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PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY PLANNING CONFERENCE HELD

Ocean City, MD (September 16, 2009) - The Worcester County Health Department, in conjunction with Worcester County and Ocean City Emergency Services, held a public health emergency preparedness conference on September 16, 2009 at the Princess Royale in Ocean City in preparation for the upcoming flu season. Over 100 representatives from business, health, non-profit organizations, churches and government attended to gain a better understanding of pandemic flu, ways to prevent the spread of flu and how to continue critical business operations.

Throughout the day, participants were given current information about seasonal and pandemic flu, particularly the H1N1 virus. Presentations provided information on State and County pandemic preparedness planning and recommendations to prepare individuals, as well as organizations, to respond appropriately. Businesses, media, schools and other organizations were challenged to look at their emergency preparedness plans and consider the possibility of the H1N1 virus becoming widespread and affecting a large portion of the population (pandemic). Emphasis was placed on organizations working together if this were to happen. According to Health Officer Debbie Goeller, "Responding to a pandemic will require a coordinated response from all sectors of the community."

From the conference, participants return to their agencies with prevention and preparedness messages to assist in further organizational and personal planning. Program participants will provide the Health Department and Emergency Services with insights that will enhance ongoing planning. Goeller emphasized that, "because of early planning on all levels, Worcester County should be better prepared to address pandemic influenza and related emergency incidents. "

More information on the seasonal flu and H1N1 flu virus is available on the Health Department's website at www.worcesterhealth.org, on the Public Health Information Line at 410-632-4321 and on the CDC website at www.flu.gov.