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“Emergency Personnel Practice Disease Outbreak Protocol”

A dangerous, fast-spreading disease has appeared among citizens in Norfolk. How do emergency personnel react? That is the scenario that will be practiced by the Norfolk Fire Division, the Region 11 Emergency Management Division, the Norfolk Police Division, the Nebraska Army National Guard 72nd Civil Support Team, Columbus Community Hospital, Elkhorn Logan Valley Public Health Department and Faith Regional Health Services in a disaster practice drill to be held Friday, April 24.



“The exercise will be conducted at several locations in Norfolk and is designed to test infectious disease protocols for all the agencies involved. Faith Regional Health Services is at the center of this exercise. Norfolk residents may be taken aback by some people who arrive at the hospital looking like they’re headed to a zombie gathering. We are using volunteers made up as if they are in different phases of an unknown infectious disease for the exercise,” said Tim Wragge, City of Norfolk Assistant

Fire Chief.

When one of these “patients” shows up at the Faith Regional Emergency Department, hospital personnel will trigger their infection control protocol and contact the Region 11 Emergency Management Division. The Norfolk Hazardous Materials Team will be activated to determine the source of the contagion. At one point both a Norfolk police cruiser and the hospitals’ emergency department will be sites that are “quarantined”.

A military helicopter will be landing near the fire training center on East Benjamin Avenue that afternoon as part of the drill.

According to Lieutenant Oliver Bergland with the Nebraska National Guard Civil Support Team, representatives from the Czech Republic military who partner with the Nebraska National Guard will also be in Norfolk observing the exercise.

“The representatives are interested in developing capabilities in the Czech Republic to deal with unknown hazardous materials and on-scene analysis of chemical compounds and biological agents,” Bergland said.

The exercise is expected to be completed by 5:00 pm that afternoon.