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**Village of Oak Park testing emergency response systems**

An emergency preparedness exercise at Oak Park and River Forest High School Friday has more than 200 public safety personnel, public health practitioners and volunteers testing the community's ability to activate, distribute and dispense its share of national defense medicine stockpiles.

The four-hour, midday exercise is using the high school as a mock clinic site and students as residents who come to pick up medication for their families. While the students are only pretending, the exercise is simulating how a real incident would be managed. Behind the scenes, the Village is testing its incident command structure, which would manage resources in a real disaster, as well as its mutual aid agreements with other communities.

The high school is considered an ideal drill site not only because of available space, but also because of its large, on-site population. About 1,200 students are expected to pass through the medicine-dispensing clinic set up in the field house. Evaluators are timing the processing to determine if the Village is prepared to dispense the quantity of medicines required to treat the entire population of Oak Park in a real emergency.

"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 – which is what we are doing today at the high school.

"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. 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."

No real medicines will be dispensed and no personal information collected, Shields said. The drill is a health education component of the participating students' physical education classes.

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**Emergency preparedness exercise  
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Other communities, including Skokie, Stickney and Evanston, are sending administrators to observe as part of their own emergency planning efforts. Observers also were expected from the Centers for Disease Control, Cook County Department of Public Health, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Defense, Illinois Department of Public Health and the United States Marshals Service.

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

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