

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

What is a Public Health Order, and why was one issued now?

DHEC has authority to issue Public Health Orders in situations where there is an increased risk to the public's health because of the threat of an infectious disease. DHEC, in an effort to heighten awareness of the threat of Ebola, which is a highly infectious virus with a high mortality rate, determined it should issue a Public Health Order. Although there have been no reported cases in South Carolina, the Public Health Order was issued to establish and assure immediate means of communication across multiple agencies and individuals in the fields of health care, law enforcement, and other affected professions to provide up to date information at the press of a single button. The system provides ready access for persons who want to know the latest information about public health threats.

What does the Public Health Order do?

The Public Health Order does two things. First, it requires certain individuals and facilities to register for the Health Preparedness Network (HPN) to receive one-way communications of public health importance from DHEC. Second, it requires certain entities to designate an individual to receive and respond to requests for information of public health importance from DHEC through the State Medical Asset Resource Tracking Tool (SMARTT).

What is the HPN?

The HPN is a new statewide electronic system to provide essential email communications to a central database of key individuals and facilities who are instrumental in South Carolina's preparedness capabilities when dealing with potentially serious health threats, such as the Ebola virus. The individuals and facilities registering with HPN will receive one-way communications of public health importance through email. The email addresses provided will not be shared with anyone.

Why was the HPN created?

The HPN was created to enhance the state's existing ability to maintain open and active communications with essential individuals and facilities, to prevent the spread of contagious diseases and to help with early identification of and prevent potential for a disease outbreak.

Who needs to register for the HPN?

The individuals and entities required to register with the HPN have been divided into four main groups: responders, providers, persons dealing with the deceased, and private schools.

The responder group includes: EMTs, ambulance services, and emergency medical responder (non-transporting) agencies; 911 dispatchers/operators and dispatch centers; fire departments and fire chiefs.

The provider group includes the following individuals: athletic trainers, chiropractors, long-term care administrators, nurses, pharmacists, physicians, physician assistants, respiratory care practitioners,

social workers, veterinarians; and the following facilities/entities: ambulatory surgery facilities, community residential care facilities, home health agencies, hospitals and institutional general infirmaries, hospice services and facilities, in-home care provider agencies, infectious waste transporters, intermediate care facilities for persons with intellectual disability, laboratories (including but not limited to independent and those located within health care facilities), nursing homes, pharmacies and pharmacy-located clinics, primary care physician offices (including but not limited to free clinics, FQHCs, general practitioners, internal medicine, pediatrician offices, Rural Health Clinics, and urgent care facilities), renal dialysis facilities, residential treatment facilities for children and adolescents, substance abuse facilities.

The group of persons dealing with the deceased includes: individuals who perform embalming, cremation and funeral services, including but not limited to cemeterians, funeralists, and morticians; coroners and deputy coroners.

The private school group includes: private institutions of higher learning; private school principals, headmasters, or other persons who operate private, independent, or parochial schools; school nurses at each of these facilities.

How do I register for the HPN?

Members of the responder group register by sending an email to:
RESPONDER-join@lists.CIO.SC.GOV

Members of the provider group register by sending an email to:
PROVIDER-join@lists.CIO.SC.GOV

Members of the group of persons dealing with the deceased register by sending an email to:
DECEASED-join@lists.CIO.SC.GOV

Members of the private school group register by sending an email to:
SCHOOL-join@lists.CIO.SC.GOV

Am I already registered for the HPN?

You may have received an email that said you are already registered. If so, you do not need to do anything further. If you received an email containing instructions for registering, please follow those instructions to register.

Why aren't public schools and state agencies included in the Public Health Order?

Through cooperation with other governmental agencies, DHEC has obtained contact information for entities that are operated by state governmental agencies and has already registered those entities with HPN.

Can members of the general public register for HPN?

If you are a member of the general public and would like to receive up-to-date communications from DHEC regarding the Ebola virus you may register for HPN by sending an email to RESIDENT-join@LISTS.CIO.SC.GOV.

I am a member of law enforcement and I do not see a group in the Public Health Order that applies to me, what should I do?

Through cooperation with other state agencies, DHEC already has law enforcement email addresses and has registered such agencies and individuals. However, if you would like to make sure that your information is included, you may register again as a member of the general public by sending an email to RESIDENT-join@LISTS.CIO.SC.GOV.

What if I change my email address after I register for the HPN?

If your email address changes after you register, you must notify DHEC, using the same process described for the initial registration.

Can I opt out of registering for the HPN?

No. No one who is required to register pursuant to the Public Health Order may opt out of registering.

Can I have my name removed from the HPN?

No. Registration is required and your name cannot be removed.

What happens if I do not register for the HPN?

If you are a member of one of the groups required to register and you do not, you will be in violation of a Public Health Order issued pursuant to SC Code Section 44-1-140, which may result in a civil penalty in accordance with SC Code Section 44-1-150.

What is SMARTT and how is it different from HPN?

SMARTT is a tool that will allow DHEC to request and receive information. It is a two-way communication system to allow DHEC to gather information about available resources and other vital data related to emergency preparedness.

Who needs to register for SMARTT?

The following entities are required to register for SMARTT pursuant to the Public Health Order:

- Licensed hospitals and institutional general infirmaries
- Licensed ambulance services
- Licensed emergency medical responder agencies (non-transporting)
- 911 Dispatch Centers

All primary care physician offices, including but not limited to free clinics, FQHCs, Rural Health Clinics, pediatrician offices, internal medicine, general practitioners, and urgent care facilities.

How do I register for SMARTT?

The links for registering for SMARTT are available on the DHEC website, www.scdhec.gov.

Can I opt out of registering for SMARTT?

No. No one who is required to register for SMARTT pursuant to the Public Health Order may opt out of registering.

Can my information be removed from SMARTT?

Your information can be removed if you are no longer the person designated to provide and receive information. However, the registered entity must immediately update SMARTT and provide a designee to respond and provide information at all times.

What happens if I do not register for SMARTT?

If you are required to register but do not, you will be in violation of a Public Health Order issued pursuant to SC Code Section 44-1-140, which may result in a civil penalty in accordance with SC Code Section 44-1-150.

Whom do I contact if I have more questions?

Please email any questions to DHEC at Ebola@dhec.sc.gov, or contact DHEC via telephone at (803) 608-6014.