



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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**HAWAI`I SCORES HIGH IN NATIONAL EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS REPORT**

HONOLULU – In a report issued yesterday by the Trust for America's Health, Hawai'i was one of nine states that scored an eight out of ten possible categories used to measure the nation's preparedness to respond to public health emergencies. The report, entitled "Ready or Not? Protecting the Public's Health from Disease, Disasters, and Bioterrorism," outlines substantial improvements that have been achieved and how states' emergency preparedness efforts are clearly having a positive impact.

"Hawai'i has made considerable progress in preparing for public health emergencies such as pandemic flu over the past few years with funding support from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention," said Health Director Chiyome Fukino, M.D. "Emergency preparedness is a shared responsibility and the Hawai'i Department of Health is continuing to strengthen and share strategies so that individuals, families, and agencies are prepared for whatever emergencies arise."

"Preparedness is an ongoing process of evaluation and improvement," said Dr. Sarah Park, chief of the DOH Disease Outbreak Control Division. "We welcome feedback on our programs and capabilities that can help us increase our capacity to respond to public health threats."

(more)

Hawai'i scored well in the majority of areas such as: having adequate plans to distribute emergency vaccines, antidotes, and medical supplies; having a state public health laboratory that can meet the expectations of the state's pandemic influenza plan; having a disease tracking system to collect and monitor data electronically via the Internet; and having a Medical Reserve Corps Coordinator. Since its inception in 2004, the DOH's Medical Reserve Corps has grown to a group of over 750 registered and trained volunteers. This past year, the DOH State Laboratories increased its containment capacity to bio-safety level three and expanded its capability to include additional influenza and other rapid tests. The DOH has worked closely with the State Civil Defense, Red Cross, State Department of Defense, Healthcare Association of Hawai'i, counties and federal agencies to exercise and test emergency response operations regularly since 2003.

Overall, while significant progress has been made nationwide to better protect the country from public health emergencies, federal funding for essential programs has gone down each year. In recent years, Hawai'i has seen its federal funding for public health preparedness reduced by as much as 18 percent. In addition, supplemental funding once available for states and localities for pandemic influenza preparedness is no longer offered, even though the need for such support is critical with states expected to play a key role in the nation's strategy for combating pandemic influenza.

The "Ready or Not?" report contains state-by-state health preparedness scores based on 10 key indicators to assess public health emergency preparedness. All 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia were evaluated. The report was released by the non-profit Trust for America's Health that works to make disease prevention a national priority.

The report and state-by-state materials are available at: www.healthyamericans.org.

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