

From: Ross Doman
To: Doman, Ross
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*** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ***

With Eye on Potential Health Threat, Wyoming Department of Health Officials Ask Displaced People from Hurricane Katrina Region, or Wyoming Residents Housing them, to Contact their Local Public Health Office

CHEYENNE - Wyoming Department of Health officials said today that the state may not be immune to potential public health concerns spurred by Hurricane Katrina and recommended that persons displaced due to the storm who are ill or who were exposed to hazardous conditions contact public health officials and a local healthcare provider.

Dr. Tracy Murphy, State Epidemiologist with the department of health, said that anecdotal reports indicate that Wyoming communities have received persons displaced from the Gulf Coast due to the hurricane which came ashore two weeks ago. He said the conditions in the affected areas as well as the crowded living conditions that resulted significantly increased the potential for gastrointestinal, respiratory, and skin diseases.

If present, some of these illnesses could be spread from person to person. To address these concerns, the state department of health and local public health officials are working closely together to gain an idea of how many displaced persons are arriving in Wyoming and their health status, he said.

"We strongly encourage those displaced due to the hurricane and those who are hosting or assisting them such as family, friends, and relief organizations to be vigilant for signs and symptoms of illness such as fever, bad cough, persistent skin rash, skin wounds or sores that won't heal or appear infected, diarrhea, and vomiting, or any other manifestation of recently acquired illness", said Murphy.

If such signs or symptoms are present those affected should contact public health officials and seek medical care.

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For more information, please contact:

Dr. Tracy Murphy, State Epidemiologist, Wyoming Department of Health, (307) 777-7716
Ross Doman, Public Information Officer, Wyoming Department of Health, (307) 777-6420