

The Public Health Response to Terrorism

Past Experience & Future Challenges



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Strengths of NY's Public Health Disaster Preparedness

- Large, sophisticated health care system.
- Strong public health infrastructure.
- State-of-the-art laboratory facilities.
- Experience with emerging infections.
- Disaster readiness
 - Planning for potential Y2K events.
 - Bioterrorism preparedness & training.



Strong Public Health Infrastructure

- **NYS Health Department**
 - 4 Regional Offices
 - 9 District Offices
 - 2 Hospitals
 - Wadsworth Labs
 - School of Public Health
 - 4 Veterans' Homes
- **NYC Health Dept.**
- **57 Counties**
 - 36 full-service public health units
 - 21 partial-service public health units



State-of-Art Laboratories: Wadsworth Center

- **Dedicated, modern Level 3 laboratory for bioterrorism testing, with surge capacity.**
- **Specially trained team of scientists to coordinate bioterrorism testing.**
- **Validated protocols in place for testing and analysis of molecular & environmental anthrax.**
- **Exceptional environmental and nuclear testing capacity. 1 of 5 labs in U.S. licensed to measure chemical terrorist agents in human specimens.**



Current Actions: Preparedness Planning

- **State, counties & hospitals updating terrorism response plans.**
- **Strengthening preparedness for wide range of scenarios, including:**
 - mass trauma events
 - intentional release of biological agents
 - intentional release of chemical agents
 - intentional release of radiological agents.



Current Actions:

Enhanced Disease Surveillance

- **Enhanced surveillance for unusual disease events at hospital Emergency Rooms.**
- **Mandatory disease reporting:**
 - Anthrax, smallpox & other possible biological agents on list of diseases that docs and labs must report immediately to DOH.
- **Doctors receiving info & training on rapid recognition & diagnosis of illnesses due to bioterrorism.**
 - “Bioterrorism Rapid Response” cards being distributed to all doctors & hospitals.



Current Actions: Response to Bioterrorism Events

- **Response, when necessary, will include:**
 - Mass vaccination
 - Mass distribution of antibiotics & other medicines.
 - Contact tracing.
 - Isolation & quarantine



Current Actions: Air Quality

- Environmental monitoring for possible release of biological, chemical and radiological agents.



Current Actions: Water Supply Security

- **Implementing enhanced security measures at water supply facilities.**
- **Emergency plans for water supplies strengthened.**
- **Enhanced testing and analysis of water supplies to detect unusual agents.**



Current Actions: Food Safety

- **Strengthened bioterrorism surveillance of food supply.**
- **Improved security measures to prevent & detect tampering with food supplies.**



Current Actions: Radiological/Nuclear Safety

- Heightened security at New York's 6 nuclear power plants.
- Enhanced radiological emergency response training.
- In the event of a radiological emergency:
 - Potassium iodide (KI) may be distributed to general population in areas surrounding nuclear power sites. (protects thyroid from radioactive iodine.)
 - Evacuation
 - Sheltering

