an appropriate structure to meet the demand. I thank you for your time and will now hopefully be able to answer any questions you might have.