



**For Immediate Release:** 03.21.08

From: David Powers  
Communications Director  
708.358.5781

Contact: Christopher Shields  
Emergency Response Manager  
708.358.5488

**High school students to help Village test emergency response systems**

Students at Oak Park and River Forest High School are being asked to forego an hour of physical education to help local public health officials test their ability to dispense large quantities of preventive medicine during an emergency.

A four-hour, mid-day emergency response drill scheduled for Fri., May 23 will use the high school as the mock clinic site and volunteer students as residents who come to pick up medication for their families.

No real medicines will be dispensed and no personal information collected. The goal, officials say, is to test the Village's ability to activate, distribute and dispense its share of national defense medicine stockpiles should a real medical emergency arise.

"The Village has tested its medical dispensing protocols on a small scale, which helped us fine tune many of the details," said Christopher Shields, Oak Park's Emergency Response Manager. "But to assess the true capabilities of the program we need to drill on a much larger scale."

Shields said the high school is an ideal drill site, not only because of available mock clinic space, but also because of its large, on-site population.

"Should we have a real emergency, the Village would need to dispense 1,080 doses of medicine every hour for 48 hours to treat our entire population," he said. "Obviously, we can't drill to that level. But, with the help of several hundred high school students, we can gauge our ability to dispense a fairly high number of doses in a short time, and see where we need to improve our planning."

During a real incident, residents would come to one or more clinic sites in the community to receive medications for their families. Depending on the severity of the situation, proof of residency might be required, and certain personal medical information would be collected to ensure proper medication and dosages.

For the May drill, however, students will only be pretending. The process will be similar to how a real incident would be managed, complete with controlled processing, orderly lines and assessment and treatment stations.

-more-

High school drill  
2-2-2

But the students participating in the drill will just be going through the motions, walking through lines and stopping at processing stations. They won't need to provide any personal information and they will only get empty medicine bottles, which will be collected at the end of processing. The drill will be a health education component of their PE classes.

According to Shields, it is the response staffs that are being tested on their abilities to orderly dispense medication to a large number of people as quickly and as safely as possible. In addition to municipal public safety personnel, Oak Park emergency response staff includes members of the Medical Reserve Corps, residents who volunteer to help the Village implement its emergency response programs.

The medicine-dispensing event is just the public phase of the drill, Shields said. Behind the scenes, the Village will be testing its incident command structure, which would manage resources in a real disaster, as well as its mutual aid agreements with other communities. Police and public health officials and equipment from other communities will be involved. Other communities, including Skokie, Stickney and Evanston, also are sending administrators to observe as part of their own emergency planning efforts.

For more information on the drill or emergency planning, call the Oak Park Department of Public Health at 708.358.5480. Information also is posted on the Village web site [www.oak-park.us/drill](http://www.oak-park.us/drill) or via e-mail to [health@oak-park.us](mailto:health@oak-park.us).

###