

Operational Lessons Learned from the Anthrax Attacks on the United States



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Basis for Observations

- Anthrax contamination of USPS facilities
- Anthrax contamination of the Hart Senate Building in Washington, DC
- Response to the World Trade Center disaster
- Pre-event planning and deployment to high profile events

Special Features of the Responses

- Large multi-agency responses
- High national visibility and public concern
- Politically and economically charged sites
- No established proven procedures for a large civilian anthrax response

Site Control

- Site security and access
- Worker identification and security clearances
- Parking trailers for responders
- Equipment deliveries and staging
- Media control
- Signage to direct the public

Incident Command

- Current training focused on UCS participation
- Many agencies had varied internal command & support structures
- Operational communications between command and field groups were inconsistent
- “New” response groups were inexperienced with unique aspects of field work
- Responders were challenged by multiple locations

On-Scene Points of Contact

- Safety
- ICS representative/Inter-agency liaison
- Daily reporting
- Field operations and Team Leaders
- Logistics (equipment/services procurement)**
- Security/site control
- Site shipping/receiving
- Sampling, analytical and data management
- Financial/cost tracking
- Plant, facility and union liaison
- Media and public relations

Staffing Logistics

- Uncertainty of personnel needs
- Availability of support contracts
- Hotels, transportation, & scheduling
- Site personnel expectations
- New site employee briefings
- Mandatory personnel rotation/time off
- Use of antibiotics
- On-site medical/psychological resources

Sampling Considerations

- Adopt universal sampling procedures
- Develop and customize sampling strategy
 - Facility size and usage
 - Reduce spread of contamination
- Rely on experienced samplers
 - Not a training exercise
- Avoid varied sampling media for each lab
 - Wipe, swab, HEPA filters
- Evaluate screening technologies
- Identify packaging & shipping issues

Summary of the Lessons Learned

- Pre-plan and maintain flexibility
- Resist the pressure to start prior to completing a technical and safety strategy/plan
- Establish UCS and communications early
- Establish clear internal command structure
- Identify contracts and secure rates during pre-planning
- Make worker welfare a priority

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