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CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT IN PREPAREDNESS

ISSUE

Volunteer and citizen organizations can perform critical roles during a major emergency. Officials need to involve citizens in preparedness efforts before an incident occurs. Officials can empower the public to take care of themselves, educate them on what to do during an emergency, and raise awareness on what they can do to help. Citizens will be involved in prevention and deterrence, which will allow first responders to perform their critical duties.

BACKGROUND

One of the most important ways citizens can help is to learn how to prepare their household for an emergency. Realizing that prepared citizens can lessen the burden on the response community, the American Red Cross, the Commonwealth of Virginia, the State of Maryland, and local officials in the District of Columbia have released preparedness guides specifically targeted to help households preplan for emergencies. These guides educate citizens on how to:

- Create a family emergency plan;
- Prepare an emergency supplies kit;
- Respond to specific types of incidents; and
- Locate the best sources of information immediately after an event.

This past spring, President Bush urged local communities across the country to start Citizen Corps councils to coordinate public education and awareness, outreach, and training of volunteers. Using and expanding existing networks of responders and volunteer groups, the councils unite representatives from local government, emergency management, medical services, law enforcement, the first responder community, volunteers, neighborhood commissions, water and utility providers, major industries, educational institutions, and transportation authorities. Working with state and federal agencies, these councils will coordinate community activities.

COMMITMENT TO ACTION

We will utilize mechanisms for regional cooperation in endorsing and implementing Citizen Corps programs within the National Capital Region.





DECISION-MAKING AND COORDINATION

ISSUE

Emergency response efforts in the National Capital Region (NCR) call for decision-makers at the local, state, and federal levels to coordinate and communicate their decisions in a clear, consistent, and authoritative manner including such matters as threat conditions, states of readiness, special response actions, early release of employees, or closing of key facilities. Events or threats of events including storms or terror attacks may trigger federal agency personnel to self-evacuate; i.e., leave their offices without official permission and prior to formal notification by the Office of Personnel Management. Federal decisions on expedited release of the workforce need to be coordinated with the City of Washington, DC, and should be coordinated with the State of Maryland and the Commonwealth of Virginia because their decisions affect traffic management and evacuation plans and procedures. In addition, private sector managers often make decisions based on what the federal government has decided for its workforce, and they may not have immediate or full information about evacuation destinations and transportation means given to federal employees. The coordination of this decision-making requires a more robust and institutionalized process for the NCR.

BACKGROUND

Coordinated decision-making is routinely accomplished in the NCR for weather-related events such as snowstorms. This can be used as a base to examine methods for emergency decisions. In addition to governmental decision-makers, many other people have to act on governmental closure decisions, including officials of for-profit and non-profit organizations; hospitals; schools; transportation organizations; and bridge, tunnel, roadway, and airport facilities. Additional attention should be paid to the secondary effects of such decisions on non-governmental workplaces, schools, and facilities. For example, the need for communication to the non-government sector regarding evacuation or sheltering in place; evacuation routes and modes of transport; and assistance to officials of buildings with special needs populations, such as hospitals and nursing homes, should be included.

There are two levels of decision-making that must be accomplished within the NCR—management of an overall incident and management of an incident site and interaction between elements of local, state, and federal government. This can best be achieved through the use of the Incident Command System, allowing integration of private sector elements where necessary. At the policy level, a new system is needed to collect and integrate incident management information and data from one or more major incidents in the NCR and to manage the complex web of intergovernmental relationships in an efficient and effective way.

DECISION-MAKING AND COORDINATION (CONTINUED)

The uniqueness of the NCR requires coordination among a large city, two states, and the three branches of the federal government. Both states must also ensure coordination with and between their local governments. Decisions within the federal government relative to the NCR respect the separation of power of the federal branches of government. The President or designee provides decision-making authority with regard to federal assistance and response to emergencies, to include decisions on the closing of federal executive branch offices. The Judicial and Legislative branches depend in part on the Executive Branch as well as the District of Columbia for resources to address emergencies affecting their institutions. However, they retain decision-making authority relative to actions affecting their own operations and personnel. The District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia maintain statutory authority to direct state or District agencies in response to emergencies or disasters. The states may also maintain authority for certain strategic actions affecting local governments; however most decision-making authority is left to the chief elected official in a local jurisdiction for actions in their respective community. Therefore, decision-making in the NCR requires the horizontal integration and coordination of decisions between local agencies and communities, as well as vertical coordination with the state. By virtue of encompassing the seat of the federal government, decisions in the NCR require an added level of vertical integration of those local and state decisions with the federal government.

COMMITMENT TO ACTION

We will work in partnership to utilize a coordinated process for decision-making for significant incidents or emergency situations in the NCR. This includes methods for coordination between operational entities as well as senior decision-makers in local and state governments, the federal government, and the private sector.





EMERGENCY PROTECTIVE MEASURES

ISSUE

Actions that individuals can take to prepare themselves, their families, and colleagues for potential emergency incidents are necessary to ensure the health and safety of the public in the event of a major emergency in the National Capital Region (NCR). Effective and well-coordinated emergency protective measures for the public and first responders need to be clearly defined and communicated. Education on protocols of when to implement these measures is also needed.

BACKGROUND

Emergency protective measures are implemented to prevent or minimize potential health and safety impacts on the public, emergency workers, and responders. These measures can include actions such as evacuation, sheltering-in-place, relocation, mass immunization or prophylaxis, and respiratory protection. Typically, evacuation and sheltering are the primary protective actions considered for use in local, state, and federal programs because they are the most effective. These measures are planned for and used by local, state, and federal agencies as well as industry and the private sector in their emergency management programs.

It is essential to devise effective response protocols involving the healthcare sector, and to educate the public about its role in responding to and recovering from any emergency incident. A plan for distributing the national pharmaceutical stockpile needs to be developed for the NCR. For hazardous materials and radiological preparedness and response programs, additional protective measures such as decontamination, access control, respiratory protection, shielding, relocation, control of foodstuffs and water, and others also may apply.

COMMITMENT TO ACTION

We will work in partnership to define and develop a common set of emergency protective measures to protect the health and safety of the public in the event of a major emergency event the NCR. Such measures will include standardized emergency protection guides, protocols, and procedures; public education on when to implement these measures; and coordinated pharmaceutical distribution plans across jurisdictions.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION

ISSUE

Protection of the infrastructure in the National Capital Region (NCR) against acts of terrorism is a major priority of government and the private sector. Substantial work has been done by local, state, and federal agencies regarding infrastructure protection, but it is recognized that this needs to be built upon to develop a regional planning focus. Given that a substantial portion of the NCR infrastructure is privately owned or controlled, there needs to be an effective process by which government and the private sector can communicate and coordinate on identifying and setting protection priorities for critical infrastructure assets and services.

BACKGROUND

The nation's critical infrastructure assets and services fall into multiple sectors, including:

- telecommunication networks and systems;
- electric power systems;
- gas and oil production storage and transportation facilities and systems;
- banking and finance organizations and institutions;
- transportation systems and facilities;
- food and water supply systems;
- emergency services systems and facilities;
- media facilities;
- hospital, mental health, and other healthcare facilities and services; and
- continuity of government, business, and non-profit services.

The NCR is home to a unique mix of local, state, federal, and privately owned or controlled infrastructure assets. Identification and protection of critical assets, particularly those that are attractive as targets for acts of terrorism, are fundamental to the security of the region. The private sector owns or controls a significant portion of the infrastructure in the NCR and therefore has a major stake in its protection. To this end, government and private sector stakeholders need to coordinate efforts and develop a process to improve asset protection methods and techniques for the region as well as protocols for continuity and recovery.

COMMITMENT TO ACTION

We will work in partnership with the private sector to jointly identify and set protection priorities and guidelines for infrastructure assets and services in the NCR.





MEDIA RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATION

ISSUE

Clear, consistent, and authoritative communication is essential during a major emergency or disaster. To allow for efficient communication for the immediate impact area and for the National Capital Region (NCR) as a whole, plans should be in place for a Joint Information System (JIS) that includes procedures and protocols for the establishment of one or more joint information centers (JICs). JICs may be established first for the immediate impact area(s) and then for the NCR, if needed.

BACKGROUND

The Joint Information System is an ongoing operational concept that can be used for information coordination both before and after an event. The JIS has a unifying concept, similar to the unified command system, wherein each organization maintains its unique identity but is viewed as part of the whole. It is not a “single voice,” but numerous voices providing a clear, unified message. Furthermore, the JIS is a means by which critical public information can be vetted and coordinated among the jurisdictions operating in the NCR. JIS policies and procedures can provide a framework for deciding which organization(s) will assume the lead for one or more emergency events affecting the NCR with respect to intra-regional coordination among jurisdictions, and external communication with media and citizens.

Jurisdictions may each establish a JIC. Because of the unique character of the NCR, FEMA established a dedicated Emergency Response Team (ERT) to coordinate weapons of mass destruction disaster consequences. The coordination efforts include the ability to establish a single regional JIC that would be supported and energized by the established JIS. FEMA and the Federal Response Plan agencies, plus the District of Columbia, State of Maryland, and Commonwealth of Virginia all have experience working with JICs. Utilizing a JIC concept in getting accurate information to the public and the media is critical. Since multiple jurisdictions and organizations may be affected by an emergency or disaster, it is essential to emphasize the need for the media to send out coordinated, consistent messages to the public. Lessons learned regarding the JIS by the state and local jurisdictions must be incorporated into any new system. Guidelines as well as any new training and education programs developed should include the results of past experiences.

How people perceive risk determines how they respond to it, which in turn sets the context for public policy. The task of risk communication is not just conveying information. It is to alert people when they ought to be alerted and reassure them when they ought to be reassured.

MEDIA RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATION (CONTINUED)

COMMITMENT TO ACTION

We will work in partnership to develop a Joint Information System (JIS) for the NCR during response to a major emergency or disaster event. Although co-location may not be possible, creating a process and protocols for operating as a “virtual” joint information center will achieve the goal of a coordinated voice for the public and the media. In turn, an NCR policy about communicating risk and emergency protective measures to the public in the event of an attack will be jointly developed.





Mutual Aid

ISSUE

Emergency response in the National Capital Region (NCR) could require implementing mutual aid agreements, such as the existing Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). This allows the regional partners to assist one another in disaster response. Currently, reimbursement and liability issues surround enacting mutual aid agreements across jurisdictional boundaries. A consensus needs to be reached on the mutual aid process and the responsibility, reimbursement, and liability involved with any existing or newly created agreements.

BACKGROUND

Federal, state, and local agencies in the NCR have a history of working across jurisdictions to support the needs of their neighbors in times of emergencies. However, involved agencies at any level may not always have the resources to respond adequately to an emergency or disaster. These mutual aid agreements have been utilized to provide for assistance in managing emergencies or to offer personnel or equipment assistance to neighboring jurisdictions when local or state resources are overwhelmed. Sixteen mutual aid agreements exist in the NCR that have a regional focus; and many more exist among the District of Columbia, the State of Maryland, and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia are each signatories to the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), which contains regulation for implementation, party responsibilities, limitations, licensing or credentialing and permitting provisions, liability, compensation, evacuation, and reimbursement arising from a request for mutual aid. It provides a structure for requesting assistance from other states, and resolves potential legal and administrative obstacles to providing assistance. EMAC may also enhance preparedness for terrorist attacks by providing for fast response, making available specialized response units and facilitating multi-state cooperation. EMAC does not reduce or eliminate assistance from federal resources, nor does it assume operational control.

COMMITMENT TO ACTION

We will utilize EMAC and pursue resolution of existing responsibility, reimbursement, and liability issues related to implementing mutual aid agreements in the NCR; explore a mechanism to analyze existing agreements and the need for additional agreements; explore agreements to support functional mutual aid response between local governments across state boundaries; utilize consistent and statutory authorization to facilitate participation of mutual aid response between local governments across state boundaries; examine the development of mutual aid agreements between federal agencies or institutions and communities; and explore methodologies for enhancing private sector mutual aid support.

TERRORISM PREVENTION

ISSUE

Strong and effective coordination of information and anti-terrorism intelligence is imperative, given the unique nature of the National Capital Region (NCR). It is essential that federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, state emergency management agencies, and first responders identify and perfect methods of promptly sharing the constant flow of information related to combating terrorism.

BACKGROUND

Designated NCR representatives from federal, state, and local emergency planning agencies, law enforcement agencies, and first responders will provide leadership for anti-terrorism coordination, initiatives, and activities.

Anti-terrorism initiatives are under way at all levels of local, state, and federal government. Law enforcement organizations bear the greatest responsibility for anti-terrorism activities. Prior to September 11, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, and the federal government had been conducting terrorism response and anti-terrorism planning. Many of the counter-terrorism efforts are coordinated through the FBI-sponsored Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTF) and the Anti-Terrorism Task Forces (ATTF), coordinated through the U.S. Attorney Offices for the District of Columbia, Eastern District of Virginia, and the District of Maryland. Since September 11, there has been a renewed and significant emphasis placed on the need for information sharing, particularly with respect to anti-terrorism matters.

State and local emergency management agencies and first responders from emergency medical services, fire and rescue, hazardous materials, and infrastructure protection have a role in intelligence sharing that needs to be fully developed at the regional level.

A consolidated and expedited method for granting national security clearances is also needed to help state and local representatives obtain the same level of national security clearances as their federal partners.

COMMITMENT TO ACTION

The United States Attorneys for the judicial districts within the NCR will work with the FBI to enhance coordination and information sharing through their respective JTTFs and ATTFs.





TRAINING AND EXERCISES

ISSUE

There is a need for a comprehensive program to include a calendar for terrorism and security-related training and exercises across the National Capital Region (NCR) that is inclusive of all levels of government, as well as schools and universities, health care institutions, and other private and non-profit partners as appropriate. This includes developing a methodology to document and implement lessons learned from actual emergency events and exercises, and reflecting national training and exercise standards and strategy requirements to the extent possible.

BACKGROUND

Jurisdictions in the NCR have been engaging in emergency preparedness training and exercises, a great deal of which have been conducted across jurisdictional boundaries. Yet, further steps are needed to assure the tightest linkage among all of the agencies and jurisdictions involved in homeland security in the region. Response in the NCR is unique in coordinating local emergency responders directly with federal agencies. This requires training and exercising tailored to response operations in the NCR. Exercises are crucial practice sessions for how plans and procedures will be carried out in real operations.

In order to assure that terrorism and security-related training and exercises in the NCR are consistent across jurisdictions and levels of government, a master calendar for training and exercises in the Region is needed. One calendar incorporating all training opportunities would focus resources on program enhancements and expanding opportunities. A comprehensive catalog of all courses provided by local, state, and federal agencies would be a logical complement to this initiative.

The National Homeland Security Strategy requires the establishment of national standards for training and exercises. A central coordinating body will determine training standards and establish an annual national exercise program for individuals and government representatives. Regional training and exercise efforts should be implemented in a manner that fits with the framework of the national strategy.

TRAINING AND EXERCISES (CONTINUED)

COMMITMENT TO ACTION

We will work in partnership to coordinate plans for terrorism and security-related training and exercises across the NCR that are inclusive of all levels of government, as well as schools and universities, health care institutions, and other private and non-profit partners as appropriate; set a calendar of exercises for the NCR to include one full-scale and one functional exercise per year including multi-jurisdictional exercises of all forms; and utilize a consistent methodology to document and implement lessons learned from actual emergency events and exercises. Where feasible, member jurisdictions shall provide the opportunity for other regional partner agency employees and representatives to attend their training and participate in workshops. Standards and approaches for training and exercises should be consistent across the NCR and reflect national training and exercise strategy requirements.

