



*“Protecting and Promoting Public Health and Environmental Quality
in the Community through People, Prevention & Partnerships”*

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News Release

El Paso County Health Department Receives National Recognition for Emergency Preparedness Planning and Readiness

COLORADO SPRINGS—The El Paso County Department of Health and Environment has been recognized as “Public Health Ready” by the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Project Public Health Ready (PPHR) Review Committee, and will be honored during the 2009 Preparedness Summit in San Diego, CA on February 19. El Paso County Health Department’s commendation from PPHR follows a comprehensive review of the Department’s planning and preparedness for potential public health emergencies—ranging from infectious diseases to bioterrorism to natural disasters. In its citation, PPHR highlighted the Health Department’s crisis communication plan, Microbe Monthly disease alert communication and medical surge plan as exemplary emergency preparedness tools and resources.

“Our Health Department is very committed to emergency planning and preparedness protocols—including functional exercises in collaboration with local, state and national emergency responders and public health officials,” stated Public Health Director Kandi Buckland, R.N., M.P.A. “This national recognition by Project Public Health Ready is a testimony to our skilled staff and their dedication to protecting this community from wide-scale disasters, in addition to daily health and safety risks. We are grateful for this honor and want to express our deepest thanks to our many partners in public health—private and professional—whose ongoing cooperation and participation in emergency preparedness helps ensure a safer community.”

To gain recognition from PPHR, the El Paso County Health Department had to meet expectations of public health preparedness in three key areas: preparedness planning, workforce competency and demonstration of all-hazards readiness through exercises or response to real events. Out of approximately 3,000 local health departments nationwide, only 158 have been recognized as “Public Health Ready.” PPHR is a unique partnership between NACCHO and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), providing comprehensive benchmarks developed specifically to promote emergency preparedness for local and regional public health departments.