

Hunterdon County Health Emergency Preparedness 'A Model For New Jersey'

The Hunterdon County Health Division's emergency preparedness training and planning was labelled 'a model for public health preparedness in New Jersey,' by the State Department of Health assessment auditor earlier this month.

County Health Officer Karen DeMarco stated "The County's Health emergency preparedness operations were approved by the state Health Department auditor, who complimented the robustness of the Division's plans and called the operation a model for the state.

The approval comes as a result of numerous training exercises, hours of staff training, and after action reports, all designed to protect Hunterdon County residents in the event of a range of public health threats, including infectious diseases, natural disasters, and biological, chemical, nuclear, and radiological events."

Freeholder Board Deputy Director Suzanne Lagay, the Board's liaison to the Health Division, remarked, "We are proud of, and secure in, the fact that Hunterdon County—with its skilled employees—plans, drills and consistently performs at such an expert level on behalf of its citizens. May we never be put through the ultimate test," she quickly added.

The federal Center for Disease Control (CDC) requires each health organization to participate in an Operational Readiness Review, conducted by the state Department of Health, which is a rigorous, evidence-based assessment that evaluates local public health preparedness planning and operational functions.

Hunterdon County's Health preparedness operations are funded in large measure by Public Health Emergency Preparedness grant funds from the CDC.

The Health Division is assessed on readiness both in terms of the capabilities of the staff and current plans, ranging from in-depth planning and training for emergency medication distribution, the public information dissemination and alert system, and staff incident response.

The CDC works with state and local public health agencies to help strengthen and enhance the capabilities of the public health and healthcare systems to respond to evolving threats and other emergencies.