



THE SENTINEL

Reporting on Preparedness



Public Health

District 2 Public Health (North) • Emergency Preparedness • Gainesville, Georgia

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With unseasonably warm temperatures, snow no problem

Winter temperatures moved quickly through our area January 5-9 leaving a few inches of snow in the higher elevations. However, the storm had little effect as roads held enough warmth to prevent snow and ice from accumulating. Some area schools exercised caution by cancelling classes while others observed early release or delayed opening after the weekend. Of course, local stores reported a run on milk and bread.

Fast moving storms like these remind us that preparation is the key to reducing the effects of weather incidents. Georgia's governor was proactive and issued a state of emergency for 79 counties in north Georgia. This set the stage for responders to pre-posi-

tion equipment and supplies for response to the possible winter weather in anticipation of significant quantities ice and snow.

There was a lot of behind-the-scene work accomplished in a short period of time. The State Operations Center was activated, local county Emergency Operations Centers opened, Regional Coordinating Hospitals ratcheted up their communications, and District 2 Public Health monitored the situation at the District Operations Center.

In the end, with a few exceptions, our area was spared serious impact from the frozen precipitation. A few days later warmer temperatures returned and erased all evidence of winter weather.

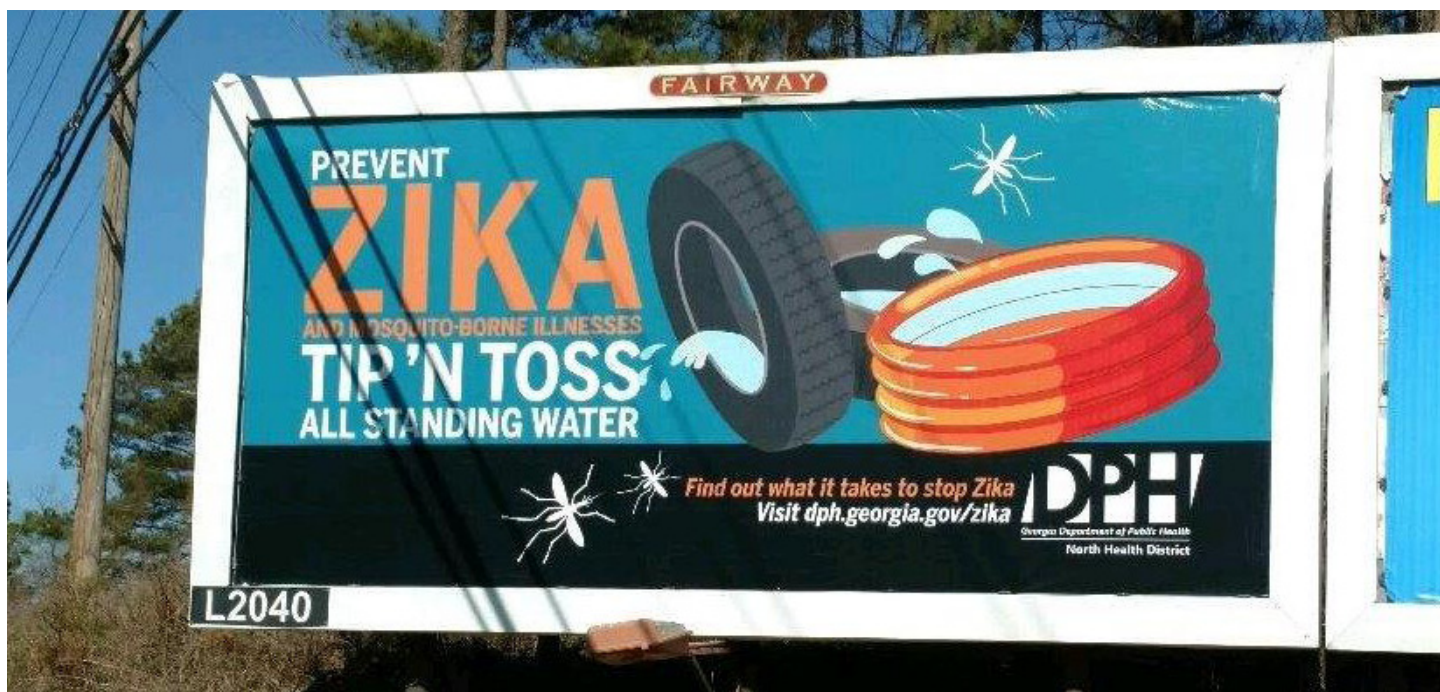




Tip 'n Toss campaign highlights effort to prevent Zika this year

Billboards like the one below will soon be on display throughout counties in our district. The 'Tip 'n Toss' campaign reminds residents to eliminate standing water, which is important in reducing mosquito breeding. Decreasing the number of mosquitoes diminishes exposure to mosquito bites. The combination of the elimination of standing water and preventive measures, such as protective clothing, larvicides, and use of approved repellants can further limit the spread of mosquito diseases.

In addition, fact sheets about Zika and other mosquito borne viruses will be available at all local health departments. The fact sheets describe different ways individuals can protect themselves and their families from mosquito bites. Tips for residents on how to properly assess property for elimination of standing water and reducing mosquito breeding are also addressed. For more information about the Zika virus and prevention, visit <http://www.dph.georgia.gov/zika>



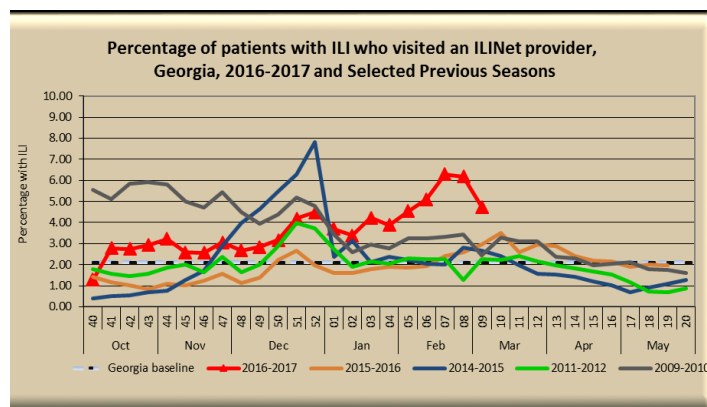
2017 seasonal influenza activity hits widespread status in Georgia

Influenza activity in Georgia has been above the baseline of 2.1% of patients reporting with influenza like illness (ILI) since week 40 in 2016. During week nine of 2017, the activity level was identified as widespread. This sustained activity has resulted in 891 influenza hospitalizations in the metro area this season.

Seasonal influenza in Georgia runs from October to May with cases peaking in January and February. Activity peaked higher and earlier in some previous years, but this year's activity has remained above the baseline for a longer period of time, as shown in red on the chart (right).

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, influenza activity for the nation is above the baseline as well. Health officials say that activity will likely remain high for the next few weeks and remind everyone that it is not too late to be vaccinated. This year more than 144 million doses of the flu vaccine have been distributed,

and there is still plenty of vaccine on hand for individuals who want to get the flu shot. In addition to vaccination, health officials encourage covering your coughs and sneezes, washing your hands often and staying home if you are ill to prevent the spread of illness.





Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) summit held in Athens, February 20 - 22

The 2017 Strategic National Stockpile Summit gave attendees an opportunity to discuss issues relevant to opening PODs and distributing vaccines or medicines. This included updates on distribution, dispensing, security, and points of dispensing operations.

Some of the initiatives discussed included guidance for the 50-day follow-on requirement for anthrax prophylaxis, progress on the anthrax vaccine, and best practices for first responder POD operation. Breakout sessions addressed various topics and gave district personnel an opportunity to meet their Georgia State Patrol partners to discuss security issues and plans.

Sessions on epidemiology, laboratory capabilities and how these disciplines would function during an SNS event were also featured. Leah Hoffacker, SNS Coordinator also discussed the Medical Countermeasures Operational Readiness Review and how to utilize Sharepoint to keep the program progress up to date.

New information was presented about Vulnerable Populations planning and how to find resources within communities to help with these groups. This breakout session highlighted Gwinett County's CMIST framework

for emergency planning. CMIST is an acronym for different parts of the framework: C = communication, M = medical/maintaining health, I = independence, S = supervision/safety/support/self-determination, and T = transportation.

This framework can help planners avoid overlooking or not preparing for individuals who may have functional issues. For instance, (c)ommunications includes individuals who may have limited or no ability to speak, see, hear or understand. (M)edical would consist of individuals or groups of people who need help managing activities of daily living. It also includes people who are managing chronic, terminal or contagious health conditions.

(I)ndependence describes those who are able to function if they have their assistive devices or equipment. Assistive devices include mobility aids, communication aids, medical equipment and service animals. People who need (s)upervision are comprised of those with mental conditions, addiction problems, brain injury, or become upset and unable to function in an emergency. (T)ransportation is an issue in an emergency because there are many who cannot drive, or have no access to transportation or to appropriate transportation.

Risk communicator and social media workshop held in Macon



The annual risk communicator and social media workshop was held in Macon on March 7 and 8. This event provided district risk communicators an opportunity to learn about new communications policies and procedures, emerging technology and some different ways to use existing technology.

During the two-day workshop, communicators shared what is working well in their districts and learned new ideas from other district and state communicators. Updates on initiatives such as SUPHER, MCMORR, and Bio-Watch were provided along with a discussion on desired training for PIOs/RCs.



Local events help EP staff share preparedness information, train with partners

Providing information to residents about disasters and emergencies is a key part of the community preparedness and recovery planning effort. Each year the District 2 EP Team participates in several events to encourage residents to take steps toward making an emergency kit, developing a family emergency plan and becoming informed about disaster threats that may affect our area.

As with any subject, being informed helps individuals understand issues and problems that may arise. Preparing for emergencies and disasters is no different. When individuals have knowledge about events that may affect them, they can prepare more wisely and have items readily available that could help them better survive an incident.

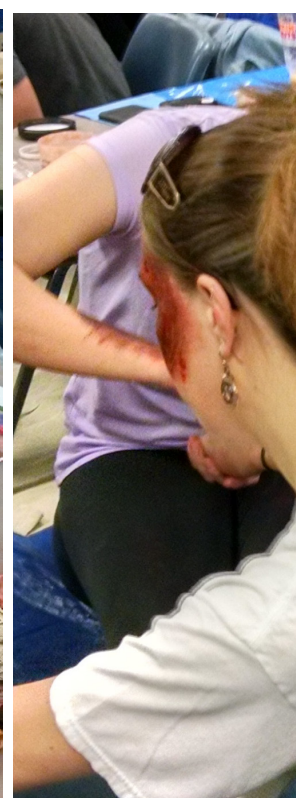
Research has shown that when individuals are more healthy, they recover from illnesses more quickly. The same is true with having a good disaster plan. When we prepare, we have taken steps to ensure that we can return to normal more quickly. The goal is to build an effective community of responders by encouraging residents to take steps to be prepared for all types of incidents.



Brandin Gillman, District Training Coordinator readies information for distribution at the Gainesville Hall Interagency Transition Council held at North Hall Community Center.



District 2 information booth for the Greater Hall Business Expo



District 2 Emergency Preparedness assisted the University of North Georgia with moulage during their exercise in March

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