



News Release

For Immediate Release:

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Exercise Will Test State's Pandemic Triage Guidelines

Guidelines part of effort to ensure statewide preparedness for a potential H1N1 pandemic

(Salt Lake City) – In the event of a worst-case public health emergency, such as an influenza pandemic, demand for treatment may eclipse the capacity of the state's health care system. In order to ensure those who are most likely to benefit from medical care receive it, the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) has developed comprehensive Pandemic Influenza Hospital and ICU Triage Guidelines.

The state triage guidelines were developed by the UDOH with input from local health departments and a workgroup comprised of representatives from Intermountain Healthcare, MountainStar Healthcare, University of Utah Health Care and the Utah Hospitals and Health Systems Association. The latter organization played a key role in the development of the new guidelines by facilitating the workgroup.

In the event of a public health emergency declared by the Governor, the guidelines would be implemented on a statewide level and would apply to all health care professionals, clinics and facilities in the state.

MountainStar will be the first health care system to test what challenges the state triage guidelines would present if actually put into use in a hospital, and how effective they will be in ensuring health care resources are used efficiently. Each of the six MountainStar hospitals in Utah will conduct a drill on **Wednesday, August 26, from 9 a.m. to noon.**

During the drill, actors posing as patients will present to the hospitals with varying

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symptoms. The medical staff at each hospital will use the new guidelines to assist in making treatment decisions.

To test its own response to the implementation of the state triage guidelines, the UDOH will conduct a simulated activation of its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at the Cannon Health Building during the MountainStar drill. Media inquiries specific to the content of the state triage guidelines should be directed to UDOH public information officer Tom Hudachko.

“We hope this drill will provide us with some insight on where the guidelines work well and where we can make improvements,” said state epidemiologist Dr. Robert Rolfs. “While the guidelines are based on sound, evidence-based science, there’s great value in exercising them in as close to a real-world setting as we can create in order to determine how well they will work.”

The complete state triage guidelines are available for review and public comment on the UDOH web site at www.pandemicflu.utah.gov/plan/med_triage011009.pdf.

On Tuesday, August 25, MountainStar will provide local media with a training scenario. It will include more details about the drills, hospital and media center locations, names and titles of hospital spokespersons, as well as on-site media contact information.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.