

# The Public Health Response to Terrorism

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## Past Experience & Future Challenges



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**Prior to  
September 11th,  
we felt relatively  
safe & secure  
in the U.S.**



But on  
September 11th,  
the world  
as we knew it  
changed ...



DOH

# Prior Events Helped Prepare New York for Sept.11 & Anthrax

- Readiness for Potential Y2K terrorist events.
- Bioterrorism response training for counties (50 training sessions over 2 yrs.)
- Weapons of Mass Destruction response training.
- Bioterrorism Response Plan (prepared 3 yrs ago)
- Experience with Emerging Infections
  - West Nile
  - E. Coli
  - TB
  - Meningitis epidemic
- 1999 Ice Storm.



# 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.



# Large, Sophisticated Health Care System

- 72,000 physicians
- 260,000 RNs
- 55,000 EMTs
- 13,000 medical residents
- 8,000 PAs
- 260 acute hospitals
- 66,200 hospital beds
- 2,200 isolation rooms
- 680 nursing homes
- 36 trauma centers



# 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.**
- **MOU agreement to provide essential laboratory functions for CDC.**
- **Exceptional environmental and nuclear testing capacity. 1 of 5 labs in U.S. licensed to measure chemical terrorist agents in human specimens.**



# Role of Public Health in Disaster Response

- **Health Care Coordination**
- **Disease Surveillance, Prevention**
- **Environmental Health Surveillance & Response**
- **Laboratory Testing & Analysis**
- **Public Information**





**When the  
Towers  
collapsed,  
some on  
the ground  
were killed  
or injured  
by falling debris.**

**Hundreds  
of wounded  
were taken  
to hospitals**

**-- 7,000 ER visits**

**-- 500 admissions**



# State Health Department: Health Care Coordination

- **Directed hospitals go to “disaster status” -- activate hospital disaster preparedness plans.**
- **Monitored hospital trauma & bed availability in NYC, upstate NY, Connecticut, & N.J.**
- **Directed nursing homes to make contingency beds available.**
- **Monitored triage areas.**



# State Health Department: Health Care Coordination

- **Manned health care volunteer hotline .**
  - Handled nearly 6,000 calls from health care professionals -- including 1,440 physicians.
- **Waived certain medical credential requirements to allow immediate use of medical volunteers.**



# State Health Department: Health Care Coordination

- Secured 50,000 doses of tetanus vaccine for injured victims & emergency rescue workers.
- Coordinated blood drives with Red Cross & NY Blood Center.
  - Obtained permission to train additional phlebotomists.



# State Health Department: Health Care Coordination

- Staffed emergency command centers.
- Coordinated deployment of 25 ambulances per day to Ground Zero staging area.
- Transmitted CDC health alert to hospitals & local health units -- monitor unusual disease events.
- Coordinated health care response with hospitals, EMS, NYC DOH, CDC.



# State Health Department: Health Care Coordination **Other Actions:**

- **Provided emergency funding to hospitals:**
  - \$60 million advance Bad Debt & Charity
  - Medicaid & Medicare advance payments.
- **Provided emergency health insurance coverage for victims & families:**
  - Medicaid, Child Health Plus, Family Health Plus
- **Permitted emergency dispensement prescription medication renewals without documentation.**



# Collapse of the Towers sent smoke and debris flying over a 15-block area



- **25 mil sq. feet commercial space destroyed or damaged.**
- **1,300 businesses directly harmed.**
- **14,000 businesses indirectly affected.**
- **More than 150,000 jobs could be lost.**



# Environmental Health: Air Quality

- **Fires and collapse of WTC buildings produced smoke, debris & dust in air.**
  - Rescue workers required personal protective equipment & end-of-shift washdowns.
- **NYSDOH assisted city, state & federal agencies in extensive air monitoring and testing program.**
  - Testing for asbestos, dust, silica, metals, carbon monoxide, benzene, dioxins, etc.



# Agencies Monitoring Air Quality in WTC Area

- CDC
- NYSDOH
- NYCDOH
- EPA
- FBI
- NYSDEC
- NYCDEC
- OSHA
- NIOSH



# Environmental Health

## Air Quality

- **Conducting long-term follow-up & disease surveillance to determine asthma & other respiratory effects on residents & WTC response workers.**



# Environmental Health: Food Safety

- **NYSDOH deployed 16 food service sanitarians to protect food safety in Lower Manhattan.**
  - 24-hour monitoring food service sites .
  - Concern about safety of donated food (temperature during handling & storage)
    - **Protocols implemented at temporary food service venues.**
  - Rodent risk due to food rotting in over 200 restaurants closed & without power.
    - **Rat baits planted; restaurants cleaned.**



# Environmental Health: Water Quality

- **NYSDOH worked with NYC Health and Environmental Protection agencies to protect drinking water supplies.**
  - Drinking water quality monitored closely.
  - Ensured drinking water system buildings & structures guarded & secure.
  - Damaged water mains in WTC area valved off.



# Disease Surveillance

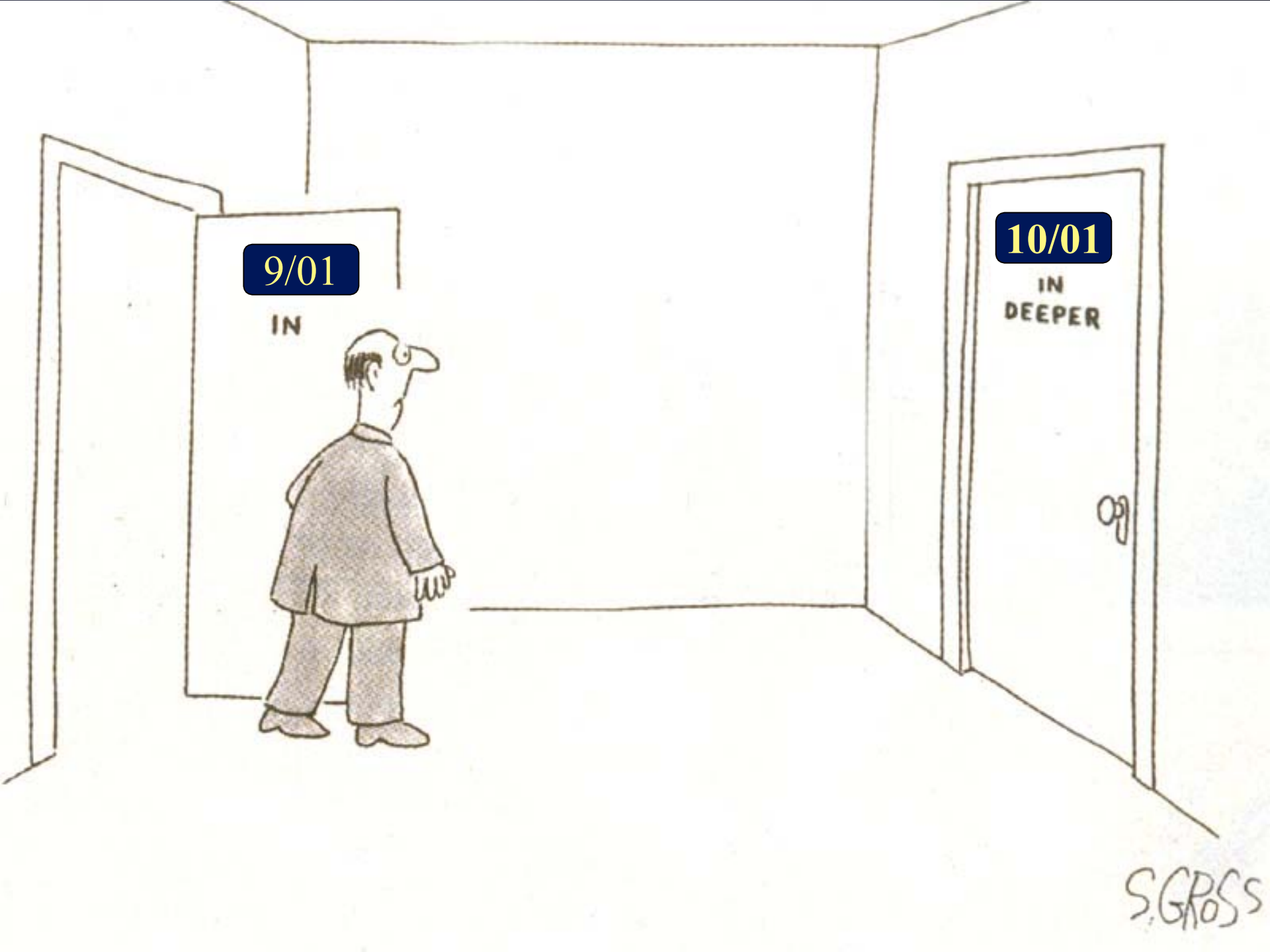
- Immediately following attack on WTC, NYSDOH transmitted CDC health alert to hospitals & public health agencies:
  - Enhanced surveillance for unusual disease events.



**We had not nearly recovered  
from the attack on the  
World Trade Center when ...**

**Letters bearing anthrax  
arrived in New York State**





9/01

IN

10/01

IN  
DEEPER

S. GROSS