

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PANDEMIC INFLUENZA PREPAREDNESS IN FULL SWING

Kingsford, Michigan-January 2, 2007. The Dickinson-Iron District Health Department has been actively engaged in pandemic influenza preparedness since May of 2006. Carol Thornton, RN, MSN is the Pandemic Influenza Coordinator for the Department and is responsible for developing and coordinating a Pandemic Preparedness Coordinating Committee composed of relevant stakeholders in the two counties, and the development of an operational pandemic plan to be added to the Dickinson-Iron District Health Department's All Hazards Emergency Response Plan.

Two Committees have been formed, one in each county and began meeting with a joint teleconference August 30, 2006. Since then, each Committee has been meeting monthly to discuss planning issues specific to their community population and common issues dealing with a pandemic influenza outbreak which may last for weeks or even months. Issues under discussion have included education of the public on personal pandemic preparedness, social distancing strategies to slow the spread of disease i.e. school closure, stockpiling of essential goods i.e. food, medical supplies, planning for vulnerable populations i.e. the elderly and the disabled, and for the increase in deaths due to influenza.

Committee members represent Dickinson and Iron County Emergency

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Management, Dickinson and Iron County Sheriff's Departments, Michigan State Police, the Department of Human Services, Dickinson County Hospital, Iron County Community Hospital, the Veterans Affairs Hospital, MCAC, UPCAP/Area Agency on Aging, the Dickinson County Chamber of Commerce, the Iron County Chamber of Commerce, Dickinson Iron County Services Area # 104, the Salvation Army, Northpointe Behavioral Health Systems, 4 C of the UP, the Prosecuting Attorney's offices, the Red Cross, Erickson, Rochon and Nash Funeral Homes, Jacobs Funeral Homes, Miner-Ortman Funeral Homes, the Langenberg Funeral Home, the Jacobs Funeral Home, Inc. of Iron River, Frog Country (WJHR/WOBE/WHTO), Dickinson Area Catholic Schools, Dickinson Iron Intermediate School District, the Pine Mountain Christian School, MSU Extension, Beacon Ambulance Service, Iron County EMS, Hyland Nursing Home, Victorian Pines Assisted Living, Freeman Nursing Home, Manor Care Nursing Home, Evergreen Heights Assisted and Independent Living, Oak Crest Assisted Living, the Medical Care Center of Iron County and Victorian Heights Assisted Living, the Iron River Care Center.

Carol Thornton noted that "both Committees are working hard to prepare our community for a pandemic and the disruptions to our normal lives that will result. Only by being prepared as individuals and as a community will we be able to cope with this serious event".

Individuals can obtain further information on pandemic preparedness by going to the Dickinson-Iron District Health Department's website www.didhd.org or visiting www.pandemicflu.gov or www.michigan.gov/michiganprepares

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