



Philadelphia Department of Public Health
Division of Disease Control

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Health Notification

Fourth of July Special Events - Public Health Preparedness Recommendations June 30, 2009

The City of Philadelphia is hosting several large public events as part of the annual Sunoco Welcome America festivities throughout the current week and upcoming 4th of July weekend. Venues for large public gatherings this weekend include concerts and parades at Independence Mall, Penn's Landing, and the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. While the City has received no information regarding any threats specific to these events, healthcare facilities should be prepared for both naturally occurring events that might result in increased illness, as well as the possibility of terrorism resulting in civilian casualties. The Philadelphia Department of Public Health Division of Disease Control (DDC) recommends that healthcare facilities review their emergency response and disaster preparedness plans as these events occur, and before the upcoming holiday period with the possibly heightened potential for terrorism and disease transmission. Specific recommendations include:

- Evaluate facilities and personnel to ensure the safety and security of both
- Ensure that appropriate staff understand their roles in an emergency and communications protocols
- Update clinical providers on biological, chemical, and radiological agents. (Information on these threats may be found at www.bt.cdc.gov, and www.atsdr.cdc.gov, and www.health.state.pa.us)
- Review procedures that address medical treatment of mass casualties, including decontamination protocols, the use of personal protective equipment and triage protocols
- Prepare to treat individuals suffering from heat related illnesses

The Philadelphia Department of Public Health Division of Disease Control (DDC) reviews data daily from multiple sources to facilitate the recognition of disease outbreaks. However, DDC always relies on clinicians to report **by telephone** conditions that require immediate notification, as well as any outbreak or unusual presentation or cluster of disease. Indicators of naturally occurring outbreaks or possible biological terrorism are:

- An unusual temporal or geographic clustering of illness (e.g., persons who attended the same public event or gathering)
- Increase in serious lower respiratory illness with negative tests for common bacteria and viruses
- Patients presenting with clinical signs and symptoms that suggest an infectious disease outbreak (e.g., ≥ 2 persons presenting with an unexplained febrile illness associated with sepsis, pneumonia, respiratory failure, or rash or a botulism-like syndrome with flaccid muscle paralysis, especially if occurring in otherwise healthy persons)
- An unusual age distribution for common diseases (e.g., an increase in chickenpox-like illness in adult patients)
- Single cases of disease due to uncommon, non-indigenous agents (e.g., anthrax, plague, tularemia) in patients with no history suggesting an explanation for illness
- Large number of cases of acute flaccid paralysis with prominent bulbar palsies, suggestive of a release of *botulinum* toxin

Please contact the Division of Disease Control (DDC) to report conditions requiring immediate notification, or to obtain public health consultation. DDC will also facilitate diagnostic testing requiring public health laboratory services. During normal business hours, call 215-685-6740; after hours, contact the City Hall Operator at 215-686-1776 and ask to speak to the person on-call for the Division.