

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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San Mateo County Health System

Health System to Test Partnerships with Local Emergency Response Teams
Health Officials to Simulate Medicine Distribution, Promote Kitchen Fire Safety

SAN MATEO, Calif. — As part of the San Mateo County Health System’s “Silver Dragon V” emergency drill, Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) and the San Mateo Coastside Medical Reserve Corps (SMC MRC) will go door-to-door at various locations throughout the county delivering kitchen fire safety information on March 24, 2011, from 9 a.m. until noon. The exercise will test the Health System’s ability to partner with local cities, law enforcement, fire departments, MRC, and CERT teams and to distribute large quantities of medicine and medical supplies from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Strategic National Stockpile (SNS).

CERT and SMC MRC volunteers throughout the County will practice their readiness to provide emergency assistance, specifically in the event of a major health emergency such as Pandemic Influenza, a food or water-borne illness, or the intentional release of a bioagent. In order to test door-to-door distribution as realistically as possible, CERT and MRC teams will distribute kitchen fire safety brochures to simulate the medicine that could be delivered following a health-related emergency involving large segments of the population.

This exercise tests an innovative approach to successfully accomplishing the distribution of life-saving medical supplies to the public in a timely manner. The San Mateo County Health System shares the results of this event with other health agencies to expand the options available in the event of a health emergency.

This is the fifth year the San Mateo County Health System has organized this exercise. For Silver Dragon I, the team delivered brochures to 1,300 households in one community to gauge how long it would take to deliver medicine to a population of that size. For Silver Dragon II and III, the health department worked with CERT teams in multiple communities and the time was fixed at three hours, with teams being tasked with tracking the number of households reached in that time frame. Last year, the team tested how long it took to visit 10,000 homes countywide; and this year, the group will try to improve upon last year’s time.

In addition to testing the Health System’s ability to distribute medications, this exercise tests San Mateo County’s plans to receive SNS medicine and medical supplies quickly. The SNS would be deployed in the event of a public health emergency severe enough to cause local supplies to run out. Once Federal and local authorities agree that the SNS is needed, medicines can be delivered to any state in the U.S. within 12 hours. While waiting for the SNS shipment to arrive, San Mateo County is prepared to distribute medicine and supplies from its own pharmaceutical stockpile.

Media is welcome to observe the exercise. To learn more, contact Robyn Thaw at 650-573-3935.

Participating Agencies:

Belmont-San Carlos Fire Department, Cal Fire, Coastside CERT, Coastside Medical Reserve Corps, City of Brisbane, City of Foster City, Half Moon Bay Police Department, Menlo College, Menlo Park Fire Protection District, Millbrae Fire Department, North County Fire Authority, Pacifica Police Department, Redwood City CERT, San Mateo County Health System, San Mateo County Office of Emergency Services, San Mateo Fire Department, San Mateo Medical Center, South San Francisco Fire Department