

A new way to monitor disease outbreaks

Clark County Public Health has a new tool for conducting disease investigations. It's the Emergency Community Notification System (ECNS), an emergency management tool that allows Public Health to make automated calls to a selected group of people and request a response to some multiple choice questions. Responses are instantly received and tabulated, allowing Public Health staff to more quickly identify a disease outbreak and prevent the spread of illness. ECNS is more efficient than a traditional call center, which can last several days and cost thousands of dollars. When Public Health staff tested ECNS last November during a gastrointestinal outbreak at an elementary school, they received data in minutes from the households of absent students. The cost? Just \$7.50.

Public Health plans to use ECNS during future disease outbreaks or other public health emergencies. If you are contacted, you will hear a message identifying Public Health as the message originator and explaining the process for responding to questions. If you don't recognize the caller ID and choose not to answer the call, the system will leave a message telling you that it will call again in 15 minutes, and letting you know the number you should expect on your caller ID.