



September 3, 2004

TO: All Commissioned Corps Officers

FROM: United States Surgeon General

SUBJECT: Readiness Status

This is the fourth status report related to Commissioned Corps' readiness. With less than a month to go in reaching the Secretary's goal of 50% of the Corps meeting Basic readiness standards, many of you are working hard to be a part of that goal. I'd like to provide just a few personal success stories.

In the last three months, our Nation has dealt with three major National Special Security Events and two very large natural disasters: the G-8 Summit held on Sea Island, Georgia in June; the Democratic National Convention in Boston in July; the Republican National Convention in New York City this past week; Hurricane Charley in August; and Hurricane Frances, which will make landfall later today in Florida. Preparations for the public health and medical implications of these various events, as well as providing care to the citizens of Florida, has been led by three of our own.

CAPT Clara Cobb, Acting Regional Health Administrator in Region IV, has been the leader of a Secretary's Emergency Response Team (SERT) for the G-8 Summit, Hurricane Charley, and now Hurricane Frances. CAPT Mike Milner, Regional Health Administrator in Region I, has been the leader of a SERT for the Democratic National Convention, and then relieved CAPT Cobb in Florida to coordinate health and medical issues at the Disaster Field Office for Hurricane Charley. CAPT Rob Amler, Regional Health Administrator in Region II, worked at the DNC with CAPT Milner, then as the SERT leader for the RNC in New York. Although they come from completely different backgrounds, locations, and educations, these officers have three things in common: they are extremely hard working, they are exemplary representatives of the Corps, and even though they all have tremendous job responsibilities, they each have made the time to meet Basic readiness standards.

RADM Brenda Holman, FDA Regional Director in Region IX, recently called my office, volunteering to deploy to an event. RADM Holman stated that she thought it was extremely important for flag officers to lead by example, and let other officers know that the leadership fully supports the mission of readiness and response. True to her commitment, RADM Holman spent the last week in New York City, working with CAPT Rob Amler and his Team at the Republican National Convention. And by the way, RADM Holman also meets Basic readiness standards.

Consider also LTJG Stephanie Peebles, Environmental Health Officer, from the Kayenta Service Unit in IHS. LTJG Peebles recently deployed to the El Dorado National Forest in California to support the U.S. Forestry Service in performing water system surveys in the Forest. This was a rigorous assignment involving a significant amount of walking in wilderness areas, 27 hikes of two miles or more, to reach the sites to be surveyed. (If you have an opportunity, ask her about the close encounter with a mountain lion.) This junior officer has already made the commitment early in her career to support readiness and response and she also meets Basic readiness standards.

Today, 1,303 officers have enrolled in the President's Challenge program at <http://www.presidentschallenge.org>. Today, 2,084 officers meet Basic readiness standards. Attached you will again find some commonly asked questions related to readiness. Please take a minute to read them, as the comments apply to all of us.

Thank you again for accepting this challenge to meet Basic readiness standards. And for hundreds of you, I appreciate your willingness to deploy, when you are needed. We are moving steadily toward our goal of 3,000 officers meeting Basic readiness by October 1, 2004. But, we are now only four weeks from that date. For many of you, reaching Basic readiness is just a short step away. You may be missing an immunization, a BLS course, a couple of training modules, or you may need to complete the President's Challenge.

It is time for you to make it happen. I know I can count on you. In fact, our Nation counts on you to keep them safe every single day. We wear the uniform of the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service. Our long and proud history of response to disease investigations, disasters, epidemics, wars, and public health emergencies completely justifies the expectation of the Secretary and the President that we are all *ready*, and we are prepared to *respond*, when there is an urgent public health need. After all, if not us - then who?



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Attachment

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What is required to complete the Basic readiness physical fitness requirement?

You now have a choice between successfully completing the Annual Physical Fitness Test and completing the President's Active Lifestyle Award or the Presidential Champion Award. Information about this option can be accessed at <http://www.presidentschallenge.org> Log your APFT results at <http://ccrf.hhs.gov/ccrf>. In addition, you must submit either your APFT results or your President's Challenge certificate to OCCSS/MAB. The appropriate reporting form to report APFT results, as well as BMI and Body Fat, is the "Physical Readiness Standards Report," which can be found at <http://dcp.psc.gov/dcpforms.asp>

How do I ensure that my President's Challenge Award information is credited towards Basic Readiness status?

Officers should ensure that when joining the USPHS group at <http://www.presidentschallenge.org> that they sign up using their PHS Serial Number.

If you have yet to join the President's Challenge, logon to the above website and:

- 1) Enter 13537 into the Group ID text-box
- 2) Enter your PHS Serial Number in the Group Member ID/Name text-box
- 3) Click Add

If you have already joined the USPHS group but did not use your PHS Serial Number when you joined, you may correct this very easily without losing any points or progress. Simply complete the following:

- 1) Login to the above website
- 2) Click on the "Your Groups" tab
- 3) Click the "Remove" checkbox next to the USPHS Group
- 4) Click the "Update" button
- 5) Enter 13537 into the Group ID text-box
- 6) Enter your PHS Serial Number in the Group Member ID/Name text-box
- 7) Click Add

This will allow us to link your results/award history in the President's Challenge program to the database utilized to determine your readiness status.

Which immunizations must be completed, and which may be "started?"

The following immunizations must be completed - Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Tetanus-Diphtheria, Polio, Influenza, and Varicella, as well as the annual PPD skin test. The Hepatitis A and

Hepatitis B series may be started, but are required to be completed by May 1, 2005. For Hepatitis B, this includes a follow-up positive titer.

How do I meet the annual influenza immunization requirement?

All officers are waived from that requirement until November 1, 2004. This is because 1) the vaccine is not available for next flu season yet, and 2) there is little real risk of flu in this country until later in the year.

How do I meet the varicella immunization requirement?

There are three options:

- 1) provide documentation of a positive titer - thus proving your immune status,
- 2) provide documentation of the two shot series of varicella immunizations. Dose two should be given 4 to 8 weeks after dose one, or
- 3) provide verified medical documentation of varicella history. Although immunizations must still be self-reported at <http://ccrf.hhs.gov/ccrf>, you must also submit proof of immunizations, titers, and/or history to OCCSS/MAB. Many officers previously self-reported a history of varicella as a method of completing that requirement. While that is still acceptable, please remember that you must submit appropriate medical documentation of that to OCCSS/MAB.

How do I meet the Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) immunization requirement?

Adults in high-risk groups, such as health care workers, should receive a total of two doses (per CDC website). This requirement can be met in one of four ways:

- 1) provide documentation of a positive titer to measles, mumps, and rubella - thus proving your immune status to all three,
- 2) provide documentation of a two shot series of MMR. Dose two should be given no sooner than 4 weeks after dose one, or
- 3) provide documentation of a single injection of mumps and rubella, and a two shot series of measles (this may be a difficult option, as many providers no longer carry the single-entity measles vaccination).
- 4) provide verified medical documentation of measles, mumps and rubella. For any of the three immunizations which lack verified medical documentation, you must meet the requirement via option 1, 2, or 3. Many officers previously self-reported a history of measles, mumps and/or rubella as a method of completing that requirement. While that is still acceptable, please remember that you must submit appropriate medical documentation of that to OCCSS/MAB.

Is OFRD using the “old” or the “new” Manual Circular on Basic Readiness to determine my readiness status?

Manual Circular #377, published July 2, 2004, was constructed for three reasons: 1) to ensure that deployed officers are safe, 2) to provide a group of trained and deployable officers to support urgent public health needs, and 3) to define the readiness requirements for promotion in promotion year (PY) 2005. The immunization requirements in Manual Circular #377 were designed to protect officers and their patients, but you need to be aware that the requirements in MC #377 are what will be used in determining officer readiness status for PY 2005. This is reflected in the Q&As above.

However, we want to clarify that for the OMB report date of October 1, 2004, we will use the standards in place since January 1, 2004. By doing so, we are using consistent standards throughout the reporting period. Thus, we will not use MC #377 for this report date.

In order to increase the number of officers who meet Basic readiness, the CPOs, PACs, and Agency Representatives have done outstanding work in assembling telephone committees to contact all officers lacking readiness requirements, as well as sending out support and informational messages to their peers. The OFRD will send out specific information via E-mail to each officer, such that they will be familiar with any shortcomings in their readiness status and they will know exactly what, if any, items need to be addressed in order to meet Basic readiness.