

# Public Health Informer

Winter 2013

Fort Bend County

Health & Human Services



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.



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## Public Health Risk Assessment Results

Fort Bend County Health & Human Services (FBCHHS) recently has been engaged in a new effort to conduct a county hazard risk assessment that takes into account public health risks. Using a newly developed tool known as the Texas Public Health Risk Assessment Tool (TXPHRAT), FBCHHS collaborated with community partners and offices of emergency management to complete this project. Not surprisingly, the results were a hybrid of traditional emergency management hazards and those more centric to public health.

### Top Hazards Identified:

- Hurricane/Tropical Storm
- Tornado
- Pandemic Influenza
- Conventional and Chemical Terrorism
- Biological Terrorism

However, the TXPHRAT goes a step further than just allowing a jurisdiction to identify and rank its hazards. The new tool allows for an evaluation of the planning, training, and available resources to mitigate the impact of a given hazard. This data comes from an evaluation of the 15 Target Capabilities, for which the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has charged public health, along with other variables such as hazard probability, population vulnerability, and hazard impact.

Once the data was entered into the tool, it allowed FBCHHS to generate a gap analysis report to identify areas with remaining risk and capabilities to focus future intervention and mitigation efforts. The capabilities identified for continued improvement include: Responder Safety & Health, Medical Surge, Mass Care, Public Health Surveillance and Epidemiological Investigation, and Community Recovery. Fort Bend County Health & Human Services is currently using this information to plan future trainings, workshops, and exercises. With support from our community partners we hope to continue strengthening our response capabilities and resources.

If you would like more information about the results please contact David Olinger, david.olinger@co.fort-bend.tx.us, 281-238-3515.

# Public Health News at a Glance

## House Passes Disaster Preparedness Bill

The U.S. House of Representatives recently voted to pass the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Reauthorization Act — which if enacted by Congress would strengthen emergency response programs for state, local and public health practitioners. The vote cleared the House by a 383-16 vote. The [original law](#) passed in December 2006, creating programs designed “to improve the Nation’s public health and medical preparedness and response capabilities for emergencies, whether deliberate, accidental, or natural.” Its updated statute would implement public health resources for emergencies including acts of terrorism, severe weather incidents and disease outbreak.

## Novel Coronavirus Recently Detected

Coronaviruses are common and usually cause colds. This year a novel coronavirus was identified as the cause of severe respiratory illness in adults from Middle Eastern countries. People who got sick with novel coronavirus developed severe respiratory illness with shortness of breath, coughing and pneumonia. Some died. Investigators are working to find the source of the virus and how it spreads. There are no reports of anyone in the United States getting infected and sick with the novel coronavirus. There is a low risk of getting infected at this time. For more information visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

Pandemic Flu	Seasonal Flu
Rarely happens (three times in 20th century)	Happens annually and usually peaks in January or February
People have little or no immunity because they have no previous exposure to the virus	Usually some immunity built up from previous exposure
Healthy people may be at increased risk for serious complications	Usually only <a href="#">people at high risk</a> , not healthy adults, are at risk of serious complications
Health care providers and hospitals may be overwhelmed	Health care providers and hospitals can usually meet public and patient needs
Vaccine probably would not be available in the early stages of a pandemic	Vaccine available for annual flu season
Effective <a href="#">antivirals</a> may be in limited supply	Adequate supplies of antivirals are usually available
Number of deaths could be high (The U.S. death toll during the <a href="#">1918 pandemic</a> was approximately 675,000)	<a href="#">Seasonal flu-associated deaths</a> in the United States over 30 years ending in 2007 have ranged from about 3,000 per season to about 49,000 per season.
Symptoms may be more severe	<a href="#">Symptoms</a> include fever, cough, runny nose, and muscle pain
May cause major impact on the general public, such as widespread travel restrictions and school or business closings	Usually causes minor impact on the general public, some schools may close and sick people are encouraged to stay home
Potential for severe impact on domestic and world economy	Manageable impact on domestic and world economy

# Characteristics & Challenges of a Flu Pandemic

from [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)



## Rapid Worldwide Spread

- When a pandemic flu virus emerges, expect it to spread around the world.
- You should [prepare](#) for a pandemic flu as if the entire world population is susceptible.
- Countries may try to delay the pandemic flu's arrival through border closings and travel restrictions, but they cannot stop it.

## Overloaded Health Care Systems

- Most people have little or no immunity to a pandemic virus. Infection and illness rates soar. A substantial percentage of the world's population will require some form of medical care.
- Nations are unlikely to have the staff, facilities, equipment, and hospital beds needed to cope with the number of people who get the pandemic flu.
- Death rates may be high. Four factors largely determine the death toll: the number of people who become infected, the strength of the virus, the underlying characteristics and vulnerability of affected populations, and the effectiveness of preventive measures.
- [Past pandemics](#) spread globally in two or sometimes three waves.



## Inadequate Medical Supplies

- The need for vaccines is likely to be larger than the supply. Those at [highest risk](#) will likely get the [vaccine](#) first.
- Early in a pandemic, the need for antiviral medications is likely to be larger than the supply. Those at highest risk will likely get antiviral medications first.

## Shortage of Medical Facilities

- A pandemic can create a shortage of hospital beds, ventilators, and other supplies. Alternative sites, such as schools, may serve as medical facilities.

## Disrupted Economy and Society

- Travel bans, event cancellations, and school and business closings could have a major impact on communities and citizens.
- Caring for sick family members and fear of exposure could result in significant employee absenteeism.



*Fort Bend Secure: A Bio-Defense Network*, is a proactive initiative to establish **CLOSED Dispensing Sites** with businesses throughout the county.

**CLOSED Dispensing Sites:**

- Are locations that are operated by private businesses, that will provide meds for their specific population (i.e., employees and their families)
- Minimize the impact of the emergency on businesses by maintaining continuity of operations, and on the community by saving lives.
- Are not open to the public
- Distribute medications that are free

If your organization chooses to become a CLOSED Dispensing Site, you will have a tremendous opportunity to combat the impact of a public health threat or emergency. Together with your local public health agency, you will be able to address an assortment of public health issues in a groundbreaking way.

By becoming a CLOSED Dispensing Site, your business will be better protected in the event of a public health emergency. You'll receive and dispense medications and medical supplies directly to your employees and their families. By providing the materials and support they need, your business will help to ensure the general health and well being of not just your employees, but all of those affected by the public health emergency. With your cooperation, you will also be helping your community and your Health Department concentrate their efforts on dispensing medications to the general public.

To learn more about this program and how to become a Closed Dispensing Site partner please contact:

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Although hurricane season is months away, it's not too early to get prepared! One way to prepare is by registering with Enable Fort Bend. Enable Fort Bend is a system that allows emergency management personnel to be aware of those with medical and functional needs in Fort Bend County.

**Who should register ?**

Anyone who needs medical assistance including:

- Persons with a disability
- Persons with hearing and vision impairment
- Persons requiring medical equipment
- Persons who anticipate needing assistance in an emergency

**Why should I register?**

During a disaster or an emergency, people with special needs may require assistance if they experience power outages, need medications or need medical support.

This survey will help identify people who may need assistance during an emergency and assist in planning for such an event.

**How do I register?**

Go to

**[www.enablefortbend.com](http://www.enablefortbend.com)**

**OR**

Call [281-238-3514](tel:281-238-3514) to have a survey sent to you.

**Don't forget to be prepared! Make a Kit, Have a Plan, Stay Informed!**



**Public Health**  
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**Health & Human Services is Fort Bend County's principal agency responsible for protecting the health of county residents and providing essential human services, especially for those least able to help themselves.**

**The Public Health Team works to protect the health and welfare of the citizens of Fort Bend County through disease prevention and intervention, and through the promotion of a healthy community environment.**