



OCT. 27, 2006

HEALTH ALERT

*****This is only an EXERCISE*****

Lignite Wind Exercise – Health Alert Message #2

The events being reported are not real. Do not respond to this message.

Since October 24, a total of 54 patients – with 45 requiring hospitalization due to severe respiratory disease – have been reported to the North Dakota Department of Health. These patients report sudden onset of symptoms that include fever, chest pain, cough, headache, weakness and difficult breathing. One patient, a previously healthy female, died Oct. 26, 2006. All of the patients have been elderly. Preliminary investigation data reveals travel to the Garrison Dam Visitor Center and/or Prairie Knights Casino may be linked to illness. It also indicated that family members of these patients are also becoming ill with similar symptoms.

Health-care providers who have patients presenting with acute onset of severe respiratory illness that requires hospitalization should report these cases to the North Dakota Department of Health and try to obtain travel information and family illness history.

Providers should collect the following specimens for testing at the North Dakota Department of Health's Division of Laboratory Services:

- Two pharyngeal or nasopharyngeal swabs or a nasal wash should be collected for influenza DFA smear and culture.
- Serum should also be collected to rule out hantavirus and SARS.
- If a lower respiratory tract infection is suspected, sputum or bronchial wash and whole blood also should be collected for bacterial culture.

Laboratory results on initial patients are still pending. Until an etiology can be identified, providers should implement respiratory precautions in addition to standard precautions for these patients.

Providers should call 800.472.2180 or 701.328.2378 to report suspected cases.

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Please do not respond to this message.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

- *Health Alert conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.*
- *Health Advisory provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.*
- *Health Update provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.*
- *Health Information provides general information that is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.*

This message is being sent to local public health units, clinics, hospitals, physicians, first responders, tribal health, North Dakota Nurses Association, North Dakota Long Term Care Association, North Dakota Healthcare Association, North Dakota Medical Association, North Dakota EMS Association and hospital public information officers.