



The Beacon

BY AND FOR EMERGENCY RESPONDERS

Special Feature

HAZMAT TRIAGE: "THE BENNER PLAN" FOR NUCLEAR, BIOLOGICAL, OR CHEMICAL PHYSICAL STRUCTURE CONTAMINATION®

By David Howard Benner
Prince William County Dept. of Fire and Rescue

As demonstrated in the past several weeks, a little bit of bio-terrorism can go a long way in disrupting our lives and work on a national scale. Anthrax is only one of the vast array of substances that we will have to be more vigilant in intercepting. Or, if we fail at interception, to quickly contain the danger and aggressively treat the results. The November/December issue of The Beacon may have a partial answer in combating the greater effects of a potential failure in interception in "HazMat Triage: The Benner Plan." This plan can easily be expanded to "triage," by color coding physical structures.

The color coding of this plan was picked to coordinate efforts with the "S.T.A.R.T" method of patient triage, or to be used as a free standing program in the HazMat field. It is designed to bring about a national standard in color coding the suspected contaminated (purple), the decontaminated (light blue), or non-contaminated (white) HazMat patients, personnel, and equipment.

Most often, yellow or red ribbons are used to cordon off restricted areas. In an incident with mass casualties using the "S.T.A.R.T" method of triage, those colors would only add confusion. Yellow and red warning colors are so widely used that they have little meaning anymore and are widely

ignored unless backed up with law enforcement. This personal insight comes from over 20 years of my life in public safety. The cordoning off of physical structures from all but the HazMat, decon and other rescue professionals needs to be redirected by a nationally recognized HazMat color coding system.

In nuclear, biological, or chemical incidents, no matter the cause, after the initial evacuation and rescue that would take place, the physical structures could be quickly cordoned off as to safe or unsafe to go into. The surrounding non-contaminated physical structures could be cordoned off with the color white. This could be used for buildings, wings of buildings or rooms. This way people could be assured that there was little danger and could continue on with work as usual in those areas.

The HazMat color coding of physical structures would be done from the white "non-contaminated" areas in towards, but not contacting, the purple "contaminated" areas. The purple "contaminated" color would clearly mark the physical structures or areas as HazMat areas to be quarantined from entry by all except the HazMat, decon and other authorized personnel. As rooms, corridors, tunnels, wings, buildings, and all physical structures are decontaminated, they would be marked with the light blue "decontaminated" color. This would identify the light blue "decontaminated" areas for an exposure-monitoring program.

Using this system would result in less confusion and fewer contamination and recontamination occurrences. Physical structures could be put back in service for a quicker return to work if this plan were used in all HazMat nuclear, biological, and chemical incidents.

"HazMat Triage: The Benner Plan" can work for both physical structures and as HazMat patient triage in nuclear, biological, and chemical

incidents. It is quick to do, easy to learn, and inexpensive to initiate and maintain.

Lt. Benner is a career paramedic/firefighter with the Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue in Virginia. He has been with the department since January 1980. He lives quietly with his wife and 9 children between two forks of the Shenandoah River in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Questions about this article may be sent to Lt. Benner at dbenner@pwcgov.org.

PUBLIC SAFETY WIRELESS NETWORK (PSWN) PROGRAM

PSWN is a joint Department of Justice and Treasury Department program designed to foster interoperability among wireless networks that meets the requirements of local, state, and federal public safety organizations.

Program Origin

As a result of former President Clinton's reinventing government initiative, former Vice President Gore released the National Performance Review (NPR) report in 1993, outlining actions for reengineering government. NPR Information Technology Initiative 04 (IT04) called for the planning, development, and implementation of an intergovernmental wireless network. The vision for the network as described in IT04 includes the nationwide development of interoperable systems for all types of public safety agencies at the local, state, and federal levels of government.

The Federal Law Enforcement Wireless Users Group (FLEWUG)

The FLEWUG began as an ad hoc group of federal radio spectrum users that met to address the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) mandate for digital narrowbanding by 2005. In 1994, at the direction of IT04, the Department of Justice and Treasury Department executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to formalize FLEWUG as a mechanism to address interoperability and other challenges related to public safety communications. Among the FLEWUG's key concerns outlined in the MOU are common standards for land mobile radio (LMR) technology, improved interoperability among federal wireless systems, and mechanisms for achieving cost effectiveness.

The Public Safety Wireless Network (PSWN)

In 1994, the Government Information Technology Services Board issued a memorandum directing the FLEWUG to coordinate the establishment of an intergovernmental wireless network. The FLEWUG formulated a management plan in 1995 to address the implementation and planning process for the national wireless network discussed in IT04. The plan, written not only for the federal user community, but also the state and local user community, proposed a methodology for exploring the options available for providing spectrally efficient, interoperable, and cost-effective wireless communications capabilities for the public safety community. To implement their plan, the FLEWUG issued the PSWN Program Management and Organization document, which led to the creation of the PSWN Program.

For more information about PSWN, please visit their Internet site at www.pswn.gov, or call 1-800-565-PSWN.

Source: PSWN Internet site

THE FIRST ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BIO/CHEM TERRORISM

February 12-13, 2002

Hyatt Regency in Crystal City, VA

Sponsors: The Heritage Foundation

Planned by E.J. Krause & Associates, Inc.

The First Annual International Conference on Bio/Chem Terrorism is a 1 1/2 day (non-classified) program with workshops led by leading experts from government and industry.

The conference will address: The terrorist threat, science against the threat, Dark Winter scenario, Capitol Hill's role, Homeland Defense, the military's plans and activities, the Public Health role, industry readiness, the role of the media, intelligence, and corporate preparedness.

The workshops will include: Fire/EMA/Police Management of Terrorism Incidents; The Military/Emergency Service interface; How to Plan, Organize and Budget an Effective WMD Plan; and Terrorism and Intelligence Operations.

For more information about this conference, contact Katie McDonnell at 301-493-5500, or visit the conference website at www.bioterrorism-defense.com/

WMD Analysis

CAN YOU HANDLE A HOAX?

By Damon Paul Coppola

About a month ago my wife called from work to say her office may be closing for the day. The reproductive legislative-rights group her organization shares floor space with had received an overnight letter containing white powder and a threatening note from the 'Army of God'. The police had already come and gone, leaving the now bleach-soaked and un-testable package behind. The building had been evacuated briefly, but then reoccupied. The FBI would be there any hour now to investigate. My only thought was, 'why aren't you calling me from the pay phone outside the building – get out of there!'

Clayton Lee Wagner, now in police custody, had single-handedly, and without a penny spent on research and development, caused panic, disrupted business, and tied up emergency and federal resources at over 500 locations throughout the Eastern US. We know there are countless other ideological, religious, militia, and anarchist groups or individuals whose targets lie in the smallest corners of hometown America. In this new age of fear, the hoax can be as effective a weapon as an actual attack. Possible severe psychological impact coupled with low risk of jail time may prove this a new weapon of choice among terrorists.

Consider the fact that the October anthrax attacks on the US, while causing only five actual deaths, made almost every American citizen scared of their mail. Cipro was stockpiled, and countless patients presented themselves to local hospitals exhibiting 'symptoms of exposure.' It is not practical nor easy to copy-cat a skyjacking, but the benefit to a terrorist of sending one cent worth of flour in a five-cent envelope with a thirty-four cent stamp – a total of forty cents - is thousands of dollars worth of response, testing, lost business, and possibly the lost confidence in local authority to protect.

These hoaxes not only instill fear, but also expose any weaknesses in local first response and severely drain cash resources. In Los Angeles, four

1998 hoaxes cost the city \$2 million, resulting from the range of equipment and personnel required in response to threats of mass destruction. So expensive have hoaxes been in Florida this year, that Governor Jeb Bush requested a federal emergency be called in his state to pay for the excessive cost of investigations.

The 1997 B'nai B'rith anthrax hoax in Washington, DC, is a good example of what emergency managers can expect to happen without sufficient staff training. This event, the hoax of an anti-Semitic, led to workers barricaded in their offices for over eight hours, the disruption of traffic in the surrounding area for as much time, and the humiliating scene of employees stripped to their underwear and hosed with chemicals on the sidewalk. It was not a confidence-building moment. A 1998 anthrax hoax in Riverside, CA, led to the disruption of a large section of the city when traffic was stopped for hours, UCLA students had trouble getting to their final exams, and many businesses suffered heavy losses during the vital Christmas shopping season. One concerned bystander who questioned an officer about his level of risk was told, "if you've been exposed, you're exposing everybody else, so keep yourself isolated! You may want to go to the hospital and get yourself checked."

While the 9/11 events were conducted primarily to cause as much destruction as possible, most terrorist attacks are carried out to maximize fear. The effects of a hoax last only as long as fear and confusion can be sustained, and that amount of time correlates with the amount of time in which information can neither be obtained nor distributed. Even poorly planned or unintentional hoaxes can produce confusion and terror, like one that occurred in March of 2001. An environmentalist group's attempt to make a point to 'polluters' by sending them gray powder representing 'pollution' was mistaken for an anthrax attack, leading to building evacuations and the decontamination of 20 employees.

Unlike bomb threats, the direct psychological effects of chem/bio-hoaxes can last for days without sufficient and accurate public information exchange. Victims often exhibit the psychosomatic symptoms of diseases they have been informed of only by media sensationalism. Belief that incubation-periods can extend for two or three months increases these effects, and with the onset of flu-season the situation is complicated further. Very often, a scared, angry public is left wondering why,

in their time of need, the officials they elected seem powerless to help.

So, what can be done?

First, hoaxes should not be an agency's first experience with chem/bio-terror. These events require a much different response than bomb-threats, and only training, exercise and technology can provide the necessary knowledge and awareness. Local response must have the capability to quickly and accurately determine the legitimacy of threats in order to dispel panic. All hoaxes must be treated as actual events until proven otherwise, thus demanding the coordinated response of police, fire, and public health officials. The National Domestic Preparedness Office (NDPO) publishes the Compendium of Training Courses offered to local and state response agencies by various federal agencies. These must be taken advantage of. Federal grants and/or mutual agreements between neighboring towns or counties can provide the capital resources necessary to purchase detection equipment. Assets as simple as the widely available bio/chem test strips, designed to detect agents such as anthrax, plague and smallpox, can quickly avert an unnecessary disaster by ruling out threat.

Second, the Incident Command System (ICS) needs to be utilized in handling hoax events. Without properly defined command structures in the highly stressful, emotional, and confusing scenario of a chem/bio-scare, conflicting orders often lead to a rapid breakdown in procedure. Hoaxes require a response by many local agencies, and often various federal agencies including the FBI and EPA, thus the pre-establishment of interpersonal relationships is recommended. The NDPO Compendium provides several classes on proper ICS development. To round out the centralized command structure, efficient and compatible inter-agency communication systems must be developed to facilitate cooperation.

Third, public communication protocols and a local media partnership should be established prior to the onset of an event. A spokesperson, whose job is to facilitate constant contact with the public, should be designated. In more serious hoaxes, it may be necessary to have a chief executive and key staff available to the media in order to inform and reassure the public with a clear, consistent message. These emergency management/media relationships should be established well before an event arises so that mutual trust is ensured. Also, with simple awareness campaigns, the public can be educated to recognize the difference between an obvious hoax and a

potential threat. Emergency management has a unique opportunity right now in that they have peoples' attention – this chance should not be forsaken.

Fourth, laws must be enacted to adequately convict those who wish to terrorize with the threat of weapons of mass destruction. Local jurisdictions can develop or enhance their capability to prosecute crimes involving the planning of terrorism hoax events. Some states have enacted the ability to fine those convicted of hoaxes for the cost of response, and others have empowered the judicial system with the ability to impose longer jail sentences. The British government recently passed legislation allowing for 7 years imprisonment in hoaxes related to weapons of mass destruction. Once again, we have a unique opportunity that should be taken advantage of.

Lastly, hoaxes should be seen as opportunities for surprise exercise. The response community needs to expect that terrorism in all forms will aim to catch victims off guard, and the more they practice under these conditions, the better. Standard procedure can be developed that allows for agencies to continue with an event, once it has been determined that there exists no real threat, as if they were conducting an interagency exercise. This will allow for full analyses of readiness, and further develop the working relationships required to respond to future hoaxes and actual events with increased efficiency. All hoaxes should have after-action reports conducted to define areas for improvement.

Recently, a jilted boyfriend phoned an airline to report that a passenger (his ex-girlfriend) on a specific flight was infected with smallpox. The airplane was forced to the ground, with 170 passengers told to remain on board. The Seattle response community quickly and effectively mobilized. Remarkably, panic was contained and the plane was released to continue its flight just 2 and ½ hours later. Why? According to Washington State Chief Health Officer Dr. Maxine Hayes, "Their preparedness paid off. Certainly our emergency-response system worked."

The author is a graduate student at the George Washington University School of Engineering and Applied Science. He is currently working with the Institute for Crisis, Disaster and Risk Management (<http://www.seas.gwu.edu/~icdm>), under institute director Dr. Jack Harrald, on an NSF quick-response

grant to determine the interagency response to the September 11 attack on the Pentagon.
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Guest Editorial

Editor's Note: This opinion piece was originally printed in the November 2000 issue of The Beacon. The points made by Dr. Fagel are still valid in light of recent events.

“What we have here is a failure to communicate”

ARE WE READY FOR WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

By Michael J. Fagel, Ph.D., CEM

Engine 1, Medic 1, Respond to the cafeteria at Jones Middle School, student reported having a seizure at this time, condition unknown.

Engine 1, Medic one on the scene, several students running out of the main building at the school, has the fire alarm been activated?

Dispatch to Engine 1, several phone calls now reporting 5 students convulsing in the auditorium...

What happens in the first second on the call change it from a normal routine call to one that will tax the resources of the response community?

WMD, are we prepared?

The scene described above may be chaotic and overwhelming. We must begin the process of sorting out our response objectives BEFORE we answer the call.

Our nation's public safety agencies have been practicing for our standard caseload of calls, EMS runs, Building Fires and vehicle rescue.

Now as we turn into the 21st century, we must be prepared for the next wave of incidents, the WMD (Weapons of Mass Destruction) event.

WMD is much more than a standard Hazardous Materials call, or as my friend Lt. Joe Bartholomew (Aurora, IL, Fire Dept.) says “HAZMAT WITH AN ATTITUDE”

Are we prepared for this event?

Planning, preparation and practice are the keys to survival.

We, as first response agencies are the FRONT line of defense. We will have our units committed, our hospitals inundated.

The threat to our specific community may vary, BUT the need for adequate preparation and training is constant.

We cannot legislate away the potential, just as we cannot change the weather, and as much, we must continue our role in “ALL RISK, ALL HAZARD PLANNING”

We have heard for a long time that all events are local, and that the community is the “owner” of the incident. We must focus on our own capabilities. Broaden our scope to be multi-jurisdictional. Events do not respect borders or time of day. We have learned that the Government is working towards providing more assets, BUT the fact remains that it is OUR incident. Think LOCAL first and foremost. Partner with our agencies; don't do this lone.

The Federal Government is ready to assist us. BUT, they won't be here first.

We must practice response with ALL units of government. Our local response must include all elements of Police Fire rescue, Emergency Medical Services and Emergency Management. Public Health Services, the Hospitals and ENTIRE medical community MUST be engaged in this process.

Our threats can be boundless, and we must be prepared for Chemical, Biological and Nuclear Events.

Many schools of thought give potential for certain percentages of events. I won't.

The event that may occur on the north may not occur in the south. WE JUST DON'T KNOW.

Rapid detection and containment is the key. There have been many novels written about methodology to be used. We can look at history, the Tokyo Subway incident that released Sarin gas and killed several. Hundreds more went to seek medical care on their own.

The anthrax scares, the hoax and real bombs

I worked at the Oklahoma City Bombing in April 1995, and saw first hand the 169 deaths and hundreds of injured people. This IS what can occur. BUT, that is not the first attack on American soil. The World Trade Center Bombing in February 1995 in New York killed six and injured hundreds.

Preparation and training are keys to survival. Threat Assessments can help YOUR community determine some of its unique vulnerabilities. In doing these, we MUST take into account all factors. Usually, A multi disciplinary team can best do this. We MUST include Law Enforcement, Fire, EMS, Public Works, Public Health, and Emergency Management and Hazardous Materials.

There is absolutely NO room at the table for Turf Battles, egos or other such NON-productive expense. Any emergency event, tornadoes, floods and WMD do not observe jurisdictional boundaries. We must gather all key individuals and agencies to the table to have a frank, open discussion on the project. THEN, we must roll up our sleeves and begin work.

What are your capabilities, truly? Don't say what you would LIKE to do, say what you ARE ABLE to do.

Now is the time to determine where the holes are in the system. They will best be resolved with open discussion, although the FACTS may be unpalatable to some.

To utilize these assembled resources for the common good is the way WE can benefit our citizens.

Major Adrian T. Bogart III, US DOD has aptly stated...

"For no greater cause exists today than that embraced by our nation's first responders in taking the front line and standing ever vigilant to protect this country from those who would attempt to deny us our freedom."

Well put Major, as WE are the front line of defense for our communities. Our communities rely on US to make the right decision.

TOGETHER we can be better than alone

My career has spanned 3 decades of public service, Law Enforcement, EMS, Haz Mat and Emergency Management. I have seen a great deal of

cooperation among those agencies, BUT it has not always been that way. We must work everyday to improve at all levels, and avoid the "turf intramurals" that continue to plague cooperation to this day in some organizations, BIG and small.

One of the best ways to prepare is to do a full-scale drill of YOUR capabilities.

Assembling all of the key agencies and staffers that have been identified above best does this. Make a list that DOES NOT exclude planners, partners and support staff.

Look over the expected and think OUTSIDE the box. The National Guard Civil Support Teams (CST) are a good resource during the drill and event.

Look to industries that may have experience in dealing with chemicals.

Remember, Knowledge is power, and is the key to survival.

Communications is one of the key elements in any process.

We just don't mean electronic, telephone, radio, and such. The KEY is COMPLETE communications and being frank and open during the planning process.

All too often we have material that is "close hold" for whatever reason. We must support maintaining Operational Security. BUT, we must have a continuing dialogue that centers on open communications.

At numerous drills, I have witnessed communications fail.

Part of this failure is not by design, BUT by the lack of coordination. As communications systems become more sophisticated, we are now learning that architecture is not designed to let other systems operate together. Numerous studies have been done to try to determine where the failures occur. Generally, because of a lack of planning that coordinates all phases of communication. During the crisis is no time to figure out where the problems lie.

That's why we practice drills and really determine who will bring what to the table.

Thinking outside the box may be difficult for some but in emergency planning, it must be a reality. We no longer have the luxury of

complacency. Threat levels may change, but the need for preparedness is constant. What have we learned in the last several years? It's really quite simple.

We all must do a better job of communicating, planning and practicing. There's no time for turfno time for egos... and no time for complacency.

The key to survival is communications - and it includes involving all potential team players during the process. Don't forget public works, public health, hazardous materials, law enforcement, fire, emergency management, and emergency medical services. All of these listed specialties must work together and communicate on a regular basis.

Let's start the process now by organizing a joint mission with all your key players. Reach out and COMMUNICATE for the benefit of our communities, OUR Customers.

That's why we are here doing what we do, for the common good, and there is

“No greater cause!”

We must begin now to prepare for the inevitable. It is not a question of IF!

It is a question of when.

Michael Jay Fagel, Ph.D., CEM is director of Emergency Management for the North Aurora Fire Department and the Village of Sugar Grove, Illinois. He has served over 30 years in emergency management and fire service. Currently Fagel is a volunteer in the Aurora Emergency Management Agency, a position he has held since 1968. Also, he currently serves the International Association of Emergency Managers as the president of Region V, as well as a certification commissioner for the Certified Emergency Manager program of IAEM. Along with these duties, he is a reservist with FEMA in the operation support directorate as a safety officer.

The opinions contained in this article are that of the author alone and not that of any federal, state or local agency. The author can be reached at MJFAGEL @AOL.COM or 630-897-055.

CORRECTION

In the November/December issue of *The Beacon*, the access address for WMDinfoShare is incorrect. The correct addresses are as follows:

To join WMDinfoShare, send an e-mail to wmdinfoShare-request@wmdfirstresponders.com, then enter the word "Join" in the message box.

To unsubscribe, simply go to wmdinfoShare-request@wmdfirstresponders.com and enter the word "Unjoin" in the message box. To send a message to everyone on the list, send an e-mail to wmdinfoShare@wmdfirstresponders.com.

DOMESTIC PREPAREDNESS 2002

January 11-13, 2002

**The Thunderbird Hotel and Conference Center
Minneapolis, Minnesota**

Domestic Preparedness 2002 is a comprehensive back to basics conference geared toward organizations that face a real threat of terrorism and organizations that will have to respond to a terrorist act. Conferees will learn how to determine the threat level to their community, as well as learn about the various types of nuclear, biological, and chemical terrorism.

For more information, please visit their website at www.mhsusa.com.

The Beacon is published monthly for members of the emergency response community. Please send articles, comments, feedback, and letters to the Information Sharing Team at the address listed below.

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