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**Florida Department of Health Escambia County Health Department Earns National Public Health Emergency Preparedness Recognition**

**PENSACOLA, FLORIDA** – The Florida Department of Health (FDOH) Escambia County Health Department has been recognized by the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) for its ability to respond to public health emergencies. The FDOH ECHD joins a cohort of 46 FDOH County Health Departments and nearly 300 local health departments across the country that have been distinguished for their agencies' preparedness efforts through the PPHR.

The FDOH Escambia County Health Department met the comprehensive preparedness benchmarks required by Project Public Health Ready (PPHR), a unique partnership between NACCHO and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Local health departments recognized by PPHR undergo a rigorous evaluation by peer review. PPHR required the FDOH Escambia County Health Department to meet a set of national standards for public health preparedness in three key areas: preparedness planning, workforce competency, and demonstration of all-hazards readiness through exercises or a response to a real event. PPHR recognition confirms that the FDOH Escambia County Health Department has a thorough and coordinated emergency response plan in place, that agency staff members are trained, and that the agency exercises the plan and uses it during public health emergencies.

The FDOH Escambia County Health Department demonstrated robust emergency planning and training abilities throughout 2012. The agency coordinated the Special Needs Shelter during Tropical Storm Isaac and deployed an Environmental Health Strike Team to Suwannee County for Tropical Storm Debby. In addition, the Health Department deployed multiple disease investigation specialists to Duval County for a tuberculosis outbreak and handled disease investigation and patient outreach and education for nearly 600 individuals as part of the multi-state fungal meningitis outbreak. This is the second PPHR recognition the FDOH Escambia County Health Department has received, with the first being in 2005.

"We are proud to have been recognized by Project Public Health Ready for our high level of preparedness," said Dr. John Lanza, Director of the FDOH Escambia County Health Department. "We will continue to improve our ability to quickly and effectively respond to any public health crisis in Escambia County, Florida."

"All disasters strike locally, and local health departments are a critical part of any community's first response to disease outbreaks, emergencies, and acts of terrorism," said Robert Pestronk, NACCHO Executive Director. "NACCHO commends the FDOH Escambia County Health Department for being a model of public health emergency preparedness."

Visit [www.EscambiaHealth.com](http://www.EscambiaHealth.com) for more information about specific FDOH Escambia County Health Department public health preparedness efforts. For more information on Project Public Health Ready, including recognized sites, project tools, and resources, visit <http://www.naccho.org/PPHR>.

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