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VIRGINIA RECEIVES PERFECT SCORE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH PREPAREDNESS EFFORTS

(RICHMOND, Va.)—Virginia received a perfect score for the second consecutive year in an annual report evaluating the nation’s preparedness efforts for major health and public health emergencies.

Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation on Dec. 9 released the sixth annual “Ready or Not? Protecting the Public's Health from Diseases, Disasters, and Bioterrorism” report, which casts a critical eye on national and state emergency preparedness efforts since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

The report contains state-by-state health preparedness scores based on 10 key indicators to assess areas of capabilities in our nation's effort to prepare against bioterrorism and other large-scale health emergencies. Virginia was among five states that received top scores this year and was the only state to repeat its leading performance from 2007.

“The latest score from Trust for America’s Health is a tribute to Virginia’s strong cooperation among public agencies such as the Virginia Department of Health, the Department of General Services’ Division of Consolidated Laboratories and Division of Purchases and Supply, Virginia State Police and the Virginia Department of Emergency Management,” said Dr. Lisa Kaplowitz, VDH’s interim Deputy Commissioner for Emergency Preparedness and Response Programs.

“Those relationships, along with our critical private-sector partnerships with hospitals, the Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association and business sector, have been essential in ensuring that public health and health care are key components to overall emergency preparedness in the Commonwealth of Virginia,” she said.

This year, the report evaluated the states in such areas as public health laboratories, disease surveillance capabilities, mass distribution of vaccine and other medication, and coordination of medical volunteers.

Preparing Virginians for public health emergencies is an ongoing endeavor and the health department maintains its efforts to address potential disease outbreaks such as pandemic influenza, the specter of bioterrorism and other man-made and natural disasters.

Trust for America's Health is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to saving lives by protecting the health of every community and working to make disease prevention a national priority. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on health and health care issues facing the country.

For more information on the report, visit <http://healthyamericans.org/reports/bioterror08/>. Learn more about VDH's Emergency Preparedness and Response Programs at www.vdh.virginia.gov/epr/.

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