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AMMC INVOLVED IN STATEWIDE EMERGENCY DRILL

PARAGOULD, AR – Arkansas Methodist Medical Center today participated in a statewide exercise designed to test the state’s ability to respond to a large-scale public health crisis. The drill involves emergency preparedness planners from hospitals and state and local agencies statewide who plan to rehearse what they would do in the hours and days following an actual public health emergency, such as the release of a bioterrorism agent or the spread of a deadly communicable disease.

In a four-hour drill this morning, Arkansas Methodist Medical Center joined forces with the Arkansas Department of Health’s local county health unit and state and local government officials from all over Arkansas to test the state’s response readiness.

“Throughout the year, we conduct frequent drills here at Arkansas Methodist on a variety of scenarios,” said Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Barry Davis. “This drill is unique because it brings together so many of us from the local and state levels who will respond in the event of a public health emergency.”

The exercise will include most hospitals across the state, the Arkansas Department of Health and many emergency response agencies and organizations that would be involved in a statewide public health incident. The exercise will allow hospital emergency response planners across the state to evaluate their capacity to interact with other emergency responder groups using proper personnel, communications systems and operational abilities.

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“Whether it’s a bioterrorism event or a new and dangerous strain of influenza, the threat to the public is one that we must be prepared to meet with well-planned action,” Janet Johnson, Safety Officer at AMMC, said. “The opportunity to practice our response in a simulated exercise could possibly make the difference between life and death if events like these were to occur in Arkansas.”

The exercise will also allow local and state emergency responders to practice their interaction with the federal agencies, especially the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the CDC's Strategic National Stockpile (SNS). The SNS has large quantities of medicine and medical supplies to protect the American public if there is a public health emergency (terrorist attack, flu outbreak, and earthquake) severe enough to cause local supplies to run out. Once federal and local authorities agree that the SNS is needed, medicines will be delivered to any state in the U.S. within 12 hours. Each state has plans to receive and distribute SNS medicine and medical supplies to local communities as quickly as possible.

The exercise will include a wide range of public and private partners: 86 acute care hospitals, the ADH Emergency Operations Center, the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management, local law enforcement agencies, and other state and local emergency operations centers (EOCs).

A recognized leader, Arkansas Methodist Medical Center in Paragould provides progressive, compassionate healthcare to residents throughout Northeast Arkansas and Southeast Missouri. Additional information about AMMC is available at: www.arkansasmethodist.org.

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