



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104

Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5534

www.adph.org

Alabama scores high in preparedness

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Charles Woernle, M.D.
(334) 206-5325

Alabama has achieved 8 of the 10 possible key indicators for health disaster preparedness, according to the non-profit Trust for America's Health. The "Ready or Not?" report contains state-by-state health preparedness scores. All 50 states and the District of Columbia were evaluated, and only the states of Oklahoma and Kansas scored higher than Alabama.

Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said, "This is a positive report for Alabama and our department. Our partners, including Alabama hospitals, health care providers, nursing homes, community health centers, the Alabama Emergency Management Agency, local emergency management agencies and the Department of Homeland Security, have worked hard to make this happen. It is impossible to be fully prepared for a disaster, but we strive to plan for what might come in our changing times, such as biological or chemical attacks. Preparedness is a journey, not a destination."

Public health preparedness is a shared responsibility among federal, state and local governments. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Health Resources and Services Administration at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services are in charge of overseeing the use of federal funds devoted to health emergency readiness.

According to the Trust for America's Health, Alabama was one of only 15 states which have achieved "green" status for its Strategic National Stockpile delivery. Other indicators the state has met include the following:

- Has sufficient biohazard safety level 3 laboratories to meet bioterrorism needs as outlined in the state plan
- Has enough laboratory scientists to test for anthrax or plague
- Has year round lab-based influenza surveillance
- Has two weeks' hospital bed surge capacity in a pandemic
- Increased or maintained seasonal flu vaccination rate for adults over age 65
- Is compatible with the CDC's National Electronic Disease Surveillance System
- Increased or maintained its level of funding for public health services

The two areas in which Alabama was found to be lacking are being at or above the national median for the number of adults over age 65 who have ever received a

pneumonia vaccination and having a nursing workforce shortage. The national median for seniors who receive pneumonia vaccinations is 65.7 percent; 61.9 percent of Alabamians over 65 were vaccinated.

Since 2004, more than \$90 million have been cut from the CDC's preparedness funds that are allocated to states, and over \$23 million have been cut from HRSA funds allocated for state hospital preparedness. The report also offers recommendations for preparedness.

Other states receiving a score of 8 were Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, South Dakota, Texas, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia and Wyoming. The report of Trust for America's Health is available at www.healthyamericans.org.