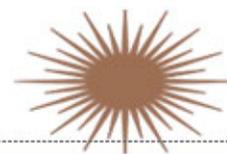


NEWS RELEASE

Arizona Department of Health Services



LEADERSHIP FOR A HEALTHY ARIZONA

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Contact: Laura Oxley, ADHS Public Information: (602) 542-1094

Contact: Janey Pearl, ADHS Public Information: (602) 364-1201

READY, SET, GO

2009 was Show Time for public health thanks to the emergence of the century's first pandemic. The appearance of the 2009 H1N1 in the Spring propelled Arizona to the national stage. The state emerged as a leader when it decided to avoid closing schools to stop the spread of influenza; the rest of the country followed soon after.

The state's surveillance of the disease in the Native American population prompted the state to allocate double the vaccine to tribes because of they were twice as likely to have complications as the general public. That discovery also helped prompt the CDC to launch a task force into the pandemic's effects on the tribal populations.

"2009 was a great year to test the public health system. ADHS served as the focal point, with skilled professionals from across the state coming together to slow the pandemic," said Interim Director Will Humble. "With the limited initial supply of the vaccine, we had to use every available avenue to push a good public health message to stop the spread."

Communication is a key component of the state's pandemic flu plan. The US Department of Homeland Security gave [Arizona's plan](#)¹ the best score in the nation. If you use school grades for the results, Arizona got a solid "A" with a 3.5. The national average was 2.2; the next closest state was Indiana with a 3.2.

Arizona's plan proved effective for distribution of antivirals and personal protective equipment from the federal government: the state accepted, inventoried and shipped supplies to counties within 36 hours, shorter than the time allotted in the plan. Counties also enacted plans this fall, skillfully demonstrating the ability to conduct the mass vaccination clinics.

"As our recent response to the flu pandemic demonstrates, we all depend on having an adequate public health infrastructure as well as plans that are flexible and scalable," said Dr. Bob England, director of Maricopa County Department of Public Health.

Another example of Arizona's preparedness can be seen in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's evaluation of the [state's preparedness](#)² in 2008. The CDC evaluated 20 preparedness measures and the state met 19 of them. Critical functions for CDC include the state's ability for laboratory testing, tracking disease and training emergency personnel for public health response.

One of the benefits of a real-life emergency response comes from implementing a plan and discovering where there is room for improvement. During the 2009 H1N1 response, ADHS expanded its communications networks. One example is the expansion of the "Health Alert Network" which distributes important, critical, timely information to our health partners across the state. During this real-life response, ADHS's network reach increased by half.

"Overall, the people in Arizona can look at what's happened in the last year and know that state is well prepared for any public health emergency," said Humble in conclusion. "Our record speaks for itself."

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¹http://www.azdhs.gov/pandemicflu/pdf/Final_HHS_Operational_Plan_Grades_1.20.09.pdf

² <http://emergency.cdc.gov/publications/feb08phprep/section2/Arizona.asp>