

In this week's NGA Homeland Security News:

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If you would like to ask a question of the NGA or your peers in other states or post a best practice in this newsletter, please e-mail Carmen Ferro at cferro@nga.org.

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Homeland Security: News from the States

Homeland security stories from news sources around the country for the week ending February 5, 2010.

[California City Adopts Disaster Readiness Program for the Disabled](#)

The City of Oakland has developed a new disaster readiness plan that specifically addresses the needs of persons with disabilities during emergencies. The plan adds a Functional Needs Annex to its Mass Care and Shelter Plan. Highlights of the plan include:

- Identifying 20 accessible emergency shelters that will accommodate people with mobility disabilities and designating a Shelter Functional Needs Coordinator for each emergency shelter to assist persons with disabilities;
- Interfacing the city's emergency notification system with various electronic and wireless devices used by people with hearing, mobility and vision disabilities in addition to standard telephones; and
- Creating a Geographic Information System to assist first responders with identifying the location of persons who may require accessible transportation services.

[Kansas Highlights Social Media Use During Disasters](#)

Kansas emergency management officials and members of the private sector recently attended the *Midwest Disasters 2.0: Social Media and Emergency Response* training session, which focused on social media use during disasters. Participants examined how social media was used during events such as the 2007 Virginia Tech shootings and the 2008 Mumbai attacks. They also looked at examples of how social media was used for disaster preparedness, including how the National Weather Service has used Skype to communicate with the local media during a weather event and how the volunteer Medical Reserve Corps has used Facebook to improve recruitment in the region. The purpose of the workshop was to help both the public and private sector understand the scope and capabilities of social media technologies and develop plans for usage in disaster events.

Most Texas Children Skipped H1N1 Booster Shot

Eighty percent of children in Texas under the age of 10 did not return for their H1N1 vaccination booster shot, according to data collected by the Texas Department of State Health Services. In response, Texas has begun a "[Flu Fighters Tour](#)" in elementary schools to reinforce flu prevention. A total of 311,025 children received their first dose of H1N1 vaccine in Texas, but there is no record for as many as 250,000 children receiving their necessary booster shot. Authorities cite several possibilities for the data, including the recall of some vaccines due to potency, the drop-off in illnesses through the fall and skepticism about immunizations. The current H1N1 pandemic influenza killed more children in 2009 than the seasonal flu.

Washington, D.C., Metro Transit Police Conduct Terrorism Drills

The Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD) has launched the Blue TIDE—Terrorism Identification and Deterrence Effort—a new initiative aimed at deterring terrorists activity in the Metro system which included about 50 MTPD officers and the Metro's anti-terrorism unit. The initiative included a number of security sweeps and patrols at the Union Station Metrorail station and Metrobus boarding area outside of Union Station and served to remind the public to remain observant while riding Metro and report any suspicious behavior. The MTPD [will also conduct](#) a series of much larger emergency exercises throughout the month of February with scenarios that mirror the mass-casualty terrorist attacks on Madrid commuter trains in 2004, the London Underground in 2005 and in Mumbai in 2008. These drills will be followed by tabletop exercises that will help metro coordinate a strategy to mitigate such incidents with local agencies, including the police, fire and emergency departments in the National Capitol Region. The exercises are funded through a \$1.2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Urban Area Security Initiative.

Washington County Conducts Disease Drill to Prepare Authorities

First responders and public health officials have participated in a drill in Whatcom County, Washington, that portrayed an outbreak of a foodborne illness during the 2010 Winter Olympics, with hundreds of stricken people surging into the United States. Medical teams assessed the mock victims in their vehicles as they arrived in the parking area to determine what level of care each one needed and escorted them to the appropriate area. More than 100 individuals representing at least 14 federal, state and local agencies were involved in the exercise.

Counterterrorism News

United States Receives Low Grade on Bioterror Preparedness

According to a new [report](#) released by the U.S. Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Proliferation and Terrorism, the United States has made progress toward improving citizen preparedness but is inadequately prepared for a biological terror attack. The report suggests that if there is a terror attack by the end of 2013, the weapon is likely to be biological. It also suggests that the federal government should invest more resources in understanding the threat of biological weapons based on these findings:

- Evidence shows that terrorists are trying to acquire WMD;
- Acquiring biological WMD fits the tactical profile of terrorists;
- Terrorists have demonstrated global reach and organization to obtain and use WMD;
- If al Qaeda recruits skilled bioscientists, it is likely they will acquire the capability to develop and use biological weapons; and
- Terrorist opportunity to acquire and use such weapons is growing exponentially because of the global proliferation of nuclear material and biological technologies.

While there is evidence that the United States is behind in its ability to respond to a biological threat, progress has been made on citizen and community preparedness. Efforts such as developing checklists need to be expanded to ensure that all communities and citizens are prepared in the event of an attack.

Additional News

DHS Releases the Quadrennial Homeland Security Review

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has released the Quadrennial Homeland Security Review (QHSR). The QHSR outlines the strategic framework to guide the activities of participants in homeland security toward a common end. The five homeland security missions are:

- Preventing Terrorism and Enhancing Security;
- Securing and Managing U.S. Borders;
- Enforcing and Administering U.S. Immigration Laws;
- Safeguarding and Security Cyberspace; and
- Ensuring Resilience to Disasters.

DHS collected comments and ideas from over 20,000 stakeholders from the 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia to assist the writing of the QHSR. With the release of the review, DHS is now conducting a review of the Department to align the programmatic activities and organizational structure with the strategic framework set out in the QHSR.

Survey Finds a Growing Fear of Cyberattacks Among IT Executives

A recent survey of 600 information technology executives in 14 countries suggests that attacks on the Internet pose a growing threat to critical infrastructure systems especially the energy and communication systems. More than half of those surveyed stated that their own countries' laws were inadequate for deterring cyberattacks and identified the United States as one of the three most susceptible countries to attack. Additional survey findings include:

- Thirty-six percent of respondents named the U.S. as the country of most concern to fall victim to a foreign cyberattack;
- Forty-percent of respondents expect a major cybersecurity incident, meaning one causing an outage of at least 24 hours, loss of life or failure of company within the next year; and
- Eighty-percent of respondents expected a major cybersecurity incident within the next five years.