

STATE OF COLORADO

Bill Owens, Governor
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Dedicated to protecting and improving the health and environment of the people of Colorado

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Colorado Department
of Public Health
and Environment

Governor's Expert Emergency Epidemic Response Committee

BACKGROUND

- House Bill 00-1077 created the Governor's Expert Emergency Epidemic Response Committee, effective March 2000.
- This 22-member committee was established to serve in an advisory capacity to the Governor in the event of an emergency epidemic caused by bioterrorism, pandemic influenza or novel and highly fatal infectious agents or biological toxins.
- The committee's first responsibility, as outlined in 24-32-2104(8)(a), C.R.S., was to develop by July 1, 2001, a supplement to the Colorado State Emergency Operations Plan, which was approved and distributed in June 2001.
- The supplement details the public health actions that would be taken in response to emergency epidemics, defined as cases of illness or adverse health conditions, communicable or noncommunicable, caused by bioterrorism, pandemic influenza or novel and highly fatal infectious agents or biological toxins.
- The committee's role in an emergency epidemic is to assess all available information and to make recommendations to the Governor.

FACTS

- The Governor's Expert Emergency Epidemic Response Committee is one component of the department's five-part approach to bioterrorism preparedness. The five components are:
 1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention bioterrorism preparedness grant
 2. Bioterrorism legislation
 3. **Governor's Expert Emergency Epidemic Response Committee**
 4. Experience gained in Operation TOPOFF in May 2000
 5. Colorado Board of Health regulations
- **Committee Activation and Functions**
 - **Activation.** In the event of an emergency epidemic that has been declared a disaster emergency, the committee would convene as rapidly and as often as necessary to advise the Governor, who shall act by executive order, regarding reasonable and appropriate measures to reduce or prevent spread of the disease, agent, or toxin and to protect the public health.
 - **Functions.** The committee's three primary functions are:
 1. To develop a supplement to the State Disaster Plan for responding to a bioterrorist incident.
 2. To review available data in an event, and if it finds there is an emergency epidemic, to advise the Governor to declare a disaster emergency.
 3. To advise the Governor on measures to reduce or prevent the spread of disease in the event of a disaster emergency. Such measures may include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ Procuring or taking supplies of medicines and vaccines;
- ✓ Ordering physicians and hospitals to transfer or cease admission of patients or perform medical examinations of persons;
- ✓ Isolating or quarantining persons or property;
- ✓ Determining whether to seize, destroy or decontaminate property or objects that may threaten the public health;
- ✓ Determining how to safely dispose of corpses and infectious waste;
- ✓ Assessing the adequacy and potential contamination of food and water supplies;
- ✓ Providing mental health support to affected persons; and
- ✓ Informing the citizens of the state how to protect themselves, what actions are being taken to control the epidemic, and when the epidemic is over.

- **Committee Priorities**

- Protecting human life (highest priority).
- Controlling the further spread of disease.
- Meeting the immediate emergency needs of people, specifically medical services, shelter, food, water and sanitation.
- Restoring and continuing operations of facilities and services essential to the health, safety and welfare of people and the environment.
- Preserving evidence for law enforcement investigations and prosecutions.

- **Committee Membership**

- The executive director of the Department of Public Health and Environment serves as chair.
- The committee includes 19 voting members and three ex officio, non-voting members. They are:

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| 1. Executive director, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment | 12. A physician who specializes in infectious diseases |
| 2. Chief medical officer, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment | 13. A physician who specializes in emergency medicine |
| 3. Chief public information officer, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment | 14. A medical examiner |
| 4. Emergency response coordinator, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment | 15. A specialist in post-traumatic stress management |
| 5. State epidemiologist, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment | 16. A director of a local public health department |
| 6. Colorado attorney general or designee | 17. A hospital infection control practitioner |
| 7. President, Colorado Board of Health or designee | 18. A wildlife disease specialist with the Colorado Division of Wildlife |
| 8. President, Colorado Medical Society or designee | 19. A pharmacist member of the Colorado Board of Pharmacy |
| 9. President, Colorado Health and Hospital Association | 20. State adjutant general (ex officio) |
| 10. Colorado state veterinarian | 21. Executive director, Colorado Department of Public Safety (ex officio) |
| 11. Director, Colorado Office of Emergency Management | 22. American Red Cross representative (ex officio) |

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Committee communication methods established.
- Meeting sites and alternate sites established for meeting during an emergency.
- Monthly meetings.
- Subcommittees formed to address burial practices and joint criminal and epidemiological investigations.
- Supplement to the Colorado State Emergency Operations Plan completed, approved and distributed to all appropriate emergency medical and disaster response agencies.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Koral O'Brien at (303) 692-2782.