

Public Safety Fact Sheet

A publication of the Washington County Anti-Terrorism Advisory Committee

In response to recent world and national events, representatives from police and fire agencies, local governments, health officials and emergency managers within Washington County have increased coordination and communication. The goal of this effort, known as the Anti-Terrorism Advisory Committee (ATAC), is to help ensure an effective countywide response to a major public safety incident. Additionally, ATAC is committed to enhancing public safety by educating the community on topics of public interest and concern through an on-going series of informational fact sheets.

Background

Smallpox was declared eradicated in 1980 following worldwide vaccination programs. However, in response to the events of September and October 2001, federal, state, and local government agencies are taking precautionary measures for the possibility of a bioterrorist attack with smallpox as a weapon. Plans include (1) developing a nationwide smallpox vaccination plan for medical and public health practitioners and first responders, and (2) stockpiling enough smallpox vaccine to protect all Americans should that become necessary.

Smallpox Vaccination Plan

On December 13, 2002, President Bush announced a plan to better protect Americans in the wake of a smallpox outbreak. Phase 1 of the plan includes vaccinating military personnel serving in high-risk areas and forming Smallpox Response Teams in the United States. These teams are comprised of public health and medical workers and other essential personnel.

Phase 2 of the vaccination plan will expand the number vaccinated to include as many as 10 million "first responders," such as health care workers, firefighters, law enforcement officers, and emergency medical services personnel. Officials hope to begin this second phase in the summer of 2003.

A limited number of Washington County public health and medical personnel will be vaccinated under Phase 1 of the plan. Health care workers and first responders will follow later in 2003. The vaccine is expected to be made available to the general public in 2004.

Local Preparedness

Much is being done locally to address the potential threat of smallpox. The Portland metro area has had an active public/private Bioterrorism Preparedness Planning Partnership since 2001. A regional partnership (Multnomah, Clackamas, Washington, Clark, and Skamania counties) includes representatives from Portland metro area health departments and hospitals, first responders, emergency medical services providers, private medical providers, and the Department of Human Services/Oregon Health Services.

Oregon recently submitted two plans (pre-smallpox outbreak and actual smallpox outbreak) to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- The "pre-smallpox outbreak plan" will identify and vaccinate approximately 100 local and state public health workers and about 600 hospital-based health care workers throughout the state. The vaccine will protect those individuals investigating a smallpox outbreak and those most likely to care for a smallpox patient. Additionally, healthcare workers will be trained to identify smallpox disease symptoms.

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Smallpox Vaccination Facts (Topic #8)

- The actual “smallpox outbreak plan” will include “ring vaccination.” Persons who are close contacts with a victim will be swiftly vaccinated. Individuals vaccinated within three days of exposure to smallpox should be protected against the disease.

Washington County health and public safety officials are implementing pre-event vaccination plans to ensure that health and emergency services continue unimpeded should a smallpox outbreak occur. Additionally, Washington County health officials are assessing mass vaccination sites should there be a need to quickly vaccinate Washington County citizens.

Vaccination and Potential Risks

Smallpox vaccine is NOT made from smallpox virus. It is made from *vaccinia*, a virus related to smallpox. Although the smallpox vaccine is generally considered safe, serious complications, including death, can occur in a very small, but significant percentage of recipients. Because of safety concerns, Washington County health officials are moving with deliberate caution to identify individuals who will be considered for participation in the pre-event vaccination process.

Contacts For More Information

- Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): 1-800-232-2522 (English), 1-800-232-0233 (Spanish); www.cdc.gov
- US Department of Health and Human Services
www.hhs.gov/smallpox/index.html
- Oregon Health and Human Services: www.ohd.hr.state.or.us/acd/bioterr/home.htm
- Washington County Health and Human Services: (503) 846-3594