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## **VDH APPOINTS NEW DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FOR EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE**

**(RICHMOND, Va.)**— State Health Commissioner Karen Remley, M.D., MBA, has appointed Mark J. Levine, M.D., MPH, as the Deputy Commissioner for Emergency Preparedness and Response Programs.

The Deputy Commissioner is responsible for public health planning and preparation for naturally occurring and man made disasters and threats and for the Virginia Department of Health's Office of Emergency Medical Services. This office plans and coordinates the statewide emergency medical services system, which includes 720 EMS agencies and 33,000 EMS providers covering every community in the state. The program licenses EMS community agencies, certifies service providers, designates trauma centers and inspects and issues permits for emergency medical service vehicles.

Dr. Levine is currently the Director for the Henrico Health District. His hands-on experience in EP&R and EMS program management includes having served as Health/Medical Incident Commander for the agency following Hurricane Katrina and co-chairing an agency panel that reviewed operations during Hurricane Isabel. He has worked closely with the local EMS community in his health district, which includes several rural municipalities.

“Dr. Levine has a demonstrated ability to bring together the medical and educational communities, local governmental and civic groups and volunteers to plan and prepare for public health emergencies. Utilizing these same skills, his health district has been in the forefront of our efforts to achieve national recognition under the auspices of Project Public Health Ready,” Commissioner Remley said.

Project Public Health Ready is a program of the National Association of County and City Officials that measures the effectiveness of a community's plans and processes, workforce development and outreach in protecting public health in an emergency.

Dr. Levine joins an EP&R office that is the only such state program to achieve a perfect score two consecutive years in the report by the Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, “Ready or Not? Protecting the Public's Health from Diseases, Disasters and Bioterrorism.” The annual report evaluates every state's ability to protect its residents from disease outbreaks, natural disasters and bioterrorism based upon 10 key indicators that assess health emergency preparedness capabilities.

Virginia also is one of only two states that received a perfect score earlier this year from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for the effectiveness of its medical countermeasure distribution system.

“It is a privilege to be joining a world class team, one with top quality professionals, a highly concentrated focus on excellence and great leadership in building and benefiting from strong partnerships,” Dr. Levine said. “To paraphrase one of history’s leading disease-prevention pioneers, Dr. Louis Pasteur, ‘chance favors the prepared community.’ My goal is to use this continuous improvement approach to keep our residents as safe as possible from all future threats.”

Dr. Levine will assume his new duties on Feb. 10. He succeeds Dr. Lisa Kaplowitz, who was the agency’s first Deputy Commissioner for Emergency Preparedness and Response Programs. Dr. Kaplowitz, who is the Health Director in Alexandria, has also been serving as the interim EP&R deputy commissioner.

Dr. Levine joined the Virginia Department of Health as the Director of its Piedmont District in 2002. He became Henrico’s Health District Director in 2005. Under his leadership, the Henrico district developed one of the state’s most active Medical Reserve Corp programs, involving nearly 300 volunteers in emergency response activities. He holds clinical assistant professor appointments with the University of Virginia and with Virginia Commonwealth University.

Prior to his public health service, Dr. Levine was a practicing family physician; a Director of the Hamot Family Practice Residency at the Hamot Medical Center; and a clinical assistant professor with the Department of Family Practice at what is now Drexel University College of Medicine and with Penn State College of Medicine. He graduated from the University of Rochester and received his M.D. from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University. He did his residency in family practice at the University of Virginia and holds a Master of Public Health degree from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, where he was selected for the public health honor society, Delta Omega.

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