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**OKALOOSA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT EARNS
PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS RECOGNITION**
- Okaloosa County Health Department is Honored as "Public Health Ready" -

FT WALTON BEACH – As local health departments nationwide strive to protect the public from infectious diseases, bioterrorism, natural disasters, and other public health threats, the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) has recognized the Okaloosa County Health Department (OCHD) for its ability to respond to public health emergencies.

The OCHD met the comprehensive preparedness benchmarks required by Project Public Health Ready (PPHR), a unique partnership between NACCHO and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

"We are very proud to have been recognized by Project Public Health Ready," said Dr. Karen Chapman, County Health Officer for the OCHD. "Your health department has met rigorous national standards that measure the readiness to respond to community needs in the event of a disaster. I believe this honor is exceedingly well-deserved because it reflects tremendous effort, dedication, creativity and cooperation on the part of our entire team of public health experts. This honor also reflects on our community and the multiple partners we work with to assure a state of emergency readiness for our residents. Okaloosa County is a leader in emergency preparedness - in public safety, public health and in other disciplines. Still, the most important factor in determining whether we succeed in responding to an emergency will be the actions of our residents and local businesses with preparedness planning, cooperating with local authorities, and helping our neighbors in a time of duress."

"NACCHO commends the Okaloosa County Health Department for being a model of public health emergency preparedness," said Robert Pestronk, Executive Director of NACCHO. "The public health system is making great strides thanks to the good work of leaders in local public health preparedness."

Local health departments recognized by PPHR undergo a thorough evaluation process by peer review. PPHR required the OCHD to meet expectations in 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. The recognition confirms that the OCHD has an emergency response plan in place, the plan is connected to other jurisdictional emergency response plans, agency staff members are trained, and the plan is exercised and used during public health emergencies.

To learn more about Project Public Health Ready, go to <http://www.naccho.org/topics/emergency/pphr.cfm>. For more information on local emergency preparedness or about the Okaloosa County Health Department, visit <http://www.HealthyOkaloosa.com>.

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