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For Immediate Release: September 6, 2011

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September is Preparedness Month

Basic steps can keep a family safe and prepared when faced with an emergency.

Stephen A. Martin, Jr., Ph.D., MPH
Chief Operating Officer

September 2011 marks the eighth annual National Preparedness Month. This year's theme is, "A Time to Remember. A Time to Prepare." During the month of September, Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) officials aligned with the national campaign seeking to transform awareness into action. The department is promoting the need for residents to be prepared in case of emergencies. In addition, trainings for the Cook County Medical Reserve Corps (CCMRC) are being offered to improve our region's ability to respond to large-scale public health emergencies.

"Having residents who are prepared for emergencies, natural or man-made, is just as important as the need for a trained volunteer force to assist in an emergency response," said CCDPH chief operating officer, Stephen A. Martin, Jr., Ph.D., M.P.H. "Achieving a basic level of emergency preparedness is easy to do and can make the difference between getting injured and staying safe."

Individuals and families are encouraged to plan ahead in case of emergencies and be ready to protect themselves for up to 72 hours. Visit www.cookcountypublichealth.org to utilize the following tools to help prepare:

- **Be Aware. Get Prepared. Take Action!** – includes a list for an Emergency Supply Kit and instructions on how to design a Family Communications Plan.
- **Pandemic Flu Brochure** – contains basic information to help individuals and families prepare for pandemic flu, including educational information about pandemic flu, seasonal flu, signs and symptoms and what to do if you get sick.

CCDPH is offering multiple preparedness training options for preparedness volunteers in September and in coming months:

- **Basic Life Support**- This course provides the American Heart Association's CPR, AED, and choking response skills.
- **Individual/Family Preparedness**- This course describes different disasters and reviews the steps necessary for the volunteer to prepare as an individual and as a family for potential emergencies.
- **Incident Command**- The IS-700a course provides a basic introduction to the National Incident Management System (NIMS). It covers the purpose, principles, key components and the benefits of NIMS - a system that provides a uniformed national response framework for how all government, private-sector, and non-governmental organizations will work together during a national emergency.
- **Blood-borne Pathogens**- This presentation will familiarize the volunteers with the significant communicable disease pathogens in Cook County: Hepatitis B and C viruses, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and tuberculosis (TB). The epidemiology of these pathogens will be reviewed including methods of transmission and strategies on how to protect volunteers from exposure during a disaster response.

To learn more about being prepared or to learn more about becoming a Cook County Medical Reserve Corps volunteer, please visit www.cookcountypublichealth.org.

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