



## KANE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT MEDIA ADVISORY

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Contact: Tom Schlueter (630) 444-3098

### **County, local policy makers conduct communications exercise**

A countywide communications drill conducted Nov. 13 by Board Chairman Karen McConnaughay was the first effort to demonstrate the county's capability to share emergency information with municipal and township Chief Elected Officials during emergent or critical situations. The need for top-level officials at the township, municipal and county levels to communicate with each other is crucial for the coordination of response efforts during a natural or man-made disaster.

The Kane County Policy Maker's Communication Exercise was conducted in phases designed to alert local officials to a conference call with Chairman McConnaughay scheduled in the afternoon. All Kane County communities were alerted by telephone and by broadcast fax messages, using a telephone contact list gathered from various county agencies by the Health Department's Preparedness Division.

The initial phase began with Emergency Operations Center staff making telephone calls to each jurisdiction informing the cities, villages and townships of the drill. The broadcast fax sent in the second phase included the log-in information required to participate in the conference call. The drill's final phase was the conference call itself.

A total of 22 of the county's 43 local jurisdictions took part in the conference call, including three of five cities, 14 of 22 villages and five of 16 townships. Those participating included mayors, village presidents, township supervisors or their representatives. A short question and answer period followed at the end of the conference call.

With all or part of the stated exercise objectives completed, there still remains work to be done to make this type of notification/information sharing process smoother and more effective:

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- Enhance the 24 hour contact information for all municipal and township chief elected officials to include office, cell phone and home telephone numbers.
- Keep this information current with annual updates.
- Expand the contact lists for each municipality and township to include the chief elected official and two (2) alternates to provide for a continuity of government.
- Conduct a similar exercise at least annually.

“During a disaster, the ability to communicate with our municipal and township partners will be critical,” Chairman McConnaughay said. “While we still have work to do to get the system where we want it to be, I am pleased with the results. The county is committed to working with our partners to enhance that communication.”

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