



California Healthcare Surge Project

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CONTACT: Mike Bowman or
Lea Brooks
(916)-440-7660

CALIFORNIA EXPANDS EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN HEALTH CARE SURGE CAPACITY

California is First State in the Nation to Develop Surge Standards and Guidelines

SACRAMENTO – To further strengthen California's preparedness for a manmade or natural disaster, the California Department of Health Services (CDHS) will develop the first statewide standards and guidelines for health care facilities to use when responding to a sudden and significant surge in sick or injured patients, State Health Director Sandra Shewry announced today.

PricewaterhouseCoopers, LLP, an international consulting firm with offices in California, has signed a six-month, \$5 million contract to work with CDHS in developing surge capacity standards and guidelines for emergency planning and operations of health care facilities and licensed health care professionals. The guidelines will cover such issues as when flexibility to state requirements are needed during an emergency, liability and reimbursement for health care workers and appropriate care for patients at alternate care sites.

"Governor Schwarzenegger has been a national leader in enhancing emergency preparedness and response to keep Californians safe when disaster strikes," Shewry said. "As the first state to begin developing surge capacity standards and guidelines, California once again will serve as a model for the rest of the nation."

Disasters, such as an earthquake, flood, pandemic influenza or radiological attack, may impose overwhelming demands on California's health care system. During such an emergency, health care professionals and facilities must be able to respond quickly to a sudden increase in demand for medical services, including needs for staff, bed capacity, medical equipment and supplies.

A recent study by the Center for Biosecurity at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center concluded that the nation's planning for a potential influenza pandemic should be refocused on expanding surge capacity for the health care system.

The surge capacity standards and guidelines will be disseminated to health care facilities, insurers, licensed health care professionals, local health departments and others. As part of the development of these principles, CDHS will seek comments from stakeholders and interested parties.

Gov. Schwarzenegger has made an unprecedented commitment to ensuring the state's readiness for a public health emergency by dedicating more than \$214 million to a surge capacity initiative in the 2006-07 budget. Through this initiative, CDHS has already purchased 2,400 additional ventilators for California's hospitals and 50 million masks to protect health care workers. The initiative also provides for the purchase of three mobile field hospitals to increase patient care by 600 beds and supplies and equipment for 21,000 alternate care site beds.