



NH Department of Health and Human Services
129 Pleasant Street - State Office Park South
Concord, NH 03301

New Hampshire Hospital Association
125 Airport Road
Concord, NH 03301

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CONTACTS
Dept. of Health and Human Services
Public Information Office
603-271-6526
NH Hospital Association
Carolyn Edy, Vice President Communications
603-225-0900

New Hospital Isolation Equipment Enhances Safety of Patients and Health Care Workers Against SARS and Other Contagious Diseases

Concord – This week, hospitals in New Hampshire received portable isolation equipment that will increase their capacity to respond to infectious disease incidents and bioterrorism. The \$140,000 equipment purchase is funded through the bioterrorism preparedness grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

“This equipment will greatly strengthen the Department’s and the hospitals’ ability to respond to a contagious disease outbreak or bioterrorist incident,” said NH Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Commissioner John A. Stephen. “This unique collaboration among the Department of Health and Human Services, the New Hampshire Hospital Association, and the Department of Safety will benefit all residents of the State.”

After assessing hospitals across the state, NHHA and DHHS set the following goals:

- Ensure that every hospital has isolation capacity
- Increase the State's isolation capacity overall
- Develop a community/state isolation capacity for emergency situations

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All 26 acute care hospitals, New Hampshire Hospital, and the VA Medical Center received the portable isolation units this week. These units will provide a controlled environment in a hospital room and will filter the air before it is vented out of the room to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

“The good news is that this equipment not only prepares us for bioterrorism, but will be useful on a daily basis for many types of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and SARS,” said Kathy Bizarro, Executive Vice President of the NHHA.

It was determined by a committee comprised of hospital infection control and facilities professionals and emergency preparedness planners that portable isolation units are the most effective, flexible, and economical way to achieve a reasonable level of isolation capacity in the State. NHHA hosted a training session for hospital staff on the proper installation, use, and maintenance of these machines this week.

“By adding these portable isolation units to every hospital, we’ve more than doubled our isolation capacity statewide,” said Bizarro. “We are also proud of the fact that New Hampshire is believed to be the first state in the country to have done this on a statewide basis. The safety of our patients and our healthcare workers has been greatly enhanced because of our collaboration with the State on this effort.”

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