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**Containment of Mock Hazardous Chemical Spill Staged in New Rochelle**

**Drill organized by United Hebrew of New Rochelle, in part, because of new federal emergency preparedness mandate which takes effect November 15**

*Over 40 United Hebrew staff, plus New Rochelle Fire Department and New York State Department of Health*

(New Rochelle, NY, July 28, 2017).......We’re living in interesting times, for sure. It’s not just terrorism that keeps our leaders up at night; it’s chemical spills, fires, and hurricane preparedness as well.

Now, the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) mandates that healthcare providers must be prepared to handle all kinds of emergency situations. Accordingly, United Hebrew of New Rochelle organized a full-scale “Code Orange” emergency preparedness drill in response to a simulated chemical spill, that was staged in the lower level of its 296-bed skilled nursing facility in New Rochelle.

The New Rochelle Fire Department descended upon the facility at 1:30 p.m. today, surprising most of the staff, which immediately reported to the staging area. A partial evacuation of staff took place, two individuals posing as severely ill or unconscious staff were treated, and the chemical spill was contained.

“Our staff responded swiftly, and our local emergency responders worked steadily at our side to quickly contain the fake chemical spill,” says Rita Mabli, president and CEO of United Hebrew. “We’re all pleased by the results of the drill, which ensures we are well prepared to reinforce the safety of the residents in our care.”

The exercise was designed to test staff response to the situation and to help improve coordination between the facility, local, and county emergency resources in the case of such a disaster.
“This drill worked because it not only helped one of our partners in the community, it benefits our department as well,” said Louis DeMeglio, fire commissioner and chief, New Rochelle Fire Department. “It’s a great training exercise for us to do together and better prepares us for the future.”

This was not the first time United Hebrew practiced a coordinated response to an emergency situation according to Mabli. Her staff has also rehearsed what to do in an active shooter situation, and how to handle a plane crashing into the building. United Hebrew also provides regular in-service training for its staff on situations particular to the care of an aging population, such as the wandering of residents diagnosed with Alzheimer’s or dementia.

After Hurricane Sandy, United Hebrew upgraded its disaster plans in order to ensure care is delivered without interruption to the 1,000 seniors the organization serves through its home health division and across the entire eldercare campus, which includes the nursing home, assisted living, and Alzheimer’s and dementia care. In addition to the emergency policies and procedures in place, the organization stocks plentiful supplies, and has five backup generators and a backup call system.

According to CMS, the new rules apply to 17 different types of healthcare providers, including hospitals and long-term care facilities. Providers must adhere to four best practice standards: developing an emergency plan, creating a communications plan, having a training program and developing appropriate policies and procedures. United Hebrew is well-prepared to meet the mandate, according to Mabli.

“We’re ready. Advance planning is essential to caring for our seniors,” said Mabli. “Our residents’ healthcare needs don’t stop when disaster strikes, so time we spend anticipating and preparing for emergencies is time well spent. We do everything we can to protect our ‘family,’ and that is how we think of our residents.”

About United Hebrew
United Hebrew of New Rochelle is a vibrant not-for-profit, non-sectarian, multi-service campus of comprehensive care nestled on 7.5 acres. United Hebrew has been serving the Westchester metropolitan area since 1919, and today, works with more than 1,000 clients daily. Services include: Long-Term Skilled Nursing; Burke Rehabilitation at United Hebrew; Willow Towers Assisted Living (The Beverly and Alfred J. Green Pavilion), Memory Care at Willow Gardens, The Phoenix Neighborhood and Griffen Program at Willow Towers, and Nightingale Neighborhood at United Hebrew; Independent Senior Housing (Low-Savin Soundview and Meadow Lane Senior Apartments); Health at Home (AZOR Licensed Home Health Care and a Certified Home Health Agency); and Private Geriatric Care Management Services (Raven Care Advocates). For more information, call (914) 632-2804 or visit www.uhgc.org.