

Northwest PUBLIC HEALTH

Washington Drills on Distribution

On January 24, 2002, from 11:30 to 4:00, Washington State Department of Health (DOH) in conjunction with Public Health-Seattle & King County, Seattle Fire Department, and other community partners from around Washington State held a drill on distributing medical supplies from the National Pharmaceutical Stockpile (NPS).



The National Pharmaceutical Stockpile is an emergency reserve of antibiotics and other medical supplies for use in national emergencies. It was deployed for the first time when it was sent to New York City after the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center.

During the Washington State Department of Health's successful test of the state's plan for distributing medicines from the stockpile, 269 cases representing people possibly exposed to anthrax were registered, briefed, assessed, and "treated" on the University of Washington campus.

The drill pinpointed several weaknesses in the state's draft plan for mass distribution of medicines in a public health emergency, in particular the organization of the registration and dispensing areas and the procedures used to brief the registrants. The distribution goal is to be able to process 100 to 150 people an hour.

UW faculty Bryant T. Karras, MD, Mark Oberle, MD, MPH, and Randal Beaton, PhD, helped DOH study the drill. They looked at the use of the Web for recruiting volunteers and did time-motion studies of the event as well as an anonymous survey of volunteer patients' and dispensing site workers' impressions of the drill.

The Department of Health expects to release the revised draft distribution plan in July 2002 and will follow up with a variety of training opportunities, from table top exercises for local health districts to full-scale drills for public health and emergency personnel.

For more information about the NPS drill, see <http://phig.washington.edu/NPS/>