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Georgia ranks among the best prepared states in national preparedness report

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ATLANTA (GA) – The Trust for America’s Health (TFAH) released a national report Tuesday that ranks Georgia among the most prepared states in terms of emergency response capabilities. Officials with the Department of Human Resources Division of Public Health say that Georgia receiving a score of seven out of 10 is an improvement upon previous years and good news for Georgia. Only three other states scored better.

“This report gives us a clear snapshot of where we are and indicates that our continued work is making Georgia safer,” said Dr. Stuart Brown, director of the Georgia Division of Public Health. “The report is fairly accurate and Georgians should feel good about these results.”

This TFAH report is the third since 2003 and ranks states according to their progress in 10 specific areas ranging from their ability to dispense medications in an outbreak to placing necessary emergency medical surge equipment in local hospitals.

According to the report, Georgia has done well in the following areas: upgrading laboratory capabilities to appropriate levels; hiring laboratory scientists specializing in Anthrax and Plague; collecting and monitoring disease information statewide via the internet; hiring essential emergency preparedness staff; planning for providing emergency care in non-healthcare facilities; acquiring sufficient ventilation medical equipment; and working with local health districts to prioritize antiviral medication distribution.

Also referenced in the report are areas where Georgia could improve, such as distribution of the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS), hiring sufficient staff for responding to a chemical attack or event and providing incentives for healthcare workers to properly respond during emergencies.

In areas where the State can improve, since the data was gathered for the report, Georgia has already taken steps to do so. To address the shortfalls in SNS distribution, public health is currently rearranging the way the state handles SNS resources in Georgia to reflect recent changes in CDC recommendations explained Brown.

Also, to address weaknesses in laboratory staffing, public health is currently in the final stages of hiring additional essential laboratory staff to handle testing for a chemical bioterrorist attack or event. In the final improvement area of providing healthcare worker incentives, public health will be purchasing additional caches of antibiotics for acute care hospital staff and their families. These purchases will increase the chances that healthcare workers

themselves can appropriately respond to an emergency with the peace of mind that they and their family are protected.

"Together these improvements will make Georgia's emergency response infrastructure the best and most prepared in the U.S.," said Brown.

For more information or to review the report visit <http://healthyamericans.org/>.

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