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**To:** DeKalb County News Media

**From:** Jane Lux  
Public Health Administrator

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Health Department Hosts Full Scale Emergency Response Exercise

### **Health Department Hosts Full Scale Emergency Response Exercise**

DEKALB, Ill. - The DeKalb County Health Department held a full-scale emergency response exercise today in conjunction with the Illinois Department of Public Health.

The Health Department's partners in this exercise included the DeKalb County Sheriff's Office, DeKalb County Emergency Services and Disaster Agency (ESDA), the City of DeKalb Fire Department, the City of DeKalb Police Department, the Northern Illinois University Police Department, and *KishHealth* System, now a part of Northwestern Medicine. The DeKalb County Sheriff's Office Mobile Command Post was on site today as well.

Thirty-eight Health Department staff also participated in the exercise.

Approximately 37 volunteers served as actors, including public health and nursing students from Northern Illinois University and Kishwaukee College, Boy Scouts from various local troops, and other community members, to simulate people in the community who were arriving at the exercise site to obtain medication.

The purpose of today's exercise was to test the ability of our local DeKalb County Health Department plans and procedures to receive and distribute medicine and medical supplies during a public health emergency. In the event of an emergency severe enough to cause local medical supplies to run out (terrorist attack, flu outbreak, tornado, etc.), the state can request the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS). The SNS is a national repository of antibiotics, chemical antidotes, antitoxins, life-support medications, airway maintenance supplies, and medical/surgical items. The SNS is designed to supplement and re-supply state and local public health agencies in the event of a national emergency.

"If we were doing a medication dispensing operation, we would follow our emergency plan," said Jane Lux, Public Health Administrator. "Our goal, what we're charged with, is to provide medication for all county residents within 24 hours."

Today's exercise simulated an anthrax release. It required the state to request the SNS from the federal government, receive packages of supplies within 12 hours of the request, break down the packages, and distribute them across the state to locations where medicine is needed. Numerous local health departments and hospitals across the state simulated receiving the SNS supplies and dispensing medicine to people who have volunteered to act as the public coming to pick up medicine.

Volunteers were checked in, were assigned roles, were assessed, and provided medication, whether it was ciprofloxacin or doxycycline. Actors could also be sent to the dosing area, if they were a pediatrics patient or weighed less than 89 pounds. They could

also be assessed if they had allergies, were pregnant or had other special circumstances. Also, actors could be sent to a special needs area if they or a member of their family had special needs.

“The reason why we’re having people go through the exercise is to see, do our staff go through the steps and the process in a timely manner, do we need to improve on that, do we need to work on our times in any of the areas?” explained Melissa Edwards, Health Promotion and Emergency Preparedness Coordinator at the Health Department. Edwards said. “We know it’s a test, and it’s a great opportunity to see what we can improve on.”

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