



STATE OF ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF  
**PUBLIC HEALTH**

Donald E. Williamson, MD  
State Health Officer

October 5, 2011

Herb Bobo, R.Ph.  
Executive Secretary  
Alabama State Board of Pharmacy  
111 Village Street  
Hoover, AL 35242

Dear Mr. Bobo:

During public health and medical emergencies, many pharmacists in Alabama are eager and willing to volunteer services in their areas of expertise. Hospitals, clinics, other health care facilities, and emergency medical locations depend upon those services in order to function properly during emergency situations. Optimally utilizing pharmacists as volunteers involves pre-planning by both the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) and the pharmacist.

In the midst of a disaster, health care facilities may be unable to verify basic licensing or credentialing information, including training, skills, competencies, and employment. Furthermore, the loss of telecommunications may prevent contact with primary sources that verify volunteer credential information during an event.

The ADPH Center for Emergency Preparedness (CEP), in coordination with its Pharmacy Division and others, coordinate health, pharmacy, medical and social services in Alabama that will be accessed during public health threats and emergencies. As part of this coordination, CEP maintains and manages the Alabama Emergency System for Advance Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals (ESAR-VHP) volunteer registry. The system is known as Alabama Responds.

Alabama Responds is an online database that allows ADPH to register volunteer pharmacists on a daily basis, and verify provider identification and credentials before an event occurs. This process allows volunteer pharmacists to be utilized rapidly when disaster strikes. The goal of Alabama Responds is to eliminate problems that occur when mobilizing health professional volunteers, including pharmacists, during an emergency response. Working within this network, pharmacist volunteers will be immediately able to provide services within Alabama and surrounding areas.

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During a disaster, requests received by CEP for volunteers will specify the skill sets that a volunteer should possess. ADPH will use Alabama Responds to match requested skill sets so the appropriate volunteer may be deployed. By registering today in Alabama Responds, pharmacists will help reduce the time it takes to provide medical care to victims who are impacted by public health emergencies and disasters.

Alabama Responds also provides important benefits to pharmacy volunteers. By registering, volunteer information is recorded in a registry that is maintained and utilized in a manner consistent with all federal, state, and local laws governing security and confidentiality. In addition, pharmacy volunteers who register in Alabama Responds will be eligible for volunteer protections that are available to volunteers who are activated and deployed through the system during declared public health emergencies and disasters.

State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson said, "We hope pharmacists will consider joining our volunteer network. Registering through the Alabama Responds system will not only help others, it will provide safeguards for you. Together we can make a critical difference in the lives of those impacted by public health emergencies and disasters."

For more information on Alabama Responds, program organization and program guidelines, read frequently asked questions at [www.adph.org/volunteer](http://www.adph.org/volunteer). Please email any questions to [alresponds@adph.state.al.us](mailto:alresponds@adph.state.al.us) or contact me at: [Charlie.Thomas@adph.state.al.us](mailto:Charlie.Thomas@adph.state.al.us).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles Thomas", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Charles Thomas  
State Pharmacy Director

CCT/PW