Beach Communities Are Open for Business

By Mary E. O’Dowd, MPH, Commissioner
New Jersey Department of Health

New Jersey’s beach communities and businesses are open and ready for visitors. Our local health officials have been inspecting our bathing beaches and testing the water quality. In recent visits to Union Beach, Long Beach Island and Asbury Park, I have seen the incredible progress that has been made reopening boardwalks, amusement piers and our favorite ice cream parlors, pizza shops and mini golf courses.

On Wednesday, I attended the Monmouth County Long-Term Recovery Group’s monthly meeting in Manalapan, where dozens of faith-based organizations and community groups like Catholic Charities, the United Way, Ocean-Monmouth Legal Services, the Red Cross and FEMA are working together to assess and meet the needs of their communities.

This past weekend, the Ocean County Health Department’s outreach vehicle was in Manahawkin at the Home Depot, Lowe’s and ShopRite offering free tetanus shots, copies of our Department’s mold guidelines and information on West Nile Virus, swimming guidelines and behavioral health services.

But, despite progress many families are still repairing their homes and some are still displaced because their homes were too badly damaged. Superstorm Sandy has created a new population of at-risk residents. Individuals and families are at risk from environmental health threats like mold, lead and asbestos as communities repair and rebuild damaged residences and businesses.

It’s important that all of our public health and health care partners—from physicians to case managers—learn about the services that are available so you can refer impacted families to services they need.

The stress caused by the storm can have significant negative consequences. And the time period we are in now—6 months after the storm—is considered the second wave. We know—based on studies of the impact of other natural disasters—that six months and beyond is when we see increases in problems with coping with stress and trauma—such as mental health issues, substance abuse and domestic violence. For example, following a disaster, increases in domestic violence can be substantial—generally speaking, up to 50%.

But there are resources available to help. For example, more than 150,000 people have been helped through the Department of Human Services’ Hope and Healing to help individuals and communities manage the emotional impact of Superstorm Sandy. This toll free Disaster Mental Health Helpline is available at (877) 294-HELP (4357). Families in need of case management services can call 211 to get assistance from Catholic Charities.

Here at the Department of Health, we have distributed 10,000 copies of our consumer-friendly mold brochure, which is available in English and Spanish on our recovery webpage at www.state.nj.us/health/er/hurricane_recovery_resources.shtml.

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New Jersey was one of the first states to recognize the importance of screening newborns for Critical Congenital Heart Disease (CCHD) before discharge to home. Congenital heart defects occur when a baby’s heart or blood vessels do not form properly. Approximately 9 in 1000 newborns are found to have some type of heart defect and approximately 25% of the defects are very serious or critical.

In 2011, Gov. Christie signed legislation requiring all newborns to be screened for these serious heart defects. The screening is done using pulse oximetry. It takes only a few minutes and is done as a simple bedside test. Infants who do not pass the screening can then receive further testing to determine if there is a problem. A baby found to have a critical congenital heart defect requires prompt diagnosis and treatment for the best outcome. While pulse oximetry cannot detect all defects, this law enables nurses and doctors to identify infants who may have hidden, serious heart problems before they leave the hospital. If undetected and untreated, critical heart defects can cause physical and mental disabilities, or even death.

In an effort to raise awareness about critical congenital heart disease (CCHD) and improve effectiveness of the mandated newborn screening, the Department of Health partnered with the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) NJ Chapter to offer regional conferences aimed at nurses who care for newborns. The conferences, in collaboration with the three Maternal-Child Health Consortia, were being held in Morristown, Freehold and Voorhees in April and May and featured a special video message from Commissioner O’Dowd. In the video, the commissioner speaks to the importance of the CCHD screening legislation and its role in saving the lives of newborns.

For more information about CCHD screening visit: http://www.state.nj.us/health/fhs/nbs/cchd.shtml

Commissioner’s Message, continued from page 1

And we've contracted with the UMDNJ School of Public Health to provide free mold training classes for the homeowners, volunteers and public health and code enforcement officials. Information about those classes can also be found on our recovery page.

Now that mosquito season is upon us, Deputy Commissioner, Dr. Arturo Brito and I taped Public Service Announcements in English and Spanish this week to remind people to remove standing water on their properties, and take common sense precautions to protect themselves.

We’ve also created and distributed a Health Resource Guide and extended the federal Emergency Prescription Assistance Program until June. This program has already served more than 4,400 individuals.

We are also working to leverage existing programs that support residents with health and social services needs. For example, we have case managers in all counties to assist parents of children with special needs and connect these children to services that support their health. We also have parent resource specialists in counties—as part of this initiative parents of special needs children help other parents navigate the health care system.

The health and safety of our residents and visitors has evolved to a higher level with the aftermath of “Sandy” and I encourage all of you to help affected families by referring them to the services that were set up to assist them.

I wish everyone a happy and healthy summer.
New Jersey continues to steadily recover from Superstorm Sandy. The hardest hit communities are rebuilding. Along many parts of the Shore, most signs of Sandy are gone. Businesses have reopened. Boardwalks are busy with early season visitors, water quality is excellent and New Jersey’s beaches are ready to enjoy. The following provides answers to some of the most common questions beachgoers may have as cleanup from this historic storm continues.

**Should I be Concerned About Storm Debris at the Beach?**

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and New Jersey Department of Health (DOH), in cooperation with municipal and county governments, are doing everything possible to ensure recreational beaches are safe and clear of debris. However, the ocean is dynamic. Currents and waves may uncover storm debris at any time. You should always be aware of your surroundings when entering the ocean. All beachgoers should use common sense and caution while on beaches and swimming. Always use beaches with lifeguards.

**Is There Much Storm Debris in the Ocean?**

Sandy’s powerful storm surge generally pushed wreckage and debris toward the bays, streams and wetlands. This is where most of the water debris is being found.

**How About the Beaches?**

Virtually all of the debris on the beaches immediately after Sandy has since been removed. Our municipalities worked tirelessly to remove big debris, and then thoroughly raked the sand for any small pieces of debris.

**What’s Being Done to Ensure Beach Safety this Summer?**

New Jersey has an aggressive program to monitor the health and safety of our recreational beaches. This year the program is being expanded to include the following work:

**AIR** DEP aircraft will be flying over the coast all summer, looking for debris in addition to making observations about water quality. If debris is observed, the DEP will coordinate with the municipality or the state’s debris removal contractors on marking and removing it.

**WATER** State water debris removal contractors are using side-scan sonar to search for storm debris in water off the beaches. They will use cranes on barges to remove debris when it poses a health or safety threat. This work is expected to continue throughout the summer.

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Land

Municipal governments, as they do every season, conduct thorough safety assessments before opening beaches. The DEP and New Jersey Department of Health have advised municipalities and their lifeguard crews that areas in the surf zone just off the beaches may have steeper drops than in the past and that they should be alert for storm debris in these areas.

Could Beaches be Closed if Debris is Found?  How Will the Public Be Notified?

Decisions on any beach closings will be made on a case-by-case basis, usually by local officials in consultation with the DEP and NJ Department of Health. In many cases it may be possible to simply move the designated swimming area a short distance. Any closings will be posted on www.njbeaches.org.

Who Should I Contact If I See Debris at the Beach?

You should immediately contact a lifeguard. If a lifeguard is not available, call the local police, the local health department, or the DEP hotline at 1-877-WARNDEP (1-877-927-6337) or by email to waterwaydebris@dep.state.nj.us.

What’s Water Quality Expected to Be Like?

Pre-season water quality monitoring by the DEP indicated that water quality is within state and federal standards at all locations. Excellent water quality is anticipated throughout the summer.

How is Water Quality Tested? Where Can I find More Information?

The DEP administers the Cooperative Coastal Monitoring Program with the New Jersey Department of Health and local environmental health agencies. Recreational beach water quality monitoring is performed routinely on Mondays and throughout the week as necessary at ocean and bay monitoring stations. In addition, the DEP conducts regular aerial surveillance of the ocean. Water quality monitoring results can be found at www.njbeaches.org.

For more information on waterway debris removal, FAQs on recreational boating, and other aspects of Sandy recovery, visit: www.state.nj.us/dep/special/hurricane-sandy/.

Going to the Beach, continued from page 3

Governor Christie visited the Ocean City boardwalk as part of his Jersey Shore reopening tour over the Memorial Day Weekend.

Ruth Charbonneau, Chief of Staff for the Department and Commissioner O’Dowd examine the beach conditions on Long Beach Island ahead of the Memorial Day weekend.
### BY THE NUMBERS: THE RECOVERY SINCE SANDY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$3,500,000,000</td>
<td>National Flood Insurance Program payments made on claims to date.</td>
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<td>$396,000,000</td>
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<td>Employer-focused grants made available through the Hire New Jersey Recovery Plan.</td>
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<td>National Emergency Grants to fund the Christie Administration’s plan to hire unemployed New Jersey residents to assist with clean-up and recovery efforts.</td>
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<td>Hurricane Sandy New Jersey Relief Fund grants awarded.</td>
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<td>Cubic yards of household and vegetative debris and sand removed from the streets that the State has overseen.</td>
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<td>Over 28,000</td>
<td>Donors to the Hurricane Sandy New Jersey Relief Fund.</td>
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<td>93%</td>
<td>Total insured claims closed including: homeowners, commercial property, personal auto, commercial auto, and business interruption, and others.</td>
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Nurses are the most trusted professionals in America, according to a 2012 Gallop poll.

Whether nurses are volunteering at a medical clinic, working in a busy Emergency Department or providing care in a hospital, community health center or other health care setting, they are leaders in improving the health of the residents of New Jersey. There are 3.1 million registered nurses in the U.S, including 78,000 in New Jersey. They work in hospitals, long-term care facilities, schools, ambulatory surgery centers, community health centers, clinics, home health and public health agencies, homeless shelters, physician offices and as educators. Advance Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs), whether they are nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, nurse anesthetists, or nurse midwives, play a pivotal role in the future of health care. APRNs are often primary care providers and are at the forefront of providing preventative care to the public.

Because of health reform, the need for more nurses will increase.

So like we do every May, we celebrate National Nurses Week to honor the dedication and hard work of nurses. National Nurses Week begins on May 6, National Nurses Day, and ends on May 12, the birthday of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing. She came to prominence while serving as a nurse during the Crimean War, where she tended to wounded soldiers. She was dubbed "The Lady with the Lamp" after her habit of making rounds at night. Her writings sparked worldwide health care reform.

During Superstorm Sandy, nurses played a vital role in saving lives, caring for patients in hospitals, providing treatment in shelters and helping to ensure that people who left home without their medication got the help they needed. They worked around the clock - some reporting for duty even as their own homes were damaged or destroyed.

The Superstorm put our entire health care system to the test and without the work of our state’s nurses we would not have been nearly as successful in saving lives during the storm.

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The number of nurses that work for the State Department of Health

The approximate number of registered nurses in New Jersey

The approximate number of registered nurses in the United States

The number of school nurses in the United States

The year that National Nurses Week was first observed

The percentage of Americans that said that nurses have “very high” or “high” honesty and ethical standards. Nurses are the most trusted professionals in America according to Gallop Polling (2012)

The percentage of U.S. nurses from a racial/ethnic minority group
Following CDC Protocols Cuts Dialysis Bloodstream Infections in Half

CDC provides tools to help all U.S. dialysis facilities reduce potentially deadly infections

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) earlier this month released results of its Dialysis Bloodstream Infection Prevention Collaborative showing a 32 percent decrease in overall bloodstream infections and a 54 percent decrease in vascular access-related bloodstream infections after CDC prevention guidelines were used. Vascular access-related bloodstream infections are those related to devices used to access the bloodstream for hemodialysis. With approximately 37,000 bloodstream infections occurring each year among dialysis patients with central lines, at an estimated cost of $23,000 per hospitalization, wider implementation of the practices in this study could help save lives and reduce excess health care spending.

Baby Boomers – Get Tested for Hepatitis C!

Hepatitis C is a serious virus infection that over time can cause liver damage and even liver cancer. Early treatment can prevent this damage. Too many people with hepatitis C do not know they are infected, so they don’t get the medical care they need.

Once infected with the hepatitis C virus, nearly 8 in 10 people remain infected for life. A simple blood test, called a hepatitis C antibody test, can tell if you have ever been infected, but cannot tell whether you are still infected. Only a different follow-up blood test can determine if you are still infected. CDC data show only half of people with a positive hepatitis C antibody test had the follow-up test reported to the health department.


Hearing Loss: New Online Directory for Parents

Each year, more than 12,000 babies are born deaf or hard of hearing; most have two hearing parents. Hearing loss can affect a child’s ability to develop communication, language, and social skills. The earlier children with hearing loss start getting services, the more likely they will reach their full potential.

New Web-Based Tool
How can a parent find where to get a full hearing test, one that matches their family's needs?

A national group of health professionals and parents developed a free web-based list of pediatric hearing audiology facilities, known as the Pediatric Audiology Links to Services (PALS). This search tool is designed to help families find where to go for hearing tests and other hearing related services. There is no other listing of U.S. audiology facilities for young children as complete, accessible, or easy to use.
The New Jersey Department of Health along with the New Jersey Workplace Blood Donor Coalition (NJWBDC) have partnered with the 2014 New York/New Jersey Super Bowl Host Committee to launch the Super Community Blood Drive in New Jersey. The campaign, which will run from May 24 through January 17, 2014, is aimed at motivating people to donate blood.

The Super Community Blood Drive represents a unique collaboration between New York and New Jersey to increase the blood supply and will include thousands of drives in the run-up to Super Bowl XLVIII at MetLife Stadium. All eight blood centers and seven hospital collection facilities in New Jersey are participating in the campaign. The launch comes at an important time because donations decrease during the summer months.

“Hospitals need blood every day for trauma cases, elective surgeries and routine care,” said New Jersey Health Commissioner Mary E. O’Dowd, who co-chairs the NJWBDC. “The Super Community Blood Drive is a unique opportunity to reach thousands of new donors in both states.”

Every person who presents to donate blood during the campaign will have the opportunity to win tickets to Super Bowl XLVIII.

To learn more, visit the New Jersey Workplace Blood Donor Coalition Website at: www.njsave3lives.com

Super Community Blood Drive Launches on Memorial Day Weekend

On Thursday, May 23 at HackensackUMC at Pascack Valley, Governor Chris Christie, Commissioner of Health Mary O’Dowd, Hackensack University Health Network and LHP Hospital Group officials gathered to officially introduce the new HackensackUMC at Pascack Valley hospital.

The hospital, under construction since April of 2012, was converted to a state-of-the-art 128 bed, all private room facility which will improve patient care and the risk of infection. It will be the only facility with all private beds in Bergen County. Each room will feature fully renovated patient rooms provided at no extra cost to the patient, including a variety of amenities and specialty features for advanced patient care including 32 inch flat screen televisions, Wi-Fi, cable and phone use at no additional cost, brand new Stryker patient beds with built in call system, bedside documentation, bar-coded pharmacy medication. This new facility will begin accepting patients on June 1st.

HackensackUMC at Pascack Valley supports growth in the local community and restoring jobs that will fuel the local and the state economies. The facility will be an economic engine for the Pascack and Northern Valley regions with the creation of nearly 500 jobs by the end of 2013. More than 600 physicians representing all specialties have requested privileges at the newly renovated facility.

Governor Christie Cuts Ceremonial Ribbon at HackensackUMC at Pascack Valley

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May 8 – Commissioner O’Dowd gave a presentation on New Jersey’s response to Superstorm Sandy to the Association of State & Territorial Health Officers.

May 16 – Commissioner O’Dowd spoke on the ongoing effects that Superstorm Sandy is having on women during the NJCPAs 9th Annual Women’s Health Advocates Recognition Brunch.

May 20 – Dr. Arturo Brito, Deputy Commissioner gave remarks and handed out awards at the Annual EMS Awards Dinner.

May 20 – Commissioner O’Dowd and members of her senior staff met with the Mayor of Beach Haven to assess damage along the beaches of Long Beach Island.

May 22 – Commissioner O’Dowd and Joe Eldridge, Director of Consumer, Environmental and Occupational Health Service held a town hall meeting in Union Beach to speak with residents on mold removal, assessment and remediation.

May 22 – Commissioner O’Dowd delivered the keynote address at the Health Care Association of New Jersey’s Assisted Living conference.

May 23 – Cathleen Bennett, Director of Policy and Strategic Planning, took part in a panel discussion on chronic illness hosted by the Health Care Institute of New Jersey.

May 29 – Commissioner O’Dowd provided an overview of Sandy recovery effort to Monmouth County’s Long-Term Recovery Group.

Dr. Brito and Kelly Boozan presented the Outstanding EMS Action by a Citizen Award to Scott Kliemisch, one of four friends who acted as a group when Kelly’s Halloween costume caught fire after a party last October preventing more serious injuries and saving Kelly’s life.

Commissioner O’Dowd delivered the keynote address at the Health Care Association of New Jersey’s Assisted Living Conference on May 22.

Dr. Christina Tan, State Epidemiologist, gave a presentation on New Jersey’s disaster epidemiology activities at the annual Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists conference on May 9.

Suzanne Miro, Senior Health Communications Specialist - Delegate Trustee for the Society for Public Health Education, attended the SOPHE annual meeting on April 19 where she presented “Eleven Years Later: Health Education After Anthrax.”

Calliope Alexander, Seafood/Shellfish Project Coordinator - Environmental Scientist, participated in the Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference (ISSC) Spring Executive Board Meeting on March 5-8 where she discussed New Jersey’s Seafood Shellfish Project that is becoming a national model for wholesale fish dealers to operate under sanitary conditions when handling processing and shipping shellfish.

Colecette Lamotte-Galette, Executive Assistant, Office of Policy and Strategic Planning is serving as the NJ Performance Improvement Manager for the CDC grant “Strengthening Public Health Infrastructure for Improved Health Outcomes.” She attended the 2013 National Public Health Improvement Initiative conference, April 24-26.

Beth Milton, Special Projects Coordinator, Family Health Services, attended the Interstate Ten Step Collaborative meeting where she outlined the Department’s Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative that encourages mothers to breastfeed their children. The meeting took place on May 16-17.

Photo from the Interstate Collaborative meeting that is promoting ten steps to successful breast feeding. Beth Milton, Special Projects Coordinator presented at the meeting on May 17.
Warmer days mean more time in the sun, but it is important to make sure that you aren’t getting too much of a good thing. The sun’s rays make us feel good but overexposure can lead to sunburns, premature aging of the skin, wrinkling, and skin cancer including melanoma. As we head into summer, don’t forget some basic steps you can take to protect your health:

1. **Apply a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher, 30 minutes before leaving the house.** Be generous when applying! You should buy products that provide ‘broad spectrum protection,’ which means protection against both UVB and UVA rays. It is important to reapply sunscreen every two hours or after swimming, perspiring or toweling off. Check your sunscreen’s expiration date. Sunscreen has a shelf life of no more than three years, but its shelf life is shorter if it has been exposed to high temperatures.

2. **Protect your skin with clothing.** Dark colors provide more protection than lighter colored clothing. Dry fabric is more protective than wet fabric. Some companies make clothing that protects against UV exposure even when wet. There are newer products available in grocery stores that can be used in your washing machine that acts like laundry detergent that increases the UV protection factor (UPF) to your own clothing.

3. **Wear a hat with a wide brim all the way around to protect your face, head, ears and neck from the sun.** A tightly woven, dark hat offers the most protection from UV rays.

4. **UV protecting sunglasses are important for protecting the delicate skin around the eyes, as well as the eyes themselves.** Ideal sunglasses should block 99 to 100 percent of UVA and UVB radiation. Large framed and wraparound sunglasses will protect your eyes from light coming in from different angles.

5. **Seek shade!** Avoid midday sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. when the sun’s rays are the strongest. You can reduce your risk of skin damage and skin cancer by seeking shade under an umbrella, tree or other shelter. UV rays reach the ground all year, even on overcast days, but the strength can vary. UV rays become more intense in the spring, even before temperatures get warmer. Protect yourself in areas of sand and water as these areas can reflect sunlight, increasing the UV radiation you receive.

6. **Avoid tanning beds.** Tanning lamps give out UVA and UVB rays. These rays can cause long term skin damage and can contribute to cancer including melanoma especially if started before the age of 30. Incorporating these simple tips into your daily lifestyle can help protect your skin for years to come!

*Carmela Hoefling, MSN, APNC, AOCNP, is an Advanced Practice Nurse in the Melanoma and Soft Tissue Oncology Program at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey.*