Tornadoes brush Dix, GMS campuses during state’s worst storm outbreak
North Carolina continues its recovery from the impact of a series of deadly tornadoes that left a path of devastation across the state on April 16.

Gov. Bev Perdue declared a state of emergency and secured a federal disaster declaration from President Obama for North Carolina. The disaster declaration makes federal funding available to individuals affected by severe weather in 10 counties and allows state and local governments to obtain funding in another eight counties.

Emergency management officials confirmed 23 North Carolinians died as a result of the Saturday afternoon tornadoes, and 130 others were injured seriously enough to require a visit to a local hospital emergency room. More than 130 homes were destroyed and more than 700 others reported severe damage. The National Weather Service in Raleigh said approximately 25 tornadoes, five of which packed winds in excess of 135 miles per hour impacted at least 32 counties spread over the state.

Severe winds caused huge trees to topple, including six on the Dorothea Dix Campus to the south of downtown Raleigh. One uprooted tree was approximately 160 years old. Falling trees caused minor damage at some DHHS buildings including the Anderson Building which sustained roof and façade damage in addition to interior water damage in three offices.

At the Governor Morehead School campus a tree left minor damage to the Penland Building and the GMS Gymnasium. Power outages were widespread in many central and eastern counties. The Dix Campus was without power for approximately two days, emergency generators provided critical back-up power for emergency systems and equipment. Electrical power and telephone services were not restored until Monday afternoon for hundreds of DHHS workers in Central Administration offices and others.

DHHS employees provided assistance to residents affected during the storm and afterwards, while others are organizing relief efforts. Those volunteer efforts are expected to continue into the months to come ranging from clean-up and food donations to debris removal and monetary contributions.

– Renee McCoy, DHHS Public Affairs

Want to help?

If you would like to help, Gov. Perdue has set up a fund to provide financial assistance for victims of the tornadoes and storms. “For those looking for a way to give back,” Gov. Perdue said, “this is a great opportunity to help.”

The N.C. Disaster Relief Fund will accept monetary donations and is managed by the Governor’s Office in partnership with United Way of North Carolina. Donations are tax deductible and 100 percent of donated funds will go to survivors. To donate or get information about the fund, please go to: [www.ncdisasterrelief.org](http://www.ncdisasterrelief.org).
Excels roundup

DHHS Goals Teams entering second round

Last spring and summer (see July 2010 Update) five separate teams worked to define strategies and measures for the Department’s five performance goals. Their efforts were intense as they worked to align services, measures and outcomes with those goals and to include them in the Department’s strategic plan.

Some previous members of the teams, along with new members, started another round of work on April 12. This second round will more clearly identify service interrelationship and how to measure and evaluate the progress of the expected outcomes for each service under each goal. Through this process they will identify where there are gaps and where service adjustments need to occur.

The 55 team leaders and members will be supported by seven team facilitators and eight members of a performance data technical team.

Check future newsletters for more details about the work of these teams.

And thanks to all for your service on these teams!

– Sandra K. Trivett, Special Projects Office
Here’s a memory aid for DHHS Excels values

Mary Edwards, Consumer Affairs Program Manager for the DHHS Division of Aging & Adult Services, shares her method of remembering the five values for DHHS Excels. Just think of the following sentence: Help DHHS stay on TRACC by following the five values:

- **T**ransparency
- **R**esults-oriented
- **A**nticipatory
- **C**ustomer focused
- **C**ollaboration.

Thanks for the tip, Mary!

LeadershipDHHS Nominations Due in June

The upcoming 2011-2012 session of *LeadershipDHHS* will mark the seventh year of this program which, to date, has graduated 140 people from across DHHS.

*LeadershipDHHS* is about developing and sustaining employees who are working to affect positive change in the Department of Health and Human Services. It is directly linked to the Department’s five values: Anticipation, Collaboration, Customer-Focused, Transparency, and Results-Based.

Information about the program and the nomination process will be provided to division and office directors by the end of May. Enrollment is limited to 25 people each year – so start thinking now about your nominations.

Administrative Assistants Week yields special Excels outreach session

A special DHHS Excels Outreach Session was held April 29 for administrative assistants who support executive staff based in the Raleigh area.

Secretary Lanier Cansler met with the group to thank them for the tremendous job they do to coordinate schedules, meetings, telephone calls and the many other details they manage to keep their offices running smoothly.

Deputy Secretary Maria Spaulding opened the meeting and discussed the cultural and management transformation that DHHS is seeking to achieve through DHHS Excels and the important role administrative assistants play as the public face of DHHS. After the presentation, the group broke into smaller units to discuss the five values and how to better implement them in their agencies.

*Articles by Sandra K. Trivett, Special Projects Office*
DHHS suggestion saves more than $20,000

The State Review Committee of NCThinks approved an award April 20 for a suggestion submitted by Terri Smith, building and property manager for the Division of Medical Assistance.

NCThinks is the state’s suggestion system for state employees. It is designed to promote efficiency and economies in state government and to save tax dollars by recognizing and rewarding individual employees for suggestions that improve state government operations.

Smith’s suggestion concerned the deactivation of unused phone lines at the Kirby Building on the Dix Campus of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Savings from the suggestion totaled $22,195.74. According to General Statute 143-345.22, the savings will be distributed according to the following scale:

- 20% of total savings allotted to suggestor = $4439.15
- 10% of total savings allotted to OSP for administration of NCThinks = $2,219.57
- 10% of total savings allotted to OSP for state employee education and training = $2,219.57
- 10% of total savings allotted to DHHS, Division of Medical Assistance = $2,219.57
- 50% of total savings allotted to the General Fund = $11,097.87

“In these tight budget times, it is important to let state employees know that their creativity in saving the state money is being rewarded,” said State Personnel Director Linda Coleman.

State employees can submit suggestions at www.ncthinks.nc.gov.
Eggs’ beeps reveal hiding places

Students at the Governor Morehead School and GMS Preschool were treated to an “eggsplosion” egg hunt thanks to the Bomb Squad from the Winston-Salem Police Department and members of the State Employees Association of North Carolina District 42.

Bomb squad members created “beeping eggs” that were included with regular eggs for the school’s annual egg hunt. The beeping eggs allow children who are visually impaired to listen for the egg rather than needing to see it.

Students, teachers, parents and volunteers were able interact with the bomb robots and visit with McGruff the Crime Dog. Each student was given a multi-sensory Easter Basket and the opportunity to find lots of eggs with hidden surprises. It was a “blast!”

The members of the bomb squad initiated the beeping egg hunts here after attending a conference for bomb technicians in September. During the conference, attendees made beeping eggs for use by other communities.

Afterwards, the members of the bomb squad learned that there is no such program in North Carolina and decided to start beeping egg hunts with the Gov. Morehead Preschool in Raleigh and GMS alumni in Winston-Salem. They hope to make this an annual event.

In all, bomb squad members made about 120 beeping eggs for the two hunts. Of these, 36 eggs were shared with the school’s 36 itinerant pre-school teachers who cover the state’s 100 counties, for use as a teaching aid.

– Lori Walston, DHHS Public Affairs

Mason Burt, preschool itinerant student from Wake County, finds a yellow egg in the azalea bush.

GMS Preschool student Coby Kea learned how to turn off his egg.

Sophia King (GMP preschool student) and Jane Barabash an Orientation and Mobility specialist from GMS Preschool enjoy the beeping egg.
Vulnerable Adult and Elder Abuse Awareness Month: May 6 – June 20

Each year, more than two million vulnerable and older adults are victims of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Research has shown that older adults who are abused, neglected, and exploited are three times more likely to die within 10 years than those who are not.

According to recent testimony given at the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging http://aging.senate.gov/hearing_detail.cfm?id=331550 elder abuse is grossly underreported because vulnerable and older adults who are being abused find it difficult to tell anyone due to shame and fear. Elder abuse affects men and women of all ethnic backgrounds and social status; it occurs in private residences and in facilities. Just ask the actor, Mickey Rooney, who gave his personal testimony at the Senate hearing and ended by saying “If elder abuse can happen to me, Mickey Rooney, it can happen to anyone.” http://aging.senate.gov/events/hr230mr.pdf

In 2010 there were more than 18,000 reports of abuse, neglect or exploitation of vulnerable and older adults made to North Carolina’s 100 county departments of social services. Reports are made by doctors and other professionals and by family members and concerned citizens in our communities.

Anyone who suspects that a vulnerable or older adult is in need of protection is required by North Carolina General Statute 108A-102 to report this information to the department of social services in the county where the adult resides.

Gov. Bev Perdue has proclaimed May 6 through June 20 as Vulnerable and Elder Abuse Awareness Month in North Carolina. This timeframe ties the awareness period to both the Mother’s Day and Father’s Day weekends, in the hopes of reinforcing the spirit of respecting and valuing not just parents, but all elders.

**Take an active role in protecting vulnerable and older adults**

- **VOLUNTEER** – in local programs that provide assistance and support for vulnerable and older adults in your community and long term care facilities.
- **EDUCATE** – yourself, family, and community about Elder Abuse by visiting the following websites:
  - Elder Justice Coalition website
    [www.elderjusticecoalition.com](http://www.elderjusticecoalition.com)
  - National Center on Elder Abuse website
    [www.ncea.aoa.gov](http://www.ncea.aoa.gov)
  - National Adult Protective Services Association website
    [www.apsnetwork.org](http://www.apsnetwork.org)
  - National Long Term Care Ombudsman Association website
    [www.ltcombudsman.org](http://www.ltcombudsman.org)
  - North Carolina Division of Aging and Adult Services at [www.ncdhhs.gov/aging](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/aging)

- **PARTICIPATE** in a Walk for Awareness on Dix Campus Monday, June 13 at 10a.m. starting and ending at the Division of Aging and Adult Services, Taylor Hall.

- **REPORT** – suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation to Adult Protective Services in the North Carolina county where the adult lives. Contact information for county departments of social services is at this website:
  [www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/local](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/local)

- **SPEAK OUT** – Don’t ignore this problem—it’s not going away. Advocate for funding of the Elder Justice Act passed in March 2010 and passage of the Elder Abuse Victims Act of 2011.

- **SHOW THE WORLD** that you care. Wear something purple to observe World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 15, 2011.

- **SPEAK OUT** – Don’t ignore this problem—it’s not going away. Advocate for funding of the Elder Justice Act passed in March 2010 and passage of the Elder Abuse Victims Act of 2011.

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Spanning from the Great Smoky Mountains – America’s most-visited national park – to the Outer Banks, North Carolina remains a popular tourist destination for people of all ages. According to the N.C. Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development, our state ranks sixth in the number of domestic visitors.

Many of the state’s attractions are accessible. Did you know that the Biltmore Estate has an elevator? Or that the N.C. Transportation Museum’s train ride can be made wheelchair-accessible? Or that, if you are Deaf or hard of hearing, you can borrow a device that will caption everything spoken over the PA system at the Carolina Panthers’ home games?

People with disabilities who enjoy traveling can read about accommodations such as these in ACCESS North Carolina, a comprehensive, detailed travel guidebook that contains accessibility information on hundreds of tourist sites across the state.

The upcoming edition of ACCESS North Carolina, planned for publication later this year, will include accessibility information for stadiums across the state and a list of beaches that lend out all-terrain wheelchairs for visitors with mobility disabilities.

ACCESS North Carolina will also highlight the new Top Shop building with an elevator that gives people who use wheelchairs access to Grandfather Mountain’s famous Mile High Swinging Bridge. It will also feature the new Fintastic! tactile, talking fish exhibit at the North Carolina Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores and Greensboro’s new International Civil Rights Center & Museum, which is wheelchair-accessible and has captioned videos. The travel guidebook will also help readers find some of North Carolina’s little-known treasures such as Pisgah National Forest’s Cradle of Forestry Discovery Center and its camouflaged wheelchair lift, Braille trail map and Adventure Zone trail with activities appropriate for children with autism.

As the number of people with disabilities swells with an aging population, more and more people can benefit from such valuable detail. The N.C. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services has published ACCESS North Carolina since 1986. Data is being assembled and updated for the book’s next printing, which will expand its listings for people with a variety of disabilities, including people who are Deaf or hard of hearing and people with vision loss.

Free copies of ACCESS North Carolina are available at any North Carolina Welcome Center or by contacting Philip Woodward, NCDVRS Access Specialist, at philip.woodward@dhhs.nc.gov or 919-733-0390. Anyone with questions about accessibility at a N.C. tourist site or anyone who wants to suggest a site to add, volunteer to assist with collecting information, or share feedback to improve ACCESS North Carolina may also contact Mr. Woodward.

— Philip Woodward, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Can your child hear you?

Thanks to the Division of Public Health’s Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program, children born in North Carolina are screened for hearing loss before they go home from the hospital. About three children out of every 1,000 newborns have hearing loss. But an equal number will acquire hearing loss as preschoolers.

Each child develops at an individual rate, but there are certain skills or “milestones” that most children will have mastered by the time they reach a certain age. Being aware of the hearing and speech milestones helps a parent recognize when hearing loss may be an issue. Whenever there are concerns about a child’s speech, hearing needs to be checked. Your child’s doctor can refer you to a pediatric audiologist or speech therapist to help.

Here are some milestones:

**Birth – 3 months**
- Startles to loud sounds
- Seems to recognize your voice
- Quiets or smiles when spoken to

**4 – 6 months**
- Babbles with many different sounds
- Moves eyes in direction of sounds
- Notices toys that make sounds
- Vocalizes excitement and displeasure

**1 – 2 years**
- Points to some body parts when asked
- Says more words every month
- Listens to simple stories, songs and rhymes
- Puts two words together (“more juice”)

**2 – 3 years**
- Understands differences in meaning (“on-in”)
- Has a word for almost everything
- Often asks for objects by naming them

**3 – 4 years**
- Hears when you call from another room
- Talks about activities at school or a friend’s home
- People outside family usually understand child’s speech

**5 – 6 years**
- Pays attention and can answer questions about a short story
- Uses the same grammar as the rest of the family
- Communicates easily with other children and adults

For more information on newborn hearing screening, visit [www.ncnewbornhearing.org](http://www.ncnewbornhearing.org).

— Kathleen Watts
Division of Public Health
Broughton’s Red Apple

Broughton Hospital has been designated a “Red Apple” by the N.C. Prevention Partners’ (NCPP) for its commitment to providing a healthy food environment and choices to its patients, visitors and employees.

“Broughton Hospital is taking important steps to offer healthier foods including portion guidelines, healthy lifestyle education and employee incentives as part of N.C. Prevention Partners’ statewide Healthy Food in Hospitals initiative, said Tom Mahle, Broughton CEO.

The project is outlined by five core guidelines – access, pricing, marketing, employee benefits and education. Each guideline aims to make it easier to eat healthy. Broughton Hospital is using pricing to help promote the delicious and healthy choices. An employee can get a filling and delicious “heart healthy” lunch including a drink for less than 500 calories and a cost under four dollars, Mahle said.

N.C. Prevention Partners (www.ncpreventionpartners.org/hospitals) – a statewide leader in reducing preventable illness and early death – works with hospitals across the state to provide healthy, affordable food options in the cafeteria, vending machines and wherever food is sold or provided on campus. This project is funded by a grant from The Duke Endowment in a partnership with the N.C. Hospital Association.

“Healthy foods are in North Carolina hospitals’ future,” said Anne Thornhill, a senior health promotion manager at NCPP. “While many hospitals are already taking important steps to offer healthy options, our goal is for all hospitals to be doing more to ensure people who want healthy options can get them. More than half of the hospitals in the state are actively promoting a healthy food environment, putting the state on the map as a national leader in obesity prevention.”

– Renee Whisenant, Broughton Hospital

State Lab welcomes robotic arm

The newest addition in the State Laboratory of Public Health is a single, robotic arm that can be just as hard-working as any laboratory technologist.

Each day, FANUC (fah-nook) the robot caps and uncaps approximately 1,000 tubes containing HIV samples sent to the State Lab for testing. FANUC was custom built for the HIV lab by PaR Systems and FANUC Robotics to protect employees from the potential for exposure as well as the repetitive motion involved in the task of preparing samples for testing.

Since FANUC’s arrival in November, HIV lab technologists have been trained to use the robot and have learned to perform maintenance and make some minor repairs themselves.

“Because this technology is so new, we’ve been able to suggest modifications to the design to improve the robot’s performance,” said Lab Technologist Amanda Smith.

Aside from the initial set up of each tray, Smith said that robot works unassisted, freeing lab staff to do other tasks. It takes FANUC approximately 30 minutes to uncap each tray of specimens.

– Julie Henry, DHHS Public Affairs
Safety is NO accident: together we can prevent injuries!

What is the leading cause of death for babies, children, teens, and young adults in North Carolina? The answer may surprise you, but injuries and violence are the culprits.

In fact, injuries and violence are the leading cause of death for North Carolinians ages one to 55. The major causes of death from injury are motor vehicle crashes, falls, drug poisonings, suicides and homicides. Most are preventable.

The Division of Public Health, Injury and Violence Prevention Branch works every day to save lives by collecting statewide data about the problem, coordinating a large network of partners across the state, and implementing evidence-based prevention programs.

“No one should have to suffer from avoidable tragedies,” said Alan Dellapenna, chief of the Injury and Violence Prevention Branch. “Whether you take small or big steps, you can make significant progress toward a safer community and an injury-free North Carolina.”

This year, the American Public Health Association focused national attention to this issue by designating the theme of April’s National Public Health Week to be Safety is NO Accident: Live Injury-Free. Here are some easy changes you can make to keep yourself and others safe and injury-free:

- Model respectful communication in your interactions with children, family members and in the community.
- Think big: consider organizing larger initiatives that can help everyone stay safe.
- Work with law enforcement to organize a medication take back event so that people can safely and securely dispose of old or unused medicines.
- Develop a suicide prevention program that encourages community members to learn about recognizing and responding to people who may be suicidal.
- Organize Tai Chi classes to help promote physical activity and prevent falls among older adults.
- Educate policymakers about the importance of traffic calming measures in residential and urban areas.
- Assess the work you do and see how it relates to injury and violence prevention. Contact the Injury and Violence Prevention Branch to find out how to get involved.

For more information and tips contact the Injury and Violence Prevention Branch at beinjuryfreenc@dhhs.nc.gov.

– Julie Henry, DHHS Public Affairs
Longer, sunny days … warmer temperatures … and ticks and mosquitoes?

You read it right. Warm weather seasons are wonderful in North Carolina, but with the blooming flowers and green grass we also get ticks and mosquitoes.

May is Tick and Mosquito Awareness Month, and the state divisions of Environmental Health and Public Health are once again encouraging people to take the necessary precautions to prevent being bitten by ticks and mosquitoes.

“It’s a known fact that ticks and mosquitoes are common in North Carolina and commonplace to summer activities,” said Dr. Nolan Newton, chief of the Public Health Pest Management Section in the Division of Environmental Health. “What most people don’t realize is that these pests are more than just a nuisance – some ticks and mosquitoes carry germs that can make people seriously ill. North Carolina reported more than 450 cases of tick-borne diseases to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2009, and the majority of those were Rocky Mountain spotted fever.”

Nolan added that there are simple, easy ways to ‘fight the bite’ while enjoying the outdoors over the next several months.

“Whether at home or work, reduce your likelihood of these illnesses by covering as much of your skin as possible whenever you are outside,” Newton said. “Mow the lawn often to keep grass short, clear brush and leaf litter under trees. Empty or remove containers that hold water to prevent mosquito breeding grounds. Keep playground equipment away from yard edges and out of deep shade. Remove plants that attract wild animals like deer and rodents. Make sure your outdoor pets are treated for ticks.”

People who travel outside should use a repellent containing DEET, oil of eucalyptus or picaridin on skin or one with permethrin on clothing, Newton said. Be sure to follow the directions when applying repellents.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends several repellents against mosquitoes: DEET, picaridin and oil of lemon eucalyptus. Most repellents are safe for use on children two months of age and up, except oil of lemon eucalyptus, which should not be used on children under the age of three. Repellents labeled for application to clothing provide excellent protection against both ticks and mosquitoes. Consumers should look for products that contain the CDC-recommended ingredients, and should read and follow all label instructions.

Ticks

Proper and prompt removal of ticks is the key to preventing infection. Use fine-tipped tweezers to remove ticks, getting as close to your skin as possible and pulling steadily upward without twisting the tick. Note the day you removed the tick on a calendar. If you become ill within a month after, be sure to tell your physician the date you removed the tick.

Other tips regarding ticks and tick removal include:

■ Check yourself and your children often when outdoors and quickly remove any ticks. Pay particular attention to the nape of the neck, behind the ears and the groin, which are favorite places for ticks to attach.
Do not use matches, hot nails, kerosene or alcohol to remove a tick. They will not make a tick let go and may cause the tick to release bacteria into the bitten area.

After removing the tick, thoroughly disinfect the bite site and wash your hands with soap and water.

If you have any signs or symptoms of tick-borne disease in the month following a tick bite, seek medical help. Symptoms of Rocky Mountain spotted fever may include sudden onset of fever, headache and muscle pain, followed by development of a rash. Symptoms of Lyme disease may include a “bull’s-eye” rash accompanied by nonspecific symptoms such as fever, malaise, fatigue, headache, muscle aches and joint aches.

For additional information on mosquitoes and ticks, visit the following websites: www.deh.enr.state.nc.us/phpm, www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/arbovirus and www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/tick.

– Laura J. Leonard, Division of Environmental Health

Critters delivered to old and young

The haul at DPH was part of more than 1,500 stuffed bunnies, chicks, ducks and other critters collected during the DHHS Bunny Drive in Raleigh and distributed to area hospital pediatric and geriatric wards, residential centers and nursing homes during Holy Week.

The furry friends were distributed to the following facilities in Wake, Cumberland, Harnett and Johnston counties: Tammy Lynn Center, Veteran’s Hospital–Fayetteville, Wake Children’s Emergency Room, Wake Pediatric Unit, WakeMed Rehabilitation, Wake Children’s Same Day Surgery, Rex Rehabilitation Center, Rex Pediatric Unit, Johnston Memorial Hospital, Western Wake Hospital, Magnolia Living Center, Liberty Commons, Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, Betsy Johnson Hospital, Britthaven of Smithfield, Brain Center Health & Rehab – Clayton, and Johnston County Sheriff’s Department.

Beverly Godwin, who works in the Controller’s Office, offered a special thank you to the many building coordinators and helpers for all their efforts to make this a success.

“Your hard work makes the bunny drive possible and a huge success each year,” she said.

– Julie Henry, DHHS Public Affairs
Celebrating 100 years

State Health Director Dr. Jeffrey Engel joined Guilford County Health Director Merle Green as her department celebrated 100 years of public health. Guilford County was the first in the state to establish a full-time program – on May 1, 1911 – and the second in the nation.