

Bristol County MRC

M O N T H L Y R E G I O N A L N E W S L E T T E R



Santa's Helper

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U P C O M I N G E V E N T S

On December 7th, 2011 the Greater Fall River MRC assisted the Fall River Health Department with providing a flu clinic for the community residents. What makes this such a unique event is that the Greater Fall River MRC unit was chosen out of 968

units considered . The clinic was a part of the filming for a MRC commercial to be aired next year on National TV, and will also be viewed as a segment on Joan Lunden's Business Journal. Next year marks the 10th Anniversary of the MRC. On hand for this event

was Greater Fall River Director Alvin McMahon, Fall River Mayor Will Flanagan, Captain Rob Tosatto Director of the Office of Civilian Volunteers, Jennifer Frenette MRC Region I Coordinator, and Mike Coughlin State MRC Coordinator

H O T T O P I C S L E C T U R E

Dr. Alfred DeMaria from the State Office of Epidemiology will be in town to present a lecture on current Public Health "Hot Topics". This event will be held on January 18th, 2011 at the Taunton Holiday Inn. Dr. DeMaria has

provided the Bristol County MRC with similar training in the past and brings great experiences to share with our units regarding all matters with current influenza virus, Triple-E, and other nasty vermin that we could po-

tentially become exposed to. Please contact your unit coordinators to express your interest in attending.. Be aware this date is tentative and subject to change. PHEP coalition members are welcome to attend.

PRINCIPLES OF PREPAREDNESS

Snow Blower Safety

If you own a snow blower (also called a snow thrower), you'd probably agree that it's a time saver. You no longer have to shovel out your driveway one back-straining shovelful at a time. Now you turn on the engine and clear away snow effortlessly. But, snow blowers can be dangerous if you don't operate them properly. Make sure that you have carefully read the owner's manual. Also, review these tips to use your snow blower safely.

A snow blower can have two major sources of danger:

An **Auger** is the sideways spinning blade that removes the snow. The blade can easily cut fingers if you try to remove clogged snow or debris. In 2001 there were 4,680 snow blower-related injuries requiring emergency room care. Many of these were related to hands or feet getting caught in moving parts.

The **Gas-powered engine** can release the deadly gas carbon monoxide. People have died of carbon monoxide poisoning by running a gas-powered snow blower in an enclosed space, such as inside a shed or garage.

Be safe when using your snow blower and keep these points in mind:

- Do not remove snow or debris with your hands or feet. First, always turn off the engine and disengage the clutch or unplug the motor (if your machine is electric). Wait five seconds. Then use a clearing tool (often attached to the machine), a stick or broom handle to clear away the snow or debris from the blade or discharge chute.
- Keep your hands and feet clear of all moving parts.
- Keep all shields in place.
- Don't wear scarves or loose-fitting clothes that can get stuck in moving parts.
- Wear hearing protection while running the machine.
- Never leave the gas engine running in an enclosed place.
- For electric models, always plug into a grounded (three-prong) outlet. If you use an extension cord, make sure it is three-prong. Be careful not to get the cord caught in the blade.
- Be careful of running over objects hidden in the snow (balls, toys or tools, for example). If you run over these items, they also will shoot out of the shaft and could harm you or someone else.

Safe fuelling and gasoline storage tips:

- Add fuel to the tank outdoors.
- Never add fuel when the engine is running.
- Wait until the engine is cool before refueling.
- Keep the gasoline can capped.
- Store gasoline outside the home, away from heat sources.

Finally, never let children operate a snow blower. Keep children away from any snow blower that is in use. And never leave a snow blower unattended.

Infection Control Update

Baby Boomers Most at Risk for Hepatitis C Virus

Research experts urge the general public to be tested for hepatitis C virus, especially baby boomers, adults born between 1946-1964, who could be most at risk for this disease. Baby boomers are more likely to have been exposed to dangerous risk factors decades ago, such as sharing a drug needle, being tattooed or pierced with unsterilized tools or receiving a tainted blood transfusion. The disease often has no symptoms, and if untreated, can lead to chronic infection that can scar the liver, cause liver failure or cancer and potentially lead to liver transplantation.

Hepatitis C virus (HCV) is the most common chronic blood borne infection in the United States, with 35,000 to 185,000 new cases diagnosed per year. Worldwide, 180 million people are chronically infected with Hepatitis C, with an estimated 3 million to 4 million new cases reported each year. The disease particularly affects minorities, Hispanics, Asian-Americans and African-Americans.

"This disease has grown to epidemic proportions, with 350,000 people around the world dying from hepatitis C-related liver disease," says Milan Kinkhabwala, MD, chief of the Division of Transplantation at the Montefiore Einstein Center for Transplantation. "But it is called the 'silent killer' because many people don't even know they

have it. This condition can be asymptomatic for decades and then present itself when it has already severely damaged the liver."

Blood tests are essential to detecting hepatitis C, because now there are ways to treat the condition, and even reverse damage to the liver."

New drugs have shown promise in clearing the virus from the body and almost doubling the cure rate of the disease," says Allan Wolkoff, MD. "Another key benefit is that they cut treatment time in half, thus reducing the time the patient has to endure the severe side effects, which include anemia, depression and flu-like symptoms like fatigue, fever and headache."

When symptoms do occur after the disease has progressed, they're generally mild and flu-like and may include fatigue, fever, nausea or poor appetite, muscle and joint pain, bruising, abdominal pain, jaundice and itching. At that point, chronic infection can lead to scarring of the liver (fibrosis) and then advanced scarring (cirrhosis). Scarring of the liver makes it difficult for the liver to function properly and can be devastating to the rest of the body, often causing liver failure or liver cancer.



The image is a Christmas card with a deep red background. On the left side, three large, round, red ornaments with gold filigree patterns are hanging from thin white lines. The background is decorated with various white and gold elements: swirling lines, small hearts, stars, and circles. The text 'Merry Christmas 2011' is written in a white, elegant script font on the right side of the card. The entire card is framed by a thin red border with rounded corners.

*Merry
Christmas*
2011