

Large-Scale Communicable Disease Outbreak and Bioterrorism Incidents Response

In a large-scale communicable disease incident, public health agencies are responsible for providing some types of medical supplies and equipment to medical facilities. They also deliver mass prophylaxis (“prophy” - preventive medications or vaccines) to all Pierce County residents. In a bioterrorism incident, prophylaxis need to be distributed within 48 hours. The population in Pierce County is roughly 821,000. Dispensing this much prophylaxis within 48 hours is a major challenge and the Health Department will need assistance from the community.

Planning addresses naturally occurring large-scale infectious disease outbreaks and bioterrorism incidents, such as an outdoor release of anthrax. These scenarios affect large portions of populations and upon detection require rapid dispensing or vaccination to those potentially exposed.

Medical Countermeasures - Bioterrorism

People can receive preventive medications and vaccines through the Health Department’s medical countermeasures program:

- **Public Medication Centers (MC)**
 - Health Department-operated locations where the general public can access prophylaxis/vaccines for themselves and their family members. These MCs will be open around the clock for 36–48 hours in geographically located areas throughout the county. Broad announcements will be made regarding locations and instructions. Forms will be available on county and city websites with instructions to bring completed medication screening forms to the location to rapidly pick up prophylaxis. The MCs are designed to dispense prophylaxis at a rate of 1,000 people per hour. Setting up MCs is a massive undertaking and will require hundreds of staff. When the emergency is declared, non-medical county and city workers and volunteers will dispense medications to the population under the guidance and supervision of the Health Officer.
 - Pharmacy dispensing will occur in large big box chain pharmacies. These pharmacies have/will sign agreements with the State of Washington with additional coordination from the Health Department. Preferably individuals with known medical needs, taking multiple medications, and families with children will access pharmacies for prophylaxis.
- **Private Medication Centers (MC)**
 - Private MCs are locations where employers make prophylaxis available to their employees and employees’ family members through a closed system not open to the public. Examples include governmental agencies, long-term care agencies, large employers, and critical infrastructure employers (law enforcement, fire, EMS, emergency management). Both medical and non-medical agencies can become a Private MC.

If you are interested in the private MC strategy and would like more information about providing this service to your employees and their family members, call Cindy Miron at (253) 798-6556 or email cmiron@tpchd.org.