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Report to the Chairman and Ranking Democratic Member, Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, House of Representatives

July 2005

HOMELAND SECURITY

DHS' Efforts to Enhance First Responders' All-Hazards Capabilities Continue to Evolve

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GAO-05-652

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Highlights

Highlights of GAO-05-652, a report to the Chairman and Ranking Democratic Member, Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Why GAO Did This Study

The events of September 11, 2001, have resulted in a greater focus on the role of first responders in carrying out the nation's emergency management efforts. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is the primary federal entity responsible for ensuring that first responders, such as police, fire, emergency medical, and public health personnel, have the capabilities needed to provide a coordinated, comprehensive response to any large-scale crisis. In the last 4 years DHS has awarded $11.3 billion to state and local governments to enhance capabilities, primarily to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from acts of terrorism. Presidential directives instruct DHS to develop a national all-hazards approach—preparing all sectors of society for any emergency event including terrorist attacks and natural or accidental disasters.

This report addresses the following questions: (1) What actions has DHS taken to provide policies and strategies that promote the development of the all-hazards emergency management capabilities of first responders? (2) How do first responders' emergency management capabilities for terrorist attacks differ to capabilities needed for natural or accidental disasters? (3) What emphasis has DHS placed on funding awarded to state and local first responders to enhance all-hazards emergency management capabilities?

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-652.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact William O. Jenkins, Jr. at (202) 512-8777 or jenkinswo@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

DHS has undertaken three major policy initiatives aimed at creating a national, all-hazards coordinated and comprehensive response to large-scale incidents: (1) a national response plan (what needs to be done); (2) a command and management process (how it needs to be done); and (3) a national preparedness goal (how well it should be done). GAO reviewed these products and determined that each supports a national, all-hazards approach. DHS has developed plans to implement three related programs to enhance first responder capabilities: (1) to assess and report on the status of first responders' capabilities; (2) to prioritize national resource investments; and (3) to establish a national training and exercise program. Implementing these programs will likely pose a number of challenges for DHS including integrating internal and external assessment approaches, assessing state and local risks in a national context to effectively prioritize investments, and establishing common training requirements across responder disciplines.

Because terrorist attacks share some common characteristics with natural and accidental disasters, 30 of DHS' 36 capabilities first responders need to support preparedness and response efforts are similar. GAO's analysis found that the baseline capabilities required for terrorist attacks and natural or accidental disasters are more similar for response and recovery and differ most for prevention. Because terrorist attacks are planned, intentional acts, all of DHS' prevention capabilities focus on terrorist attacks, while almost all other baseline capabilities focus on all hazards.

Legislation and presidential directives call for DHS to place special emphasis on preparedness for terrorism and DHS has directed that the majority of first responder grant funding be used to enhance first responder capabilities to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks. Nonetheless, grants funds can have all-hazards applications.

First Responders in Action

Source: FEMA News Photo.

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Abbreviations

CBRNE	Chemical, biological, radiological nuclear, explosive
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
HSPD	Homeland Security Presidential Directive
NIMS	National Incident Management System
NRP	National Response Plan
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

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United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

July 11, 2005

The Honorable William Shuster
Chairman

The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton
Ranking Democratic Member
Subcommittee on Economic Development,
Public Buildings and Emergency Management,
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, there has been concern among senior federal officials that another terrorist attack on U.S. soil could occur. According to testimony by the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, it may be only a matter of time before a terrorist group tries to use chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear weapons in the United States. Concerns like these have prompted increased federal attention on national emergency preparedness—that is, the nation's ability to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from large-scale emergency events. Through legislation and Presidential directives, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has become the primary federal entity responsible for ensuring that first responders, such as police, fire, emergency medical, and public health personnel, have the capabilities needed to provide a coordinated, comprehensive response to any large-scale crisis and to mount a swift and effective recovery effort.[1] In the last 4 years, DHS agencies have awarded $11.3 billion to state and local governments to enhance their national emergency preparedness capabilities, primarily for terrorist attacks.

Long before the events of September 11, 2001, terrorism preparedness was included in the Federal Emergency Management Agency's planning approach to prepare for all types of emergency events, commonly referred

[1]A capability provides the means to accomplish one or more tasks under specific conditions and to specific performance standards through proper planning, organization, equipment, training, exercises, and personnel.

to as an all-hazards approach.[2] Since the attacks, the intensified federal attention and federal spending for national preparedness has largely emphasized preparedness for terrorist attacks. However, the nation's recent experience with large-scale natural disasters, for example, wildfires in California in 2003, hurricanes in Florida in 2004, and floods in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York in 2005 provides a justification for taking an all-hazards approach to national preparedness that considers the risks of natural and accidental disasters, as well as terrorism.

Consistent with this approach, two Homeland Security Presidential Directives (HSPD) issued in 2003 require DHS to take an all-hazards focus in implementing the directives. HSPD-5, issued in February 2003, required DHS to establish a single, comprehensive approach to and plans for the management of emergency events whether the result of terrorist attacks or large-scale natural or accidental disasters. Appendix I contains the text of HSPD-5. HSPD-8, issued in December 2003, established policies to strengthen the preparedness of the United States to prevent and respond to threatened or actual domestic terrorist attacks and large-scale natural or accidental disasters. Among other things, it required DHS to coordinate the development of a national domestic all-hazards preparedness goal that would establish measurable readiness priorities and targets that appropriately balance the potential threat and magnitude of terrorist attacks and large-scale natural or accidental disasters with the resources required to prevent, respond to, and recover from them. The directive also designated the Secretary of Homeland Security as the principal federal official for coordinating the implementation of all-hazards preparedness in the United States. Appendix II contains the text of HSPD-8.

Because of the nation's increased focus on preparedness for terrorist attacks as a result of the events of September 11, 2001, you requested that we examine the extent to which DHS has considered all types of emergency events, including both terrorist attacks and natural or accidental disasters, in developing and implementing its approach to enhance and sustain first responder capabilities. This report explores the following questions:

[2]All-hazards emergency preparedness efforts seek to prepare all sectors of American society—business, industry and nonprofit, state, territorial, local and tribal governments, and the general public—for all hazards the nation may face, i.e., any large scale emergency event including terrorist attacks and natural or accidental disasters. For the purpose of this report, territorial and American Indian tribal governments are included when we refer to state and local governments.

1. What actions has DHS taken to provide policies and strategies that promote the development of all-hazards emergency management capabilities of first responders?

2. How do first responders' emergency management capabilities for terrorist attacks differ from capabilities needed for natural or accidental disasters?

3. What emphasis has DHS placed on funding awarded to state and local first responders to enhance all-hazards emergency management capabilities?

The scope of our work was focused on the extent to which the actions taken by DHS to enhance first responder skills and abilities encompassed all hazards, whether the result of nature, accident, or terrorist action. To address these objectives, we analyzed DHS's efforts to implement HSPD-5 and HSPD-8, including the process used to develop national preparedness policies and the plans, goals, and standards resulting from the process, as well as grant programs to enhance the preparedness of first responders. We interviewed DHS officials from the Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate, Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Office for Domestic Preparedness, and the Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness to obtain their views regarding the process and its products, along with information on DHS assistance programs. To obtain the views of first responders, we interviewed officials from professional organizations that represent first responders on a national level and reviewed relevant reports and studies on homeland security and domestic preparedness. Finally, we conducted structured interviews with 69 first responder departments[3] and state level emergency management officials in ten states, selected by non-probability sampling to include metropolitan areas that crossed state boundaries, tribal governments, states that face a variety of hazards, sparsely and densely populated states, and states with townships and city government structures, among other criteria. These first responder departments responded to the questions in our structure interview guide and provided additional observations during the course of our interviews. The results of

[3]"First responders," as defined in HSPD-8, refers to those individuals who in the early stages of an emergency event are responsible for the protection and preservation of life, property, evidence, and the environment, including emergency response providers. For the purposes of this report, we typically met with officials representing police, fire, emergency medical services, public works, and public health departments.

these interviews cannot be generalized to first responders not participating in the interviews. An expanded discussion of our scope and methodology is presented in appendix III. We conducted our work from May 2004 through May 2005 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Results in Brief

DHS has undertaken three major policy initiatives to promote the further development of the emergency preparedness capabilities of first responders-development of (1) a national response plan (what needs to be done to manage a major emergency event); (2) a command and management process to be used during any emergency event nation-wide (how to do what needs to be done); and (3) a national preparedness goal (how well it should be done). Each initiative reflects an all-hazards approach since each addresses emergency events that are the result of terrorist attacks and large-scale natural and accidental disasters. To develop a national preparedness goal, DHS is using an approach known as capabilities-based planning that, according to DHS, provides capabilities suitable for a wide range of threats and hazards, in an environment of uncertainty and within an economic framework that necessitates prioritization for allocation of finite resources. DHS began this process using 15 emergency scenarios developed by the President's Homeland Security Council, 12 of which are terrorist events. The scenarios were not ranked according to relative risk because, according to DHS, their purpose was to form the basis for identifying the capabilities needed to respond to a wide-range of major emergency events. These 15 scenarios, which include an attack by improvised explosive device and a pandemic flu outbreak as two examples, were developed to identify a range of tasks, critical tasks, and target capabilities, all of which would need to be performed at various levels of government to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from large-scale emergency events. DHS's planning process resulted in a Target Capabilities List that identified 36 capabilities that together encompass all critical tasks—what first responders must be able to do, in terms of planning, training, equipment, and exercises to achieve desired outcomes for all hazards. For example, for the scenario based on a pandemic flu outbreak, critical tasks include the ability to coordinate public health and medical services, provide immunizations, and direct and control public information releases. In March and April 2005, DHS published an interim national preparedness goal and guidance that first responders can use to develop, implement and maintain these target capabilities. Because no single jurisdiction or agency would be expected to perform every task, possession of a target capability could involve enhancing and maintaining local resources, ensuring access

to regional and federal resources, or some combination of the two. In October 2005, DHS plans to issue a final version of the goal that would include assigning jurisdictions to tiers based on their population density, critical infrastructure, and other risk factors and also include performance metrics for those in each tier. To achieve the goal, DHS prepared implementation requirements for national programs to assess and report the status of first responders' capabilities, to prioritize resource allocation, and to integrate training and exercise programs. DHS's goal is to achieve full implementation of these programs by October 1, 2008. Implementation of each of the three systems may pose challenges for DHS—for example, a key challenge will be establishing a standardized approach for measuring and reporting the risks faced by diverse states and localities in order to effectively prioritize and allocate federal resources.

Our analysis of the target capabilities established by DHS showed that most of DHS's targeted capabilities—30 of 36—are common to both terrorist attacks and natural or accidental disasters. Capabilities common to all hazards, for example, are on-site emergency management, and search and rescue. DHS officials reviewed our analysis and agreed with our assessment of the relative applicability of the 36 target capabilities to all hazards. During our interviews with first responders and other emergency management officials and experts, they affirmed the idea that preparedness for natural and accidental disasters is similar to preparedness for terrorist attacks. DHS categorizes the capabilities in terms of 4 mission areas: prevention, protection, response and recovery.[4] Our analysis further revealed that the preparedness capabilities required for terrorist attacks and natural or accidental disasters are more similar for protection, response, and recovery, and differ most for prevention. Terrorist attacks differ from natural or accidental disasters principally because it is possible that terrorist attacks could be prevented through actionable intelligence (i.e., information that can lead to stopping or apprehending terrorists), but there is no known way to prevent natural

[4]DHS defines prevention as activities intended to deter all potential terrorists from attacking America, detect terrorists before they strike, prevent them and their instruments of terror from entering our country, and take decisive action to eliminate the threat they pose. Protection is defined as activities intended to reduce the likelihood of attack on assets or systems and limit the impact should an attack occur. Response is defined as activities intended to implement immediate actions to save lives, protect property, and meet basic human needs. Recovery is defined as activities to develop, coordinate, and execute service- and site-restoration plans and reconstitute government operations and services through individual, private-sector, nongovernmental, and public assistance programs.

disasters, such as hurricanes, earthquakes, and tornadoes. Therefore, prevention requires specific capabilities related to intelligence and counterterrorism that are not normally used for other hazards, such as the terrorism investigation and apprehension capability.

Since September 11, 2001, funding appropriated by Congress for DHS programs to enhance first responders' capabilities has largely emphasized enhancing capabilities to respond to terrorist attacks. The Homeland Security Act of 2002 and HSPD-8 directs DHS to take an all-hazards approach to national emergency preparedness with a special emphasis on terrorism. As a result, DHS grant guidance for the State Homeland Security Grant and the Urban Area Security Initiative grant programs, the two largest sources of DHS grants funds available to states and local first responders have largely focused on enhancing first responders' preparedness for terrorist attacks. State preparedness officials and local first responders we interviewed said that DHS's emphasis for grant funding was too heavily focused on terrorism and they sought to acquire dual use equipment and training that might be used for emergency event that occur more regularly in their jurisdictions in addition to supporting terrorism preparedness. In response, DHS promoted flexibility to allow such dual usage within the grant program requirements for fiscal year 2005, according to DHS officials, although officials stated that, prior to fiscal year 2005, grant requirements allowed for dual usage and state grantees are responsible for contacting DHS when questions regarding application of grant guidelines arise. To ensure grant funds are used for their designated purpose, the states and localities we visited reported they have financial controls and monitoring procedures in place designed to ensure that whatever flexibilities for dual uses exist, they remain within DHS's program guidelines. In February 2005, we reported that in fiscal year 2004, DHS completed site visits to 44 of 56 states and territories that received grants as part of DHS's monitoring of states' grant reporting and state homeland security strategy implementation. We also reported that in fiscal year 2004 DHS revised its method of reporting on grant expenditures, moving away from requiring itemized lists of expenditures toward a more results-based approach where grant managers must demonstrate how grant expenditures link to larger projects that support one or more goals in the states' homeland security strategies.[5] Finally, in the absence of some basic, comparable standards for first responder performance, it has been difficult to assess the effect of grant expenditures on first responder capabilities and performance.

[5]GAO, *Homeland Security: Management of First Responder Grant Programs Has Improved, but Challenges Remain*, GAO-05-121 (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 2, 2005).

Background

Prior to September 11, 2001, the federal government's role in supporting emergency preparedness and management was limited primarily to providing resources before large-scale disasters like floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes, and response and recovery assistance after such disasters. Historically, FEMA developed mitigation programs designed to minimize risk to property or individuals from natural or manmade hazards. These mitigation programs included the post-disaster Hazard Mitigation Grant Program and the pre-disaster Project Impact program. In addition, the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as amended, established the process for states to request a presidential disaster declaration in order to respond and recover from a large-scale emergency event. However, in response to the events of September 11, 2001, the federal government has provided billions of dollars to state and local governments for planning, equipment, and training to enhance the capabilities of first responders to respond to terrorist attacks and, to a lesser extent, natural and accidental disasters. These extensive resources reflect a growing federal role in promoting emergency preparedness.

First Responders are Responsible for Carrying out Emergency Management Efforts

The nation's first responders have the lead responsibilities for carrying out emergency management efforts.[6] The role of first responders is to prevent, protect against, respond to, and assist in the recovery from emergency events. Traditionally, first responders have been trained and equipped, in the event of an emergency—natural or accidental disasters and terrorist attacks—to arrive on the scene and take action immediately. In the first hours of an event, first responders from various disciplines, which could include police, fire, emergency medical personnel and public works, must attempt to enter the scene, set up a command center, establish a safe and

[6]First responders have traditionally been thought of as local fire, police, and emergency medical personnel who respond to events such as fires, floods, traffic or rail accidents, and hazardous materials spills. As a result of the increased concerns about bioterrorism and other potential terrorist attacks, the definition of first responder has been broadened. Section 2 of the Homeland Security Act defined emergency response providers as including "Federal, State, and local emergency public safety, law enforcement, emergency response, emergency medical (including hospital emergency facilities), and related personnel, agencies, and authorities." Homeland Security Act of 2002, Pub. L. No. 107-296 §2(6), 116 Stat. 2135, 2140 (codified at 6 U.S.C. §101(6)). HSPD-8 defined the term first responder as "individuals who in the early stages of an incident are responsible for the protection and preservation of life, property, evidence, and the environment, including emergency response providers as defined in section 2 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 101), as well as emergency management, public health, clinical care, public works, and other skilled support personnel (such as equipment operators) that provide immediate support services during prevention, response, and recovery operations."

secure perimeter around the site in order to save lives and protect property, evacuate those within or near the site, tend to the injured and dead and transport them to care centers or morgues, restrict and redirect traffic and pedestrians, reroute and restore public utilities, remove debris, and begin the process of recovery.

Since September 11, 2001, the roles and responsibilities for first responders to prevent emergency events and protect the public and property have expanded. In July 2002, prior to the creation of DHS, the President developed a National Strategy for Homeland Security which recommended steps that federal, state and local governments, private companies and organizations, and individual Americans should take to improve homeland security. The National Strategy identified the need to improve tactical counterterrorist capabilities of the various federal, state, and local response assets that can intercede and prevent terrorists from carrying out attacks. These assets include state and local law enforcement and emergency response personnel which the National Strategy considers crucial to preemption of terrorists, no matter if they are part of the local SWAT team or the FBI's Hostage Rescue Team.

Figure 1: First Responders in Action

Source: FEMA News Photo.

First responder organizations across the county are to various degrees, trained, staffed, and equipped to prepare for and respond to various events. These organizations may differ in governmental role, size, structure, and capabilities. For example, activities of local law enforcement departments in smaller communities may be limited to day-

to-day law enforcement while, in larger communities, departments may include specialized teams such as bomb squads or special weapons and tactics units. Likewise, local fire departments may be volunteer operations with basic firefighting capabilities or, in larger communities, may include teams specializing in hazardous materials response, search and rescue, or structural collapse. The local public health system can consist of public or private emergency medical services that provide immediate victim care and transport victims to the area's public or private hospitals to receive patient care, along with the state and local medical staff that monitor and detect disease outbreaks. Supporting the response and recovery efforts of first responders are other state and local officials who provide preparedness planning, administration, and the communications systems needed to command and control activities on the scene.

Natural and accidental disasters have provided all levels of government in many locations with experience in preparing for different types of emergency events. However, terrorist attacks potentially impose a relatively new level of fiscal, economic, and social disruption within this nation's boundaries. Today's threat environment includes not only the traditional spectrum of large-scale manmade and natural hazards—wilderness and urban fires, floods, oil spills, hazardous materials releases, transportation accidents, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, pandemics, and accidental or natural disruptions to the nation's energy and information technology infrastructure—but also the deadly and devastating arsenal of chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high-yield explosive weapons as exemplified by the attacks on New York City and Oklahoma City. These attacks have resulted in greater public and governmental focus on the role of first responders and their capabilities to respond to large-scale emergency events.

DHS Is Responsible for Leading National Emergency Preparedness Efforts

Two DHS organizational units have the primary responsibilities for leading national emergency preparedness efforts—the Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate and the Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness. The Homeland Security Act assigned responsibility to the Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate, which includes the Federal Emergency Management Agency, for building a comprehensive national incident management system that defines the roles and responsibilities of federal, state, and local governments, and the various first responder disciplines at each level during an emergency event. The Act also charged the directorate with consolidating existing federal government emergency response plans into a single, coordinated national response plan, as called for by HSPD-5. DHS assigned

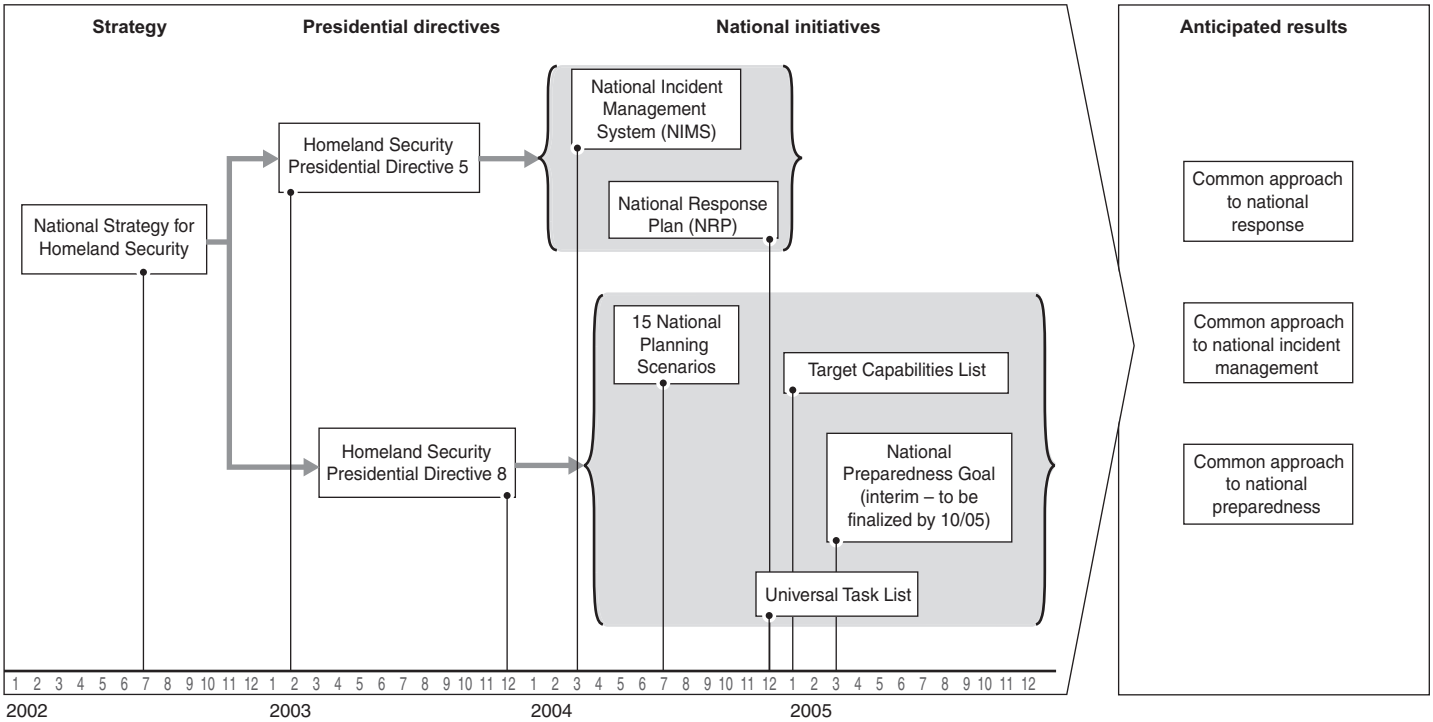
responsibility for developing a national preparedness goal to its Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness, which includes the Office for Domestic Preparedness. The Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness also awards and administers the majority of DHS's first responder preparedness federal grant programs.[7] In large part these grants are directed to the governor of each state, who in turn makes these funds available to local jurisdictions within the state.

DHS Has All-Hazards Policy Initiatives and National Strategies Under Development and Faces Challenges in Enhancing First Responders' Emergency Management Capabilities

To comply with HSPD-5 and HSPD-8, DHS has established a national plan for emergency event response, a national management system to be used during emergency events, and an interim national preparedness goal. DHS also plans to develop national strategies for assessing and reporting the status of first responders' capabilities, prioritizing federal, state, and local resource investments to enhance these capabilities, and standardizing training and exercise programs for first responders to practice and improve emergency response capabilities. The presidential directives on which these efforts are based correspond to the major initiatives first developed in the National Strategy for Homeland Security. Our analysis of the documents resulting from, and plans for, these efforts showed that DHS has taken an all-hazards approach to promote first responders' emergency management capabilities. Figure 2 illustrates the timeline of DHS's efforts to develop these national initiatives and identifies the anticipated results.

[7]When the Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness was created in January 2004, it combined the Office for Domestic Preparedness with the Office of State and Local Government Coordination. At that time, grant programs from multiple agencies within DHS were transferred to the new office. The Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness provides grant funds to the 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealths of Puerto Rico and the Northern Marianas, American Samoa, the Virgin Islands, Guam under the State Homeland Security Grant program, and 50 urban areas selected for funding under the Urban Area Security Initiative grant program.

Figure 2: Homeland Security Policy Initiative Timeline



Source: GAO analysis of DHS homeland security policy guidance.

DHS Has Developed All-Hazards Policies to Guide Response to Emergency Events

To comply with the initiatives of the National Strategy and the timeframes and requirements established in HSPD-5, DHS implemented an integrated all-hazards approach to emergency event management by establishing the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the National Response Plan (NRP). NIMS is a policy document that defines roles and responsibilities of federal, state and local first responders during emergency events. The intent of this system described in the document is to establish a core set of concepts, principles, terminology and organizational processes to enable effective, efficient, and collaborative emergency event management at all levels. These concepts, principles, and processes are designed to improve the ability of different jurisdictions and first-responder disciplines (e.g., fire and police) to work together in various areas—command, resource management, training, and communications. The NRP is designed to integrate federal government domestic prevention, protection, response, and recovery plans into a

single operational plan for all hazards and all emergency response disciplines. Using the framework provided by NIMS, the NRP describes operational procedures for federal support to state, local, and tribal emergency managers and defines situations where the federal authorities are to provide support and situations where the federal authorities are to assume control. The NRP organizes capabilities and staffing and equipment resources in terms of functions that are most likely to be needed during emergency events, describes common processes and specific administrative requirements (e.g., public affairs, financial management, public health, etc.), and outlines core procedures. The NRP also augments NIMS by defining roles and responsibilities for specific types of emergencies.

To develop NIMS and NRP, DHS assembled a variety of stakeholders from federal, state, and local levels such as national professional associations, and state and local responders representing the full range of response disciplines. During the development of NIMS, stakeholder groups reacted to initial drafts developed by DHS. The final draft of NIMS incorporated, in part, key elements of a widely-used, interdisciplinary system of command—first used in conjunction with wildfires in California during the 1960s—into a standardized, national system that would apply across all emergency response disciplines and levels of government. Similarly, the NRP was based on a consensus among stakeholders of best practices to apply in integrating prevention, protection, response, and recovery plans into one all-discipline, all-hazards plan.

HSPD-5 requires all federal departments and agencies to adopt and use NIMS in their individual preparedness efforts, as well as in support of all actions taken to assist state and local governments. Further, the directive requires federal departments and agencies to make adoption of NIMS by states a condition, to the extent permitted by law, of federal preparedness assistance beginning in fiscal year 2005. For fiscal year 2005 DHS required states and other jurisdictions that receive direct funding to incorporate NIMS into existing training programs and exercises, emergency operations plans, and intrastate mutual aid agreements; to institutionalize the use of the Incident Command System; and will require states and other jurisdictions to certify as part of their fiscal year 2006 grant applications that they have met the fiscal year 2005 NIMS requirements. However, final requirements for fiscal year 2006 self certification have not been formulated, according to DHS officials. DHS encouraged, but did not require, local governments to implement these activities to the maximum extent possible.

We assessed NIMS and NRP to determine the extent to which the policy documents discuss and emphasize different types of emergency events. Our analysis showed that both documents had been developed in a manner that reflects an all-hazards approach. For example, both NIMS and NRP use the generic term "incident management" rather than specifying the cause(s) of events, such as a terrorist act, accident, or natural disaster. Moreover, NIMS and NRP are designed to promote interdisciplinary efforts that consider the involvement of multiple jurisdictions and multiple responders. The common processes and specific administrative requirements listed in NRP also are described in terms that are not specific to any type of threat or emergency. For example, according to NRP, the plan is to be implemented during "incidents of national significance."[8]

First responders we visited affirmed that NIMS and the NRP do take an all hazards approach—that is, they apply to natural and accidental disasters, as well as terrorist attacks. For example, 12 first responder officials we interviewed told us that they have long used the incident command system upon which NIMS was based for a variety of emergency events. Similarly, one homeland security director in a large urban city said NIMS had only had a moderate impact on their operations because the city has already been using an incident command system in its all-hazards approach.

[8]The Secretary of Homeland Security declares Incidents of National Significance—in consultation with other departments and agencies as appropriate—and provides coordination for federal operations, resources and communications with Federal, State, local, tribal, private sector, and nongovernmental organizations to maintain and coordinate threat or incident response activities. Incidents of National Significance can be declared based on one of the following:

1. A federal department or agency has requested the assistance of DHS,

2. The resources of state and local authorities are overwhelmed and federal assistance has been requested,

3. More than one federal department or agency has become substantially involved in responding to an incident,

4. DHS has been directed by the President to assume responsibility for managing a domestic incident.

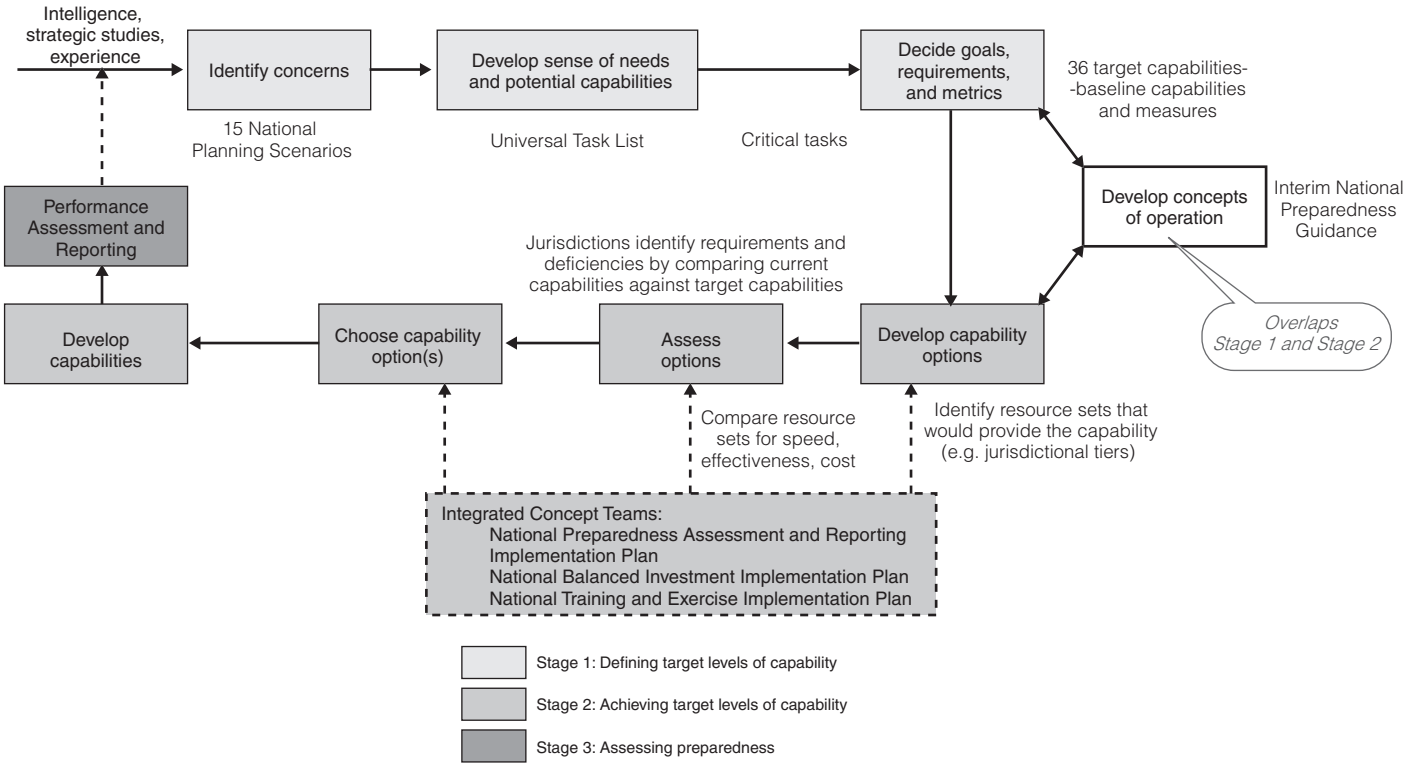
DHS Is Developing an All-Hazards National Preparedness Goal and Related Products Using Capabilities-Based Planning

To comply with the requirements established in HSPD-8, DHS is developing a National Preparedness Goal. While NIMS defines "how" to manage a large-scale emergency event and NRP defines "what" needs to be done, the National Preparedness Goal is intended to generally define "how well" it needs to be done. DHS issued an interim version of the goal in March 2005. The interim version will remain in effect until superseded by the Final National Preparedness Goal, which DHS intends to issue in October 2005.[9] According to officials from DHS's Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness, the final version is expected to remain largely the same as the interim; however, the office is working with its state and local government stakeholders to define appropriate jurisdictional tiers, and plans to add this information to the final version of the goal. According to the Interim National Preparedness Goal, the primary purpose of establishing tiers is to account for reasonable differences in target levels of capability (or system-specific elements of capability) among groups of jurisdictions based on differences in risk factors such as total population, population density, and critical infrastructure. Our review of the interim goal indicates that it reflects an all-hazards focus by consistently citing both natural and accidental disasters and terrorist attacks as emergencies and the extent to which the nation's first responders must develop their capabilities to address all hazards.

To develop the goal and determine the tasks and capabilities needed by first responders on a nation-wide basis, DHS is using an approach known as capabilities-based planning. The purpose of this approach is to provide capabilities suitable for a wide range of threats and hazards, in an environment of uncertainty and within an economic framework that necessitates prioritization for allocation of finite resources, according to DHS. As figure 3 shows, DHS's application of the capabilities-based planning process model to the development of the goal and related products involves three stages: (1) defining target levels of capability; (2) achieving target levels of capability; and (3) assessing preparedness.

[9]DHS has issued several products to support the National Preparedness Goal, including a Target Capabilities List, a Universal Task List, National Planning Scenarios, and National Preparedness Guidance, which DHS has made available to state, and local first responders and other emergency management professionals. DHS considers all of these products to be drafts until the Department issues the Final National Preparedness Goal.

Figure 3: Three Stages of DHS Capabilities-Based Planning Process Model for Development of the National Preparedness Goal



Source: GAO analysis of DHS documents related to the National Preparedness Goal and capabilities-based planning process model adapted from P. Davis, Rand.

DHS began the first stage of the capabilities-based planning process identifying concerns using 15 National Planning Scenarios that were developed by the Homeland Security Council, as illustrated in table 1.[10]

[10]The President's Homeland Security Advisory Council is composed of 21 members appointed by the President selected from the private sector, academia, professional service associations, federally funded research and development centers, nongovernmental organizations, State and local governments, and other appropriate professions and communities. The Council convened a working group to help develop the scenarios with officials who represented the Departments of Commerce, Defense, Energy, Health & Human Services, Interior, Justice, Labor, State, Transportation and Veterans Administration, as well as officials from the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Aeronautics & Space Administration, the Terrorist Threat Analysis Center, the White House National Security Council, and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

The 15 scenarios include 12 terrorist attacks (incorporating chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, explosive, and cyber attacks) and 3 natural disasters—an earthquake, a hurricane and a pandemic influenza outbreak. According to DHS, the Homeland Security Council excluded scenarios for which they considered well-developed and tested response capabilities to be already available and scenarios where the set of response capabilities would be a subset of one of the 15 scenarios chosen. Examples of excluded scenarios are industrial and transportation accidents and frequently occurring natural disasters, such as floods, the nation's most frequent natural disaster. According to DHS officials, there was less concern about planning for natural disasters because there is a tremendous amount of experience, actuarial data, geographical and seasonal patterns, and other information that is not available in the context of terrorism. Officials told us that the department chose to focus the identification of its concerns on event consequences rather than event probabilities, given the high degree of uncertainty related to preparing for terrorist events.

Table 1: DHS Suite of National Planning Scenarios

• Improvised nuclear device attack	• Major earthquake
• Aerosol anthrax attack	• Major hurricane
• Pandemic influenza	• Radiological attack with dispersal device
• Biological attack with plague	• Improvised explosive device attack
• Chemical attack with blister agent	• Biological attack with food contamination
• Chemical attack with toxic chemical agent	• Biological attack with foreign animal disease (Foot and Mouth disease)
• Chemical attack with nerve agent	• Cyber attack
• Chemical attack resulting in chlorine tank explosion	

Source: DHS National Planning Scenarios.

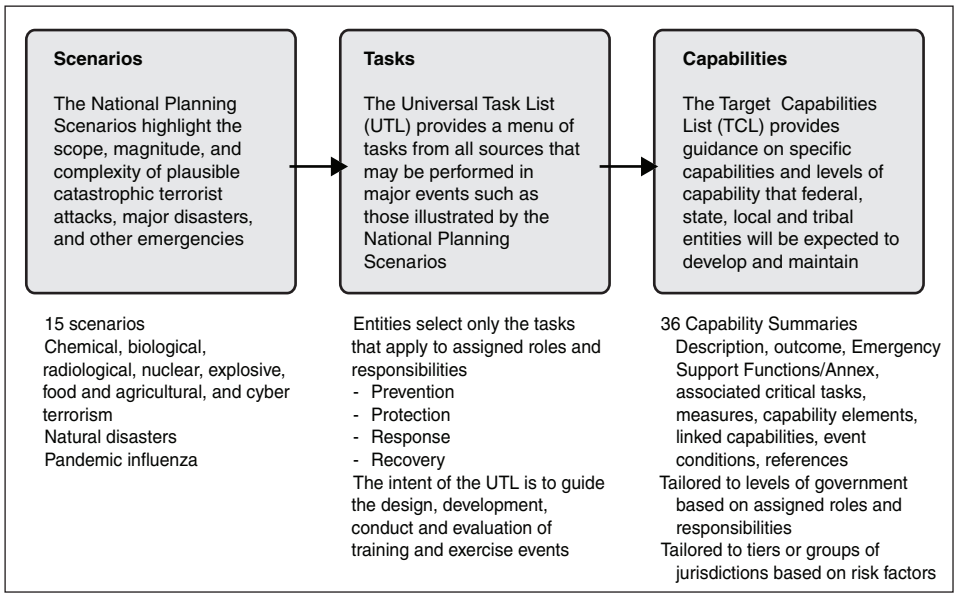
According to DHS's National Preparedness Guidance, the planning scenarios are intended to illustrate the scope and magnitude of large-scale, catastrophic emergency events for which the nation needs to be prepared. Some state and local officials and experts in the field of emergency preparedness said that the scenarios did not appear to reflect an assessment of risk or a relative ranking related to risk. As a result, they questioned whether the scenarios were appropriate inputs for preparedness planning, particularly in terms of their plausibility and the

number of scenarios (12 of 15) that are based on terrorist attacks.[11] Officials in DHS's Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness said that the scenarios were not ranked according to risk, noting that this was unnecessary given the purposes for which the scenarios were developed. They stated that the 15 planning scenarios are not meant to be proscriptive, predictive, or exhaustive nor were they intended to be ranked according to risk. According to DHS's National Preparedness Guidance, the objective of developing the scenarios was to provide a minimum number of credible scenarios that covered the range of response requirements. DHS's executive summaries of the planning scenarios state that the scenarios were not ranked according to risk and probability because they were developed to test the full range of response capabilities and resources for federal, state, and local governments as well as the private sector, each of which could have different risks and rankings.

As it moved to the step in the process to develop a sense of preparedness needs and potential capabilities, DHS created a list of tasks that would be required to manage each of the 15 National Planning Scenarios. Then, in consultation with federal, state, and local emergency response stakeholders, it consolidated the list to eliminate redundancies and create a Universal Task List of over 1,600 discrete tasks. This list was further refined to identify critical tasks that would need to be performed at various levels of government to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from large-scale emergency events. Next, DHS identified target capabilities that encompassed these critical tasks. The relationship between the scenarios, tasks, and capabilities is shown in figure 4.

[11]The scope of our work was focused on the extent to which the actions taken by DHS to enhance first responder skills and abilities encompassed all hazards, whether the result of nature, accident, or terrorist action. Thus, our work did not include assessing either the appropriateness of the scenarios used to identify needed first responder capabilities or the appropriateness of the tasks and capabilities developed based on those scenarios.

Figure 4: Scenarios, Tasks, and Capabilities for the National Preparedness Goal

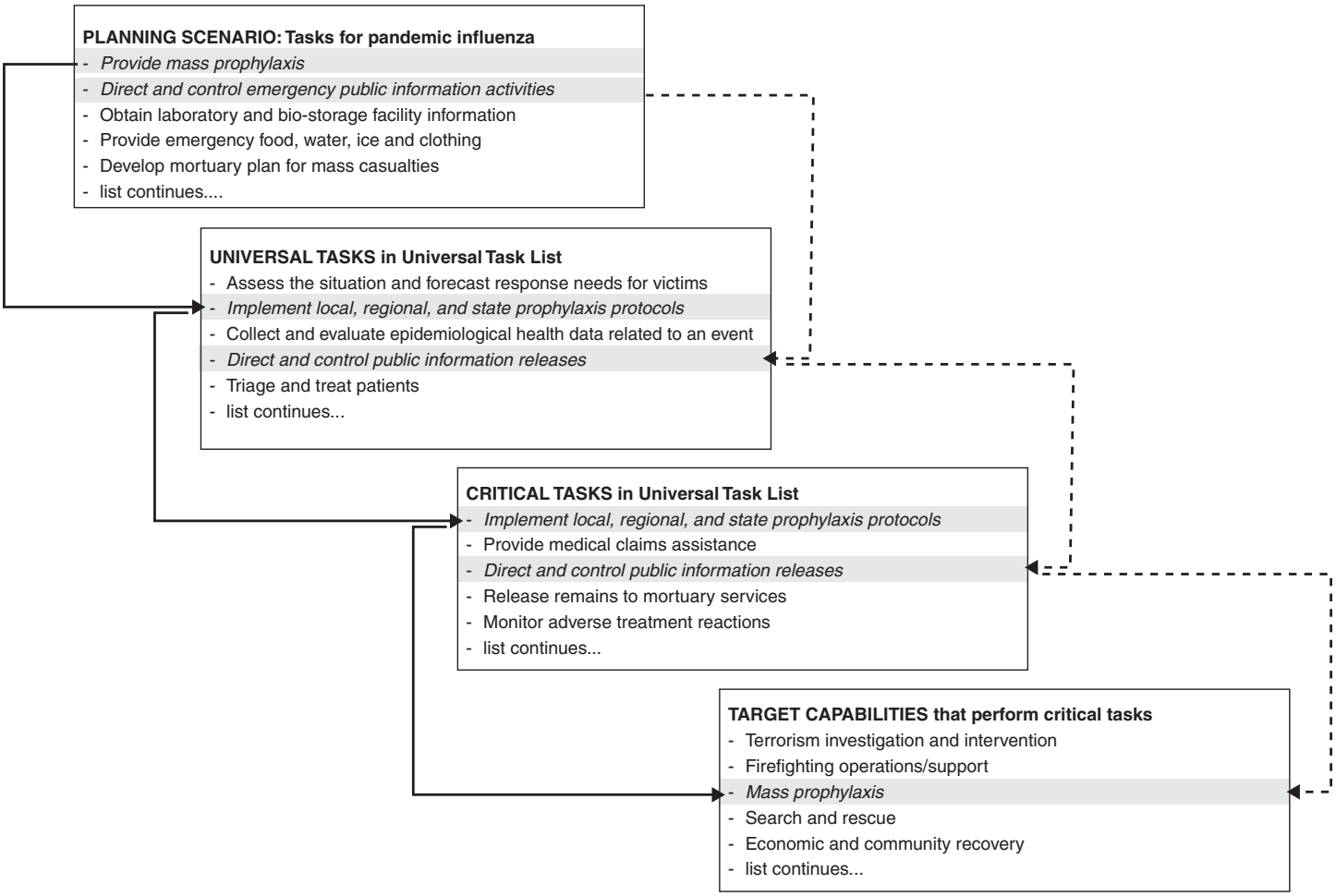


Source: DHS Interim National Preparedness Goal.

According to DHS, the Universal Task List is intended to include all unique, potential tasks at all levels of government that are needed to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from all large-scale emergency events, although every task would not necessarily be applicable to each of the 15 planning scenarios and no single jurisdiction or agency would be expected to perform every task. From this universe of potential tasks, DHS worked with stakeholders to identify a subset of about 300 critical tasks that must be performed during a large-scale event to reduce loss of life or serious injuries, mitigate significant property damage, or are essential to the success of a homeland security mission.

The final step of the first stage of DHS's planning process is to decide goals, requirements, and metrics. To complete this step, DHS, working with its stakeholders, developed a Target Capabilities List that identifies 36 capabilities needed to perform the critical tasks for the events illustrated by the 15 scenarios. An example of a desired outcome for the target capability of mass prophylaxis—prevention of or protective treatment for disease—is to effectively reach an entire affected population in time to prevent loss of life and injury. The relationship between the Universal Task List, critical tasks, and target capabilities for the pandemic flu scenario is illustrated in figure 5.

Figure 5: Example of Target Capability Development: Pandemic Influenza Scenario and Resulting Universal Tasks, Critical Tasks, and Target Capability



Source: GAO analysis of DHS planning scenarios of pandemic influenza event Universal Task List and Target Capability List.

The Target Capabilities List, according the National Preparedness Goal, provides guidance on the specific capabilities and levels of capability that federal, state, local, and tribal first responders will be expected to develop and maintain. DHS has defined these capabilities generically and expressed them in terms of desired operational outcomes and essential characteristics, rather than dictating specific, quantifiable responsibilities to the various jurisdictions. In the final version of the National Preparedness Goal, DHS plans to organize classes of jurisdictions that share similar characteristics such as total population, population density,

and critical infrastructure into tiers to account for reasonable differences in capability levels among groups of jurisdictions. According to the Interim National Preparedness Goal, the purpose of defining these groups of jurisdictions is to be able to appropriately apportion responsibility for development and maintenance of capabilities among levels of government and across these jurisdictional tiers, because both the risk and the resource base vary considerably among jurisdictions across the United States.

According to observations from 12 of the first responder departments we interviewed, radiological and biological attacks are among potential emergency events they may face which they are least prepared for and most concerned about their capabilities. However, because these types of attacks may require that a greater number of capabilities be exercised simultaneously or that a greater number or wider variety of first responders be employed to provide specific capabilities, these capabilities would necessarily be drawn from regional, federal, or private resources. In this regard the National Response Plan defines the roles and responsibilities of federal, state, local, private-sector, and nongovernmental organizations and citizens involved in support of domestic incident management, noting particularly that when state resources and capabilities are overwhelmed, state governors are responsible for requesting federal assistance when it becomes clear that state or tribal capabilities will be insufficient or have been exceeded or exhausted.

As we have previously reported, state and local resources alone will likely be insufficient to meet the terrorist threat, given the specialized resources that are necessary to address some types of terrorist attacks, the range of governmental services that could be affected, and the vital role played by private entities in preparing for and mitigating risks.[12] Because no single jurisdiction or agency would be expected to perform every task, possession of a target capability could involve enhancing and maintaining local resources, ensuring access to regional and federal resources, or some combination of the two. DHS encourages planning for regional cooperation and notes in the NRP that mutual aid agreements provide mechanisms to mobilize and employ resources from neighboring

[12]GAO, *Combating Terrorism: Intergovernmental Cooperation in the Development of a National Strategy to Enhance State and Local Preparedness*, GAO-02-550T, (Washington, D.C.: April 2, 2002).

jurisdictions to support the incident command. Facilitating effective regional coordination may present some challenges. For example, our work in the National Capital Region found that no regional coordination methods had been developed for planning for the use of 15 of the 16 funding sources we reviewed.[13] While the National Capital Region has experience with working together for regional emergency preparedness and response, officials from the National Capital Region told us that they had not worked together to develop plans and coordinate expenditures for the use of federal funds.

DHS also issued National Preparedness Guidance in April 2005 that provides information, instructions and examples on how to prepare for implementation of the goal at the federal, state and local levels of government. The guidance identifies the most urgent needs for enhancing national first responder preparedness capabilities in terms of 7 national priorities: (1) implementation of NRP and NIMS; (2) implementation of the interim National Infrastructure Protection Plan; (3) expanding regional cooperation; (4) strengthening capabilities in interoperable communications; (5) strengthening capabilities in information sharing and collaboration; (6) strengthening capabilities in medical surge and mass prophylaxis; (7) strengthening capabilities in detection and response for chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive weapons. Our review also indicated that the National Preparedness Guidance largely reflects an all-hazards approach and was developed in a manner that recognizes a range of possible threats and origins. Six of the 7 national priorities established and described by the guidance are generally applicable to all hazards. In addition to implementation of the 7 national priorities, the guidance identifies other all-hazards planning requirements for federal, state, and local governments.

[13]GAO, *Homeland Security: Management of First Responder Grants in the National Capital Region Reflects the Need for Coordinated Planning and Performance Goals*, GAO-04-433, (Washington, D.C.: May 28, 2004).

DHS's Implementation Plans May Address the Need for a Risk-Based, Strategic National Approach to Enhancing First Responders' All-Hazards Capabilities, But It Faces Implementation Challenges

We reported in our 21st century challenges work that federal investments in national preparedness have not been guided by a clear, risk-based strategic plan. The objective of the second stage of DHS's capabilities based planning process is to develop such a plan by creating a decision framework that will allow first responders at all levels of government to assess needs, update preparedness strategies, and allocate resources to address capability gaps and make the greatest improvements in preparedness. To support its planning efforts in the second stage of implementing HSPD-8, DHS has developed program implementation plans for (1) a national assessment and reporting of capability status, (2) an approach for balancing national investments in capabilities, and (3) programs for national training, national exercises, and collection and dissemination of lessons learned and best practices.

To develop these program implementation plans, DHS established task teams composed of various stakeholders from within DHS as well as representatives from state and local first responders and representatives from their professional associations such as the International Association of Fire Chiefs and Chiefs of Police, and the International Association of Emergency Managers. These stakeholder groups, called Integrated Concept Teams, developed the three program implementation requirement plans. According to DHS, implementation will be led by designated DHS program management offices along with stakeholders comprised of federal, state, local, tribal officials and private sector advisors; operational tasks will be performed by contractors. DHS plans to issue contracts during fiscal year 2005, to develop systems to meet the goals of the implementation plans, and complete implementation of the three national systems by September 30, 2008.

National Preparedness Assessment and Reporting Program Implementation Plan

According to DHS's Assessment and Reporting Implementation Plan, DHS intends to implement an assessment and reporting system to collect preparedness data to inform decision-makers at all levels on the capabilities of the federal government, states, local jurisdictions, and the private sector. According to the plan, DHS intends to collect data from all governmental recipients of direct funding, using states to collect data from local jurisdictions and using federal regulatory agencies and other appropriate sources to collect private-sector data. According to DHS, aggregating this data at all levels will provide information needed to allocate resources, execute training and exercises, and develop an annual status report on the nation's preparedness. The purpose of the assessment and reporting system is to provide information about the baseline status of national preparedness and to serve as the third stage of DHS's capability-based planning approach to ensure that state and local first responder

capabilities fully support the National Preparedness Goal. The proposed system is to include the following components:

- *Capability assessment:* Using target capabilities, first responders would be able to assess their preparedness to identify gaps, excesses, or deficiencies in their existing capabilities or capabilities they will be expected to access through mutual aid. In addition, this information is to measure the readiness of federal civil response assets and the use of federal assistance at the state and local level and provide a means of assessing how federal assistance programs are supporting the National Preparedness Goal.

- *Compliance assessment:* By establishing a mechanism for monitoring compliance with mandated guidance such as compliance with NIMS, and conformity with guidance on the preparation of homeland security strategies and grants, the compliance assessment is intended to serve as a check and balance on the self-reported information in the capability assessment.

- *Performance assessment:* By using a standardized reporting that documents performance in specific tasks relevant to the target capabilities, first responders will be expected to demonstrate accomplishments in exercises and real-world operations. Part of the performance assessment is to include corrective action plans to highlight and address areas in need of improvement.

As DHS implements the assessment and reporting system, it may encounter several challenges, which were identified by the assessment and reporting concept team in developing the implementation plan. These challenges include:

- Determining how to aggregate data from federal state, local, and tribal governments; private sector owners/operators; non-profit agencies; and citizen volunteers;

- Determining assessment timeframes (i.e., snapshot, annual, real time), and when and how often they should take place;

- Integrating self-assessment and external assessment approaches; and

- Resolving security classification limitations on information sharing among participants.

National Balanced Investment Implementation Plan

According to DHS's National Balanced Investment Implementation Plan, DHS intends to establish an approach to support improved investment decision-making, using the capability, compliance, and performance information provided by the assessment and reporting system. The purpose of the balanced investment program, according to the plan, will be to direct federal preparedness assistance to the highest priority capability gaps, balanced by significant risk factors. The proposed system is to include the following components:

- *All-Hazards Needs Assessment:* Using information on preparedness gaps and redundancies identified by the assessment and reporting system, DHS intends to use state-developed needs assessments to identify and quantify planning, equipment, training and exercises, and other organizational needs. These needs assessments are to include input from the first responder community, the private sector, the research and academic community, citizen groups, and tribal entities. DHS plans to direct the states to prioritize the needs they identify in the needs assessments based on various factors, including threats and vulnerabilities, tiers, universal tasks, probability, impact, risk, and cost/benefit analysis. Then, DHS expects to use the needs assessments to develop guidance, specifically tailored to state and local funding recipients, to guide the allocation of federal funding and resources in order to fill capability gaps.

- *All-Hazards Preparedness Strategies:* Needs assessments will provide a consistent basis for developing preparedness strategies for federal, regional, state, urban area, local and tribal first responders. DHS plans to develop and provide guidance and requirements so that strategies at all levels will align with the National Preparedness Goal and facilitate cooperation, mutual aid, and standardization across jurisdictions.

- *All-Hazards Decision Framework:* DHS intends to design a framework for allocating resources to implement federal, regional, state, urban area, local and tribal first responders' strategies. Using a structured process to estimate the relative impact of alternative investments and identify the optimal mix of investments for funding, DHS plans to assess, prioritize and develop optimized ranking of potential investments based on factors such as population concentrations, critical infrastructure and other significant risk factors.

In the implementation of its balanced investment program DHS intends to devise a process to prioritize investments in planning, personnel, equipment, training, and exercises to close capability gaps identified by the national assessment and reporting system. A key challenge will be establishing a standardized approach for measuring and reporting the risks

faced by diverse states and localities in order to effectively prioritize and allocate federal resources. Given that the 15 national planning scenarios DHS used to identify capability gaps were selected without regard to relative risk (i.e. probability of occurrence), it is not yet clear how DHS will prioritize investments in capability gaps on a national level. We have consistently advocated a risk management approach as a basis for ensuring that specific programs and related expenditures are prioritized and properly focused. Although risk management is an evolving practice, we have encouraged the application of certain key elements of a risk management approach, including a risk assessment that defines risks based on the likelihood that they will occur and the consequences of their occurrence. Another key element of the risk management approach we have advocated is the identification of risk mitigation alternatives and the ability to select among those alternatives based on risk, cost, and effectiveness. The intent of DHS's planned all-hazards decision framework to prioritize and optimize investments based on population, critical infrastructure, and other significant risk factors appears to offer the opportunity for such an approach to managing risk. However, as DHS does not expect to fully implement its balanced investment program before October 2008, it continues to operate its federal preparedness assistance programs without a solid risk-based decision framework, and we were unable to evaluate whether and the extent to which such a framework will incorporate these key elements of risk management. For example, it is not clear how DHS will use the data collected in the all-hazards needs assessment to consistently and comprehensively prioritize resource allocations based on national threats and vulnerabilities or how the department will define acceptable risks as it sets priorities.

National Training and Exercise and Lessons Learned Plan

According to DHS's National Training and Exercises and Lessons Learned Implementation Plan, DHS intends to implement a system to develop and maintain state and local responders' all-hazards capabilities. The goal of this system is to provide integrated national programs for training, exercise, and lessons-learned that will reorient existing initiatives at all government levels in order to develop, achieve, and sustain the capabilities that are required to achieve the National Preparedness Goal. The proposed system is to include the following components:

- *National training program:* Based on training needs defined by the Universal Task List, Target Capabilities List, and the National Incident Management System, the program is intended to provide criteria for accreditation of training courses, a national directory of accredited training providers, and a National Minimum Qualification Standards Guide.

- *National exercise program:* This program is intended to reorient the existing National Exercise Program to incorporate the capabilities-based planning process and provide standardized guidance and methodologies to schedule, design, develop, execute, and evaluate exercises at all levels of government. This program is also intended to provide requirements for the number and type of exercises that communities of varying sizes should conduct to meet the National Preparedness Goal.

- *National lessons-learned program:* This program is intended to create a centralized source for sharing lessons learned information that will be reviewed and validated at a national level using a standardized reporting format and process.

DHS faces challenges to coordinate this effort across the many state and local jurisdictions and among the variety of first responder disciplines. According to this integrated concept team's meeting minutes, its efforts were essential in order to develop a management system to ensure there are standard processes across all agencies. Among other things, DHS faces challenges related to:

- Disparate training requirements across disciplines,
- Different processes to manage training and exercises, and
- Different terms and definitions among disciplines related to emergency response functions.

Most Preparedness Capabilities Apply to All Emergency Events, but Prevention of Terrorist Attacks Requires Unique Capabilities

Terrorist attacks share many common characteristics with natural and accidental disasters. Our analysis of DHS's Target Capabilities List and our discussions with first responders and other emergency management stakeholders revealed that the capabilities required to address terrorist attacks and to address natural and accidental disasters are most similar for protection, response, and recovery, and differ most for prevention. More specifically, 30 of the 36 target capabilities yielded by DHS's capabilities based planning process apply across all types of emergency events. It is possible that terrorist attacks could be prevented through actionable intelligence (i.e., information that can lead to stopping or apprehending terrorists), but there is no known way to prevent natural disasters, such as hurricanes, earthquakes, and tornadoes. Natural or accidental disasters differ from terrorist attacks in that they are unintentional and unplanned rather than the result of deliberate, planned action. It is the deliberate, planned nature of terrorist attacks that makes preventive efforts for such attacks principally the responsibility of intelligence and law enforcement agencies.

Terrorist Attacks Share Common Characteristics with Natural and Accidental Disasters, and Most Preparedness Capabilities are Similar for All Emergency Events

Because terrorist attacks share many common characteristics with natural and accidental disasters, many of the capabilities first responders need to support national preparedness efforts are similar. As shown in table 2, many terrorist attacks are analogous to natural and accidental disasters.

Table 2: Natural and Accidental Disasters and Terrorist Attacks That Have Similar Effects

Natural and accidental disasters	Terrorist attacks
Fires	Arson
Explosions	Bombings
Plane/Train Crashes	Aviation/Rail Terrorism
Floods	Dam/Dike Sabotage
Chemical Spills/Releases	Chemical Warfare
Radiological Accidents	"Dirty Bombs"
Nuclear Accidents	Nuclear Terrorism
Epidemics, Biological Accidents	Biological Terrorism

Source: GAO analysis of research and historical information on emergency events.

For example, chemical attacks would resemble hazardous materials spills that release similar chemicals on highways or accidents that cause toxic gases to leak from rail cars, a small-scale biological attack using a common disease organism would resemble a natural outbreak, the tasks required to respond following large explosions are analogous to those necessary for responding to the aftermath of tornadoes, and preparedness for "dirty bomb" attacks requires practices that responders whose jurisdictions encompass nuclear power plants regularly exercise, according to other emergency professionals we consulted and the observations of selected officials from first responder departments we interviewed. As one expert explained, managing the Pentagon scene on September 11, 2001, consisted of five interrelated all-hazards response routines: plane crash, building fire, collapsed structure, crime scene, and crowd control. According to DHS officials, their analysis of the Homeland Security Council's 15 scenarios revealed that approximately 80 percent of necessary tasks would need to be performed regardless of the scenario. To achieve the performance of critical homeland security tasks, DHS has adopted an approach to the implementation of HSPD-8 that centers on building specific prevention, protection, response, and recovery capabilities within and among four related homeland security mission areas. Table 3 describes each mission area.

Table 3: Homeland Security Mission Areas

Mission Area	Description
Prevent	Deter all potential terrorists from attacking America, detect terrorists before they strike, prevent them and their instruments of terror from entering our country, and take decisive action to eliminate the threat they pose.
Protect	Reduce the likelihood of attack on assets or systems and limit the impact should an attack occur.
Respond	Implement immediate actions to save lives, protect property, and meet basic human needs.
Recover	Develop, coordinate, and execute service- and site-restoration plans and reconstitute government operations and services through individual, private sector, nongovernmental, and public assistance programs.

Source: DHS Target Capabilities List: Version 1.1.

Because of the similarities between the effects of terrorist attacks and natural or accidental disasters, much of the planning, personnel, training, and equipment that form the basis of protection, response, and recovery capabilities are similar across all emergency events, though certain mission areas are more similar than others. Specifically, our analysis of DHS's detailed definitions and descriptions of the 36 target capabilities showed that only 6 of the capabilities are described as being specific to terrorist attacks. Five of these 6 capabilities fall into DHS's prevention mission area, and one is in the protection mission area. The remaining 30 capabilities address preparedness for all hazards. DHS officials reviewed our analysis and agreed with our assessment of the relative applicability of the 36 target capabilities to various hazards. Table 4 lists the 36 target capabilities, the respective homeland security mission area where the capability is found, and the extent to which the various components of the capability address preparedness for all hazards.[14]

[14]According to DHS, a capability is comprised of the following 10 components: capability description; expected outcome; emergency support function/annex; the capabilities' location in the Universal Task List; associated critical tasks; capability and performance measures; necessary capability elements (e.g., personnel, planning, and equipment); linked capabilities; event conditions; and references.

Table 4: Arrangement of DHS's 36 Target Capabilities by Homeland Security Mission Area and the Relative Emphasis on Terrorism Preparedness for Each

Homeland security mission area	Specific to terrorism	Applicable to all hazards
Capabilities common to all mission areas		1. Interoperable communications 2. Planning
Prevention capabilities	1. Chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive detection 2. Terrorism investigation and intervention 3. Information collection and threat recognition 4. Information sharing and collaboration 5. Intelligence fusion and analysis	
Protection capabilities	6. Critical infrastructure protection against terrorist attack	3. Citizen preparedness and participation 4. Food and agriculture safety and defense 5. Public health epidemiological investigation and laboratory testing 6. Risk analysis
Response capabilities		7. Animal health emergency support 8. Citizen protection: evacuation and/or in place protection 9. Critical resource logistics and distribution 10. Emergency operations center management 11. Emergency public information and warning 12. Environmental health and vector control 13. Explosive device response operations 14. Fatality management 15. Firefighting operations/support 16. Isolation and quarantine 17. Mass care (sheltering, feeding, and related services) 18. Mass prophylaxis 19. Medical supplies management and distribution 20. Medical surge 21. On-site incident management

Homeland security mission area	Specific to terrorism	Applicable to all hazards
		22. Public safety and security response
		23. Search and rescue
		24. Triage and pre-hospital treatment
		25. Volunteer management and donations
		26. Weapons of mass destruction/hazardous materials response and decontamination
		27. Worker health and safety
Recovery capabilities		28. Economic and community recovery
		29. Restoration of lifelines
		30. Structural damage assessment and mitigation

Source: GAO Analysis of DHS Target Capabilities List: Version 1.1.

Although almost all target capabilities in the areas of protection, response, and recovery are similar across emergency events, terrorist attacks could require that more of the specific prevention, protection, response, or recovery capabilities be exercised simultaneously, or that a greater number or wider variety of capability elements (e.g., personnel, planning, and equipment) could be employed to provide the capability. Nonetheless, many emergency response representatives we consulted agreed that substantial overlap exists between capabilities that are needed for natural and accidental disasters and those that are needed for terrorist attacks. These shared capabilities would allow for the performance of broad tasks such as controlling entry to emergency areas, recovering victims, treating the ill and injured, providing basic living needs for survivors and their families, transporting the dead, restoring essential services, handling public inquiries, providing a basis for recovery, and maintaining law and order.

Prevention Capabilities Differ for Terrorism Because of a Reliance on Actionable Intelligence

Terrorist attacks differ from natural and accidental disasters because they are intentionally perpetrated acts that could possibly be prevented or deterred. As a result, all five of the prevention capabilities on DHS's target capabilities list focus exclusively on terrorist attacks. Although first responders from the law enforcement community are active in the prevention of crime, and all terrorist attacks are crimes, the prevention of terrorist attacks differs from traditional crime prevention in its heavy reliance on actionable intelligence—information that can lead to stopping or apprehending terrorists. Reflecting this reliance within the prevention

mission area are the capabilities to collect information of value to counterterrorism and analyze this intelligence for possible threats; recognize the wider threat picture and potentially harmful patterns that may emerge from collected intelligence; and share this intelligence across disciplines and jurisdictions. Reliance on actionable intelligence also is used within the prevention mission area to support investigation of terrorist activities and to interdict weapons of mass destruction by preventing the import, transport, manufacture, or release of chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive materials. During our interviews, 29 of 52 first responder departments who replied to a question about the extent to which prevention capabilities differ between terrorist and other emergencies said that terrorism prevention is either more different than similar or very different.

Protection Capabilities for Terrorist Attacks and Natural or Accidental Disasters Are Similar, Even Though DHS Identifies Protection of Critical Infrastructure in Terms of Terrorist Attacks

Although the Target Capabilities List states that the purpose of protection capabilities is to reduce the likelihood of attack and to limit the damage should an attack occur, four of the five capabilities that compose this mission area could also be applied to limit the damage from natural and accidental disasters. For example, the protection mission area includes capabilities such as the identification and prioritization of hazards, vulnerabilities, and risks; the identification and eradication of contaminants in the nation's food supply; the investigation of disease outbreaks, both deliberate and naturally occurring; and the involvement of citizens in exercises and ongoing volunteer programs.

The only protection capability that DHS links exclusively to terrorist attacks is Critical Infrastructure Protection.[15] This capability is intended to reduce the threat to and vulnerability of high-risk targets such as the nation's infrastructure. The capability summary states that this capability applies to all terrorist attack scenarios. However, many of the critical tasks that compose this capability are traditional mitigation activities: pre-event actions that involve lasting, often permanent reduction of the exposure to, probability of, or potential loss from a variety of emergency events. These actions could include tasks as simple as fastening bookshelves to walls to keep them from falling during earthquakes or as involved as rewriting building codes and zoning ordinances to minimize

[15]The Target Capabilities List includes in the Critical Infrastructure Protection capability those systems and assets, whether physical or virtual, that are so vital to the United States that their incapacity or destruction would have a debilitating impact on the country.

future flood damage. These types of actions are applicable to multiple emergency scenarios—for example, installing shatterproof glass protects against damage and injury from flying glass in the event of both a heavy storm and a terrorist bombing. Similarly, taking protective measures to improve the safety of rail cars in a mass transit system—an example of a vital system as described in the Critical Infrastructure Protection capability—could reduce the damage from terrorist attacks while also mitigating the effects of accidental collisions.

Response Capabilities Apply Across All Emergency Types

DHS's response mission area includes 21 response capabilities that are each applicable to terrorist attacks and to natural and accidental disasters. Examples of response capabilities include the ability to: manage an emergency operations center; relocate affected and at-risk members of the population to safer areas through emergency evacuation; advise and update citizens through emergency public information; conduct and support fire suppression operations; isolate and quarantine individuals who are ill, exposed, or likely to be exposed during a contagious disease outbreak; provide mass prophylaxis following the onset of a biological event; distribute medical supplies and provide adequate medical evaluation and care during events that exceed the limits of the normal medical capacity of an affected community—referred to as medical surge; direct and control an emergency event site through an incident command system; coordinate and conduct search and rescue operations in collapsed structures; and protect first responder health and safety during a response. During our interviews, 37 of 54 first responder departments who replied to a question about the extent to which response differs between terrorist incidents and natural or accidental disasters stated that terrorism response is either more similar than different or very similar.

For example, the capability to distribute medical supplies and manage a medical surge could be needed in both a terrorist attack and a natural disaster. According to the Homeland Security Council, the number of uninjured or "worried well" who sought medical treatment after the 9/11 World Trade Center attack was approximately 15 times the number of people who sought medical treatment due to smoke inhalation. According to one public health official we interviewed, physicians would observe a similar "worried well" phenomenon in non-terrorism scenarios, for example, among otherwise healthy patients who incorrectly attribute common symptoms to a feared severe acute respiratory syndrome or SARS infection.

The capability to successfully disrupt and dispose of an explosive device, though generally directed toward an intentional act, is not limited to terrorism preparedness. Eliminating explosive devices of varying sizes and sophistication is part of a police department's regular operations, and many public safety agencies had bomb squads dedicated to this purpose before the attacks of September, 11, 2001, focused the nation's attention on terrorism.

One of the capabilities in the response mission area—Weapons of Mass Destruction/Hazardous Incident Response and Decontamination—explicitly includes weapons of mass destruction in its title, indicating that the capability may be terrorism-focused. However, this capability is combined with the capability to respond to all hazardous materials sites. Therefore, it is by definition an all-hazards capability. In the case of weapons of mass destruction, however, depending upon the size of the weapon, an emergency event could require that a host of related response and recovery capabilities be exercised simultaneously and that a greater number or wider variety of first responders be asked to deliver these capabilities than might typically occur during a natural or accidental disaster.

Initial awareness of the possibility of terrorist involvement has become part of first responders' protocols for responding to any event. For example, officials from 5 first responder departments we met with said that they have developed protocols for entering the site of an incident and have heightened their awareness of secondary devices or attacks. These protocols have increasingly become part of the standard response to any emergency event because responders must consider attacks that are intended to kill and injure response personnel and to otherwise impede response efforts. One fire department official explained that the events of September 11, 2001, raised the department's general awareness level and that, in the post-9/11 environment, response personnel are likely to think of terrorism first when a catastrophic event occurs, which may lead to a greater assessment of the situation before entering the scene. Moreover, according to local fire department officials we visited in several locations, fire departments have long been aware of secondary events, like explosions or collapsing structures; the difference now is the possible presence of intent, which means that these secondary events may be targeted instead of random, and thus may be more likely to kill, injure, and destroy.

Recovery Capabilities for Terrorist Attacks Apply Across All Emergency Types

There are three capabilities that compose DHS's recovery mission area, and all three are all-hazards in nature. They consist of the capability to: conduct damage and safety assessments in public and private structures; restore transportation, communication, utilities, and other essential services; and implement short-term and long-term economic and community recovery processes. During our interviews, 31 of 51 first responder departments who replied to the question about the extent to which recovery differs between terrorist incidents and natural or accidental disasters said that recovery capabilities were either more similar than different or very similar. For example, a community's buildings would need to be assessed after an earthquake or after a terrorist attack that topples multiple structures. The capability to restore transportation services would also be necessary whether a city's bus service has been suspended due to a winter storm or to a terrorist bombing. Long-term recovery processes may be necessary in the case of terrorist events that result in long-term or permanent evacuation from a geographic area: for example, an intentional radiological release could contaminate the surrounding area in the same way that accidental releases have done in past radiological events. In this way, the aftermath of large-scale terrorist events could be similar to the long-term or permanent evacuation from flood zones and environmentally-compromised hazardous waste sites.

Federal Funding For Enhancing First Responders' Preparedness Capabilities Emphasizes Terrorism but Can Be Applied to All Hazards

Federal grant funding since September 11, 2001, has largely emphasized enhancing first responders' capabilities to respond to terrorist attacks. Legislative language has directed DHS to use these funds chiefly to prevent, protect, respond to and recover from acts of terrorism. Additionally, HSPD-8 directs DHS to take an all-hazards approach to national emergency preparedness with a special emphasis on terrorism. As a result, DHS grant guidance has contained, in large part, explicit direction that state and local grant recipients use the funds to enhance first responders' capabilities for terrorist attacks. State preparedness officials and local first responders we interviewed said that DHS's emphasis for grant funding was too heavily focused on terrorism; rather, they preferred to invest in dual use equipment and training (i.e., could be used for all hazards, whether the source was a terrorist act or a natural or accidental disaster.) In response, DHS promoted flexibility to allow such dual usage within the grant program requirements for fiscal year 2005, according to DHS officials. To ensure grant funds are used for their designated purpose, the states and localities we visited reported they all have financial controls methods and monitoring procedures in place designed to ensure that

whatever flexibilities for dual uses exist, they remain within DHS's program guidelines.

DHS Grant Funding for First Responders Has Focused on Terrorism

DHS grant programs have largely focused on enhancing first responders' capabilities to respond to terrorist attacks based on HSPD-8 and legislation that emphasize preparedness assistance for catastrophic terrorism as the highest priority for federal funding. For example, HSPD-8 directs DHS to take an all-hazards approach to national emergency preparedness assistance and directs the department to place special emphasis on terrorism in doing so.[16] Moreover, legislative requirements associated with the larger grant programs for first responders focus on terrorist attacks, while smaller grant programs focus on all-hazards preparedness. For example, the legislative requirements associated with the 3 largest grant programs specify that funds be used for preparedness against terrorist attacks:

- State Homeland Security Grant program funds are to be used to enhance the capability of state and local jurisdictions to prepare, for and respond to, acts of terrorism, including those involving the use of chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive weapons.[17]

- Urban Area Security Initiative grant funds are to be used to enhance high threat, high density urban areas' ability to prepare for and respond to threats or acts of terrorism involving weapons of mass destruction.[18]

[16]*See* Homeland Security Presidential Directive/HSPD-8, paras. (5), (10)-(11), 39 Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc. 1822 (Dec. 22, 2003).

[17]*See* United and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act (USA PATRIOT Act) of 2001 § 1014(a), 42 U.S.C. § 3714(a).

[18]*See* H.R. Conf. Rep. No. 108-10, at 637 (2003); Emergency Wartime Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2003, Pub. L. No. 108-11, tit. I, ch. 6, 117 Stat. 559, 583 (Apr. 16, 2003); Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2004, Pub. L. No. 108-90, 117 Stat. 1137, 1146 (Oct. 1, 2003); Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2005, Pub. L. No. 108-334, 118 Stat. 1298, 1309 (Oct. 18, 2004).

- The Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program is, as its name suggests, to provide funds to assist state and local law enforcement communities in their activities to prevent terrorist attacks.[19]

The only other first responder grant programs that received an appropriation of greater than $100 million in fiscal year 2005 were two long standing programs that have historically had an all-hazards focus:

- The Emergency Management Performance Grant program was authorized to provide emergency management planning and assistance to states for multi-hazard preparedness and mitigation.[20]

- The Assistance to Firefighters Grant program provides assistance to fire departments for the purpose of protecting the health and safety of the public and firefighting personnel against fire and fire-related hazards, including incidents of terrorism or use of weapons of mass destruction.[21]

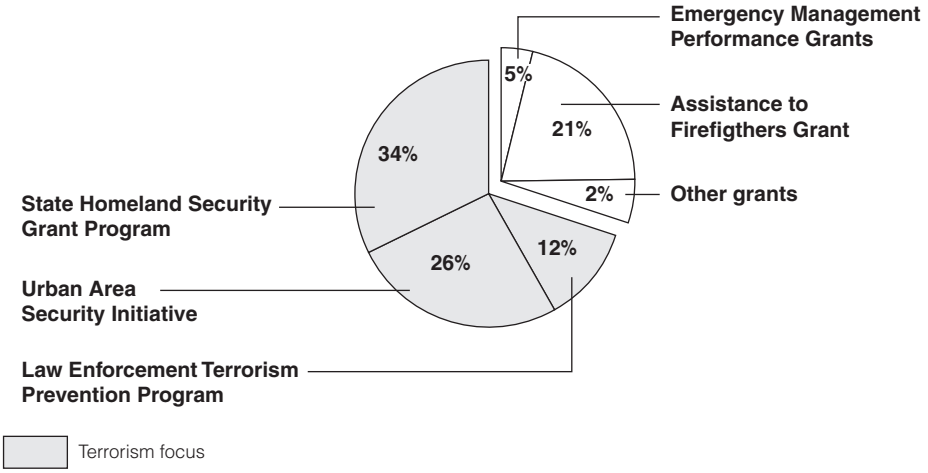
As shown in figure 6, almost 3 of every 4 grant dollars appropriated to DHS for first responders in fiscal year 2005 were for 3 primary programs that had an explicit focus on terrorism. Congress appropriated almost $2.4 billion in fiscal year 2005 for the three largest grant programs: the State Homeland Security Grant program (about $1.1 billion), the Urban Area Security Initiative ($885 million) and the Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program ($400 million). Congress appropriated about $960 million in fiscal year 2005 for all-hazards grant programs: the Emergency Management Performance Grant program ($180 million), the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program ($715 million), and other grant programs ($65 million)—such as Citizen Corps and the Metropolitan Medical Response System.

[19]*See* Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2004, Pub. L. No. 108-90, 117 Stat. 1137, 1146 (Oct. 1, 2003); Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2005, Pub. L. No. 108-334, 118 Stat. 1298, 1309 (Oct. 18, 2004) (both appropriating funds pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 3714).

[20]*See* Act of Oct. 20, 1999, Pub. L. No. 106-74, tit. III, 113 Stat. 1047, 1086 (codified at 42 U.S.C. § 5195 note).

[21]*See* Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 §§ 33(b), 34(a)(1)(A), 15 U.S.C. §§ 2229(b), 2229a(a)(1)(A).

Figure 6: Most Fiscal Year 2005 DHS First Responder Grant Funding Is for Three Programs that Focus On Terrorism

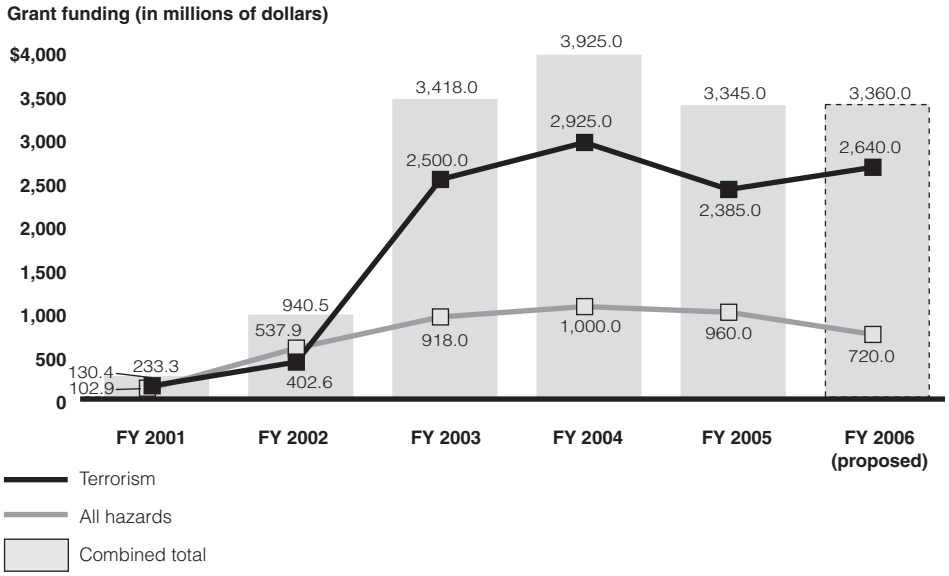


Source: GAO analysis of fiscal year 2005 congressional appropriations to DHS programs.

Our analysis of appropriations between fiscal years 2001 and 2005 for these key first responder grant programs showed that while funding for all grant programs increased substantially, funding for grant programs with an all-hazards emergency management focus increased at a lesser rate than funding for terrorism-specific programs, as shown in figure 7. This increase in terrorism-focused funding was due mainly to the funding increases for appropriated programs related to the State Homeland Security Grant program and the Urban Area Security Initiative grant program, which increased from about $109 million and $21 million, respectively, in fiscal year 2001, to almost $1.1 billion and $885 million, respectively, in fiscal year 2005.[22]

[22]For the purpose of this analysis we used the amount of funds appropriated in fiscal years 2001 and 2002 for the Nunn-Lugar-Domenici program on which the Urban Area Security Initiative program was based, beginning in fiscal year 2003.

Figure 7: DHS Grant Funding for Terrorism versus All Hazards, Fiscal Years 2001 to 2005 and Projected for Fiscal Year 2006



Source: GAO analysis of legislative appropriations to DHS programs and DHS budget request for fiscal year 2006.

For fiscal year 2006, the Administration has proposed spending almost $3.4 billion for homeland security preparedness grants, continuing DHS's emphasis on terrorism and spending about 3 of every 4 dollars or about $2.6 billion for terrorism-focused grant programs.[23] About $720 million would go toward those grant programs with an all-hazards emergency management focus. The Administration's budget request also proposes to merge the program activities currently under the terrorism-focused grant programs by merging the program activities under the Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program into the State Homeland Security Grant and the Urban Area Security Initiative. Under this proposal states and localities would be required to earmark no less than 20 percent of their spending under these programs toward terrorism prevention activities. Finally, the fiscal year 2006 budget request reflects a continuation of

[23]In addition to providing $1.02 billion funding each to the State Homeland Security Grant program and the Urban Area Security Initiative, about $600 million is proposed for the creation of a new state and local homeland security assistance program called the Targeted Infrastructure Protection Program. This proposed program would provide funding to enhance security at ports, transit systems and other infrastructure identified by DHS and would replace the current discretionary grants for ports, rail, intercity bus and trucking.

decreased funding for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. In fiscal year 2006, the proposed budget for this program is $500 million compared to $715 million in fiscal year 2005 and $750 million in fiscal year 2004.

More than 87,000 state and local jurisdictions across the nation are potentially eligible to receive first responder grants funds. Legislative funding criteria affect allocation of these funds to states who in turn allocate funds to local first responders. For example, the fiscal year 2005 Homeland Security Grant Program, allocated a minimum of 0.75 percent of the available first-responder funding to each state, which accounted for 40 percent of the total allocations for this program.[24] Alternative approaches for the formula to allocate State Homeland Security Program grants with varying degrees of attention to the risks and threats of terrorism and natural or accidental disasters are being considered by Congress. For example, one proposed change in this formula would focus mainly on higher population areas with critical infrastructure that may be more attractive to terrorists. This approach is currently the basis for the Urban Area Security Initiative program funds that are provided to 50 selected urban areas that are chosen on the basis of population, population density, presence of critical national infrastructure, threat and presence of mutual aid compacts.

Some First Responders Disagreed With Emphasis of Federal Grant Programs on Terror and Expressed Concerns about Current and Future Funding

The priorities of some first responders we interviewed did not align with DHS's priorities for enhancing capabilities. For example, during our interviews, 31 of 39 first responder departments who replied to a question about DHS's training programs, exercise activities and grant funds, disagreed that these were focused on all-hazards. In addition, officials from four first responder departments went on to say that DHS required too much emphasis on terrorism-related activities in requests for equipment and training—for example, combating weapons of mass destruction and preventing and responding to terrorist attacks using

[24]Including the District of Columbia and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico along with other territories that receive 0.25 percent under the allocation formula.

chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive materials.[25] However, responders said that they had a greater need for assistance preparing for natural and accidental disasters. During our interviews, 37 of the 69 first responder departments who responded to a question about the programmatic challenges they face cited the need for additional flexibility from DHS or state agencies in order to use grant funds to enhance their ability to respond to events that were more likely to occur in their jurisdictions. State and local officials said they have been able to identify uses for most of the training and equipment they receive that include both terrorism and other hazards. Moreover, local first responder departments and state officials we interviewed also noted that they favored dual-use purchases for many reasons: to prevent equipment from "rotting on the shelf," according to one official; to maintain a level of comfort and proficiency with equipment on hand for counterterrorism by using it for everyday responses; and to build stronger all-hazards capabilities that will allow them to better respond to terrorist attacks.

We have reported in the past that achieving national preparedness and response goals hinges on the federal government's ability to form effective partnerships with nonfederal stakeholders.[26] By working collectively with state and local governments, the federal government gains the resources and expertise of the people closest to the challenge. Just as partnerships offer opportunities, they also create challenges based upon the different interests reflected by each partner. From the federal perspective, there is the concern that state and local governments may not share the same priorities for use of federal funds. For example, in 10 first responder departments we interviewed, officials pointed out that they were much more likely to face the threat of hurricanes, floods, or wildland fires than an attack by terrorists using weapons of mass destruction or chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive materials and that their priorities focused on fortifying their efforts to deal with these natural and accidental disasters. In addition, 61 first responder departments we

[25]Planned expenditures for equipment represented 78 percent and 74 percent, respectively, of the state and local first responder grant activities under both the State Homeland Security Grant and the Urban Area Security Initiative, while about 10 percent of fiscal year 2004 funds were used for planning, the next highest category, according to DHS *Annual Report on Preparedness Funding Fiscal Year 2004* (Washington, D.C., December 2004). Planned expenditures for equipment were over $1.5 billion under the State Homeland Security Grant, and over $456 million under the Urban Area Security Initiative.

[26]GAO, *Homeland Security: Effective Intergovernmental Coordination is Key to Success*, GAO-02-1013T (Washington, D.C.; August 23, 2002).

interviewed reported that their emergency operations plans and procedures are all-hazards plans and structured around the full range of potential emergencies, incidents and risks.

In response, DHS promoted flexibility to allow such dual usage within the grant program requirements for fiscal year 2005, according to DHS officials. Officials from the Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness said that the majority of the assistance they offer to state and local first responders is required to be linked to emergency management tasks related to terrorist attacks but that some authorized equipment, training, and exercises can be used for emergencies that are not related to terrorism. Officials stated, even prior to fiscal year 2005, grant requirements allowed for dual usage and state grantees are responsible for contacting DHS when questions regarding application of grant guidelines arise. They also said that although the DHS equipment list was not created with the intention that equipment would be used for non-terrorism purposes, flexibility for dual use was reasonable, acceptable, and expected. Given that DHS now defines its targets for protection, response and recovery capabilities in terms of all-hazards applicability, approved training and equipment that are intended to enhance these capabilities of first responders inherently have an all-hazards applicability.

First responders we interviewed also expressed concerns about both current and sustained future funding for the personnel, training, and equipment they need to respond to large-scale emergency events. In addition to the start-up costs—the initial investment in new equipment and training needed to enhance first responders' capabilities—the costs of maintaining equipment, providing ongoing training and exercises for responders, and replenishing perishable supplies and stock are also likely to be significant. During our interviews, 48 of 69 first responder departments who replied to a question about challenges said their departments faced funding challenges for personnel, maintenance, equipment, training, and multi-year funding sources for sustaining preparedness capabilities. In addition, in 59 of 69 first responder departments we visited first responders cited multi-year funding as one of their top program challenges. For example, officials from three state and local departments we interviewed observed that a connection exists between multi-year funding and sustainability because without multi-year funding, local first responders cannot commit to sustaining the equipment purchased on an ongoing basis. One first responder official worried that their department is buying new equipment but were concerned that DHS might not provide future funding for them to sustain the equipment. In another locality, officials told us that equipment they had purchased could

not be maintained without continued DHS assistance. In response to these types of concerns, state and local officials have different options to ensure that capabilities can be sustained; for example, contracts for equipment purchases could be designed to include maintenance during the useful life of the equipment, according to DHS.

States and Localities Report Having Financial Controls and Procedures to Ensure Compliance with Program Guidelines

The states and localities we visited reported they have financial controls and procedures in place designed to ensure that whatever flexibilities for dual uses exist, they remain within DHS's program guidelines. State governments and local first responders we visited identified various purchasing controls and monitoring procedures that are in place at different levels of government to review the purchase of goods and services. For example, first responder departments that we met with said they are required to submit their grant requests to other local, state or regional government bodies, or steering committees. In some cases these interagency committees were made up of multiple jurisdictions and multiple first responder disciplines working collaboratively to develop the annual list of equipment and training programs to be acquired for those jurisdictions. State preparedness agencies and local first responders also identified internal review processes that exist within the state's administrative agency for homeland security grants and local internal controls. We have previously reported on the management of first responder grant programs and efforts to improve accountability and have examined these procedures and processes in greater detail.[27] In February 2005, we reported that in fiscal year 2004, DHS completed site visits to 44 of 56 states and territories that received grants as part of its monitoring of states' grant reporting and state homeland security strategy implementation. We also reported that in fiscal year 2004 DHS revised its method of reporting on grant expenditures, moving away from requiring itemized lists of expenditures toward a more results-based approach where grant managers must demonstrate how grant expenditures link to larger projects that support one or more goals in the states' homeland security strategies. Finally, in the absence of some basic, comparable standards for first responder performance, it has been difficult to assess the effect of grant expenditures on first responder capabilities and performance.

[27]See GAO, *Homeland Security: Management of First Responder Grant Programs and Efforts to Improve Accountability Continue to Evolve*, GAO-05-530T (Washington, D.C.; April 12, 2005); GAO, *Emergency Preparedness: Federal Funds for First Responders*, GAO-04-788T (Washington, D.C.; May 13, 2004); and GAO, *Homeland Security: Management of First Responder Grant Programs Has Improved, but Challenges Remain*, GAO-05-121, (Washington, D.C.; Feb. 2, 2005).

Concluding Observations

Prior to September 11, 2001, the federal government's role in supporting emergency preparedness and management was limited primarily to providing guidance and grants for planning, mitigation, and equipment before large-scale disasters like floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes, and response and recovery assistance after such disasters. Since September 11, 2001, the federal government has awarded billions of dollars to state and local governments for planning, equipment, and training to enhance the capabilities of first responders to respond to terrorist attacks and, to a lesser extent, natural and accidental disasters. These extensive resources reflect a growing federal role in promoting emergency preparedness. However, as we reported in our 21st century challenges work, this federal financial assistance has not been guided by a clear, risk-based strategic plan that would provide a basis for realistic budgeting and resource planning. Ultimately, the federal government must determine how much developing and maintaining the national emergency preparedness capabilities needed for homeland security will cost and what the nation's federal, state and local governments can afford to pay. DHS, as the primary executive department with responsibilities for national emergency preparedness efforts, faces the challenge of working with state and local governments to coordinate preparedness activities and formulate realistic budgets and resource plans to share these costs and support and sustain implementation of an efficient and effective an all-hazards national preparedness program.

DHS's development of an all-hazards national preparedness goal, along with related products and program implementation plans and requirements, if properly planned and executed, may help guide the development of realistic budget and resource plans. However, DHS may confront several challenges in its attempts to fully realize the preparedness goal and implement the three programs described by its program implementation plans. For example, DHS's assessment and reporting implementation plan, intended to accurately identify the status of capabilities at the state, regional, and local levels is vital for establishing a baseline and providing an ongoing feedback loop, upon which decisions at these multiple levels of government about preparedness needs will rest. However, DHS plans to rely extensively on self-reported data. Therefore, as the team that devised DHS's assessment and reporting implementation plan pointed out, it is likely to be a challenge for DHS to determine how to aggregate data from multiple governmental and nongovernmental emergency preparedness actors. An effective assessment system will also have to balance self-assessment approaches with appropriate external assessment checks in order to provide consistent and accurate data that can drive these budgeting and resource planning decisions.

A related challenge DHS may face is in continuing to coordinate efforts to enhance first responder all-hazards capabilities among and across various states and jurisdictions and to manage stakeholder expectations. First, DHS's tiered approach to defining first responders' required capabilities—either to possess or to secure access—suggests that finding effective approaches for local jurisdictions to work together to develop funding plans and coordinate expenditures for the use of federal funds for regional emergency preparedness and response will be an important step in the process of developing a realistic budget. However, as our work on emergency preparedness in the National Capital Region demonstrates, facilitating effective regional coordination can be particularly challenging. Additionally, as we have reported, achieving national preparedness and response goals hinges on the federal government's ability to work collectively with state and local governments in order to leverage resources and expertise. Inconsistent expectations about dual use and concerns about how to coordinate the national training and exercise program, among other things, illustrate the importance of careful attention to establishing and maintaining strong nonfederal partnerships.

Finally, DHS's proposal for a national system to balance resource investments may help to provide a strategic, risk-based approach to prioritize federal, state and local resource investments, to the extent that the department uses a systematic, comprehensive risk management approach. We have consistently advocated such a risk based approach to guide federal investments in homeland security that would consider threats, vulnerabilities, and criticalities, as well as the expected value of investments in developing first responders' capabilities to prevent terrorist attacks and to protect critical infrastructure balanced with the potential costs of developing and maintaining capabilities for responding and recovering from all types of emergency events. Such an approach could provide a basis to formulate realistic budget and resource plans at the national level. The intent of DHS's planned all-hazards decision framework to prioritize and optimize investments based on population, critical infrastructure, and other significant risk factors appears to offer the opportunity for such an approach to managing risk; however establishing a standardized approach for measuring and reporting the risks faced by diverse states and localities in order to effectively prioritize and allocate federal resources will be a key challenge. Moreover, as DHS does not expect to fully implement its balanced investment program before 2008, it continues to operate its federal preparedness assistance programs without a solid risk-based decision framework, and it is not yet clear whether and to what extent, when established, the proposed framework will incorporate the key elements of risk management that we recommend.

Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report to DHS, which had no comments or concerns with the information included in this report. DHS also provided technical comments which we incorporated as appropriate.

As we agreed with your office, unless you publicly announce the contents of this report earlier, we plan no further distribution of it until 30 days from the date of this letter. We then plan to provide copies of this report to the Secretary of DHS. Copies of this report will also be made available to others upon request. In addition, this report will be available at no charge on GAO's Web site at http://www.gao.gov.

If you or your staff has any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-8777 or jenkinswo@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff that made major contributions to this report is listed in appendix IV.

William O. Jenkins Jr.
Director, Homeland Security
and Justice Issues

Appendix I: Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5

the White House
President George W. Bush

For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
February 28, 2003

Homeland Security Presidential Directive/HSPD-5

Subject: Management of Domestic Incidents

Purpose

(1) To enhance the ability of the United States to manage domestic incidents by establishing a single, comprehensive national incident management system.

Definitions

(2) In this directive:

(a) the term "Secretary" means the Secretary of Homeland Security.

(b) the term "Federal departments and agencies" means those executive departments enumerated in 5 U.S.C. 101, together with the Department of Homeland Security; independent establishments as defined by 5 U.S.C. 104(1); government corporations as defined by 5 U.S.C. 103(1); and the United States Postal Service.

(c) the terms "State," "local," and the "United States" when it is used in a geographical sense, have the same meanings as used in the Homeland Security Act of 2002, Public Law 107-296.

Policy

(3) To prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies, the United States Government shall establish a single, compre-hensive approach to domestic incident management. The objective of the United States Government is to ensure that all levels of government across the Nation have the capability to work efficiently and effectively together, using a national approach to domestic incident management. In these efforts, with regard to domestic incidents, the United States Government treats crisis management and consequence management as a single, integrated function, rather than as two separate functions.

(4) The Secretary of Homeland Security is the principal Federal official for domestic incident management. Pursuant to the Homeland Security Act of 2002, the Secretary is responsible for coordinating Federal operations within the United States to prepare for, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies. The Secretary shall coordinate the Federal Government's resources utilized in response to or recovery from terrorist attacks, major disasters,

or other emergencies if and when any one of the following four conditions applies: (1) a Federal department or agency acting under its own authority has requested the assistance of the Secretary; (2) the resources of State and local authorities are overwhelmed and Federal assistance has been requested by the appropriate State and local authorities; (3) more than one Federal department or agency has become substantially involved in responding to the incident; or (4) the Secretary has been directed to assume responsibility for managing the domestic incident by the President.

(5) Nothing in this directive alters, or impedes the ability to carry out, the authorities of Federal departments and agencies to perform their responsibilities under law. All Federal departments and agencies shall cooperate with the Secretary in the Secretary's domestic incident management role.

(6) The Federal Government recognizes the roles and responsibilities of State and local authorities in domestic incident management. Initial responsibility for managing domestic incidents generally falls on State and local authorities. The Federal Government will assist State and local authorities when their resources are overwhelmed, or when Federal interests are involved. The Secretary will coordinate with State and local governments to ensure adequate planning, equipment, training, and exercise activities. The Secretary will also provide assistance to State and local governments to develop all-hazards plans and capabilities, including those of greatest importance to the security of the United States, and will ensure that State, local, and Federal plans are compatible.

(7) The Federal Government recognizes the role that the private and nongovernmental sectors play in preventing, preparing for, responding to, and recovering from terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies. The Secretary will coordinate with the private and nongovernmental sectors to ensure adequate planning, equipment, training, and exercise activities and to promote partnerships to address incident management capabilities.

(8) The Attorney General has lead responsibility for criminal investigations of terrorist acts or terrorist threats by individuals or groups inside the United States, or directed at United States citizens or institutions abroad, where such acts are within the Federal criminal jurisdiction of the United States, as well as for related intelligence collection activities within the United States, subject to the National Security Act of 1947 and other applicable law, Executive Order 12333, and Attorney General-approved procedures pursuant to that Executive Order. Generally acting through the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Attorney General, in cooperation with other Federal departments and agencies engaged in activities to protect our national security, shall also coordinate the activities of the other members of the law enforcement community to detect, prevent, preempt, and disrupt terrorist attacks against the United States. Following a terrorist threat or an actual incident that falls within the criminal jurisdiction of the United States, the full capabilities of the United States shall be dedicated, consistent with United States law and with activities of other Federal departments and agencies to protect our national security, to assisting the Attorney General to identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice. The Attorney General and the Secretary shall establish appropriate relationships and mechanisms for cooperation and coordination between their two departments.

(9) Nothing in this directive impairs or otherwise affects the authority of the Secretary of Defense over the Department of Defense, including the chain of command for military forces from the President as Commander in Chief, to the Secretary of Defense, to the commander of military forces, or military command and control procedures. The Secretary of Defense shall provide military support to civil authorities for domestic incidents as directed by the President or when consistent with military readiness and appropriate under the circumstances and the law. The Secretary of Defense shall retain command of military forces providing civil support. The Secretary of Defense and the Secretary shall establish appropriate relationships and mechanisms for cooperation and coordination between their two departments.

(10) The Secretary of State has the responsibility, consistent with other United States Government activities to protect our national security, to coordinate international activities related to the prevention, preparation, response, and recovery from a domestic incident, and for the protection of United States citizens and United States interests overseas. The Secretary of State and the Secretary shall establish appropriate relationships and mechanisms for cooperation and coordination between their two departments.

(11) The Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs shall be responsible for interagency policy coordination on domestic and international incident management, respectively, as directed by the President. The Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs shall work together to ensure that the United States domestic and international incident management efforts are seamlessly united.

(12) The Secretary shall ensure that, as appropriate, information related to domestic incidents is gathered and provided to the public, the private sector, State and local authorities, Federal departments and agencies, and, generally through the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security, to the President. The Secretary shall provide standardized, quantitative reports to the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security on the readiness and preparedness of the Nation -- at all levels of government -- to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from domestic incidents.

(13) Nothing in this directive shall be construed to grant to any Assistant to the President any authority to issue orders to Federal departments and agencies, their officers, or their employees.

Tasking

(14) The heads of all Federal departments and agencies are directed to provide their full and prompt cooperation, resources, and support, as appropriate and consistent with their own responsibilities for protecting our national security, to the Secretary, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Defense, and the Secretary of State in the exercise of the individual leadership responsibilities and missions assigned in paragraphs (4), (8), (9), and (10), respectively, above.

(15) The Secretary shall develop, submit for review to the Homeland Security Council, and administer a National Incident Management System (NIMS). This system will provide a consistent nationwide approach for Federal, State, and local

governments to work effectively and efficiently together to prepare for, respond to, and recover from domestic incidents, regardless of cause, size, or complexity. To provide for interoperability and compatibility among Federal, State, and local capabilities, the NIMS will include a core set of concepts, principles, terminology, and technologies covering the incident command system; multi-agency coordination systems; unified command; training; identification and management of resources (including systems for classifying types of resources); qualifications and certification; and the collection, tracking, and reporting of incident information and incident resources.

(16) The Secretary shall develop, submit for review to the Homeland Security Council, and administer a National Response Plan (NRP). The Secretary shall consult with appropriate Assistants to the President (including the Assistant to the President for Economic Policy) and the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, and other such Federal officials as may be appropriate, in developing and implementing the NRP. This plan shall integrate Federal Government domestic prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery plans into one all-discipline, all-hazards plan. The NRP shall be unclassified. If certain operational aspects require classification, they shall be included in classified annexes to the NRP.

(a) The NRP, using the NIMS, shall, with regard to response to domestic incidents, provide the structure and mechanisms for national level policy and operational direction for Federal support to State and local incident managers and for exercising direct Federal authorities and responsibilities, as appropriate.

(b) The NRP will include protocols for operating under different threats or threat levels; incorporation of existing Federal emergency and incident management plans (with appropriate modifications and revisions) as either integrated components of the NRP or as supporting operational plans; and additional opera-tional plans or annexes, as appropriate, including public affairs and intergovernmental communications.

(c) The NRP will include a consistent approach to reporting incidents, providing assessments, and making recommendations to the President, the Secretary, and the Homeland Security Council.

(d) The NRP will include rigorous requirements for continuous improvements from testing, exercising, experience with incidents, and new information and technologies.

(17) The Secretary shall:

(a) By April 1, 2003, (1) develop and publish an initial version of the NRP, in consultation with other Federal departments and agencies; and (2) provide the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security with a plan for full development and implementation of the NRP.

(b) By June 1, 2003, (1) in consultation with Federal departments and agencies and with State and local governments, develop a national system of standards, guidelines, and protocols to implement the NIMS; and (2) establish a mechanism for ensuring ongoing management and maintenance of the NIMS, including regular consultation with other Federal departments and agencies and with State and local governments.

(c) By September 1, 2003, in consultation with Federal departments and agencies and the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security, review existing authorities and regulations and prepare recommendations for the President on revisions necessary to implement fully the NRP.

(18) The heads of Federal departments and agencies shall adopt the NIMS within their departments and agencies and shall provide support and assistance to the Secretary in the development and maintenance of the NIMS. All Federal departments and agencies will use the NIMS in their domestic incident management and emergency prevention, preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation activities, as well as those actions taken in support of State or local entities. The heads of Federal departments and agencies shall participate in the NRP, shall assist and support the Secretary in the development and maintenance of the NRP, and shall participate in and use domestic incident reporting systems and protocols established by the Secretary.

(19) The head of each Federal department and agency shall:

(a) By June 1, 2003, make initial revisions to existing plans in accordance with the initial version of the NRP.

(b) By August 1, 2003, submit a plan to adopt and implement the NIMS to the Secretary and the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security. The Assistant to the President for Homeland Security shall advise the President on whether such plans effectively implement the NIMS.

(20) Beginning in Fiscal Year 2005, Federal departments and agencies shall make adoption of the NIMS a requirement, to the extent permitted by law, for providing Federal preparedness assistance through grants, contracts, or other activities. The Secretary shall develop standards and guidelines for determining whether a State or local entity has adopted the NIMS.

Technical and Conforming Amendments to National Security Presidential Directive-1 (NSPD-1)

(21) NSPD-1 ("Organization of the National Security Council System") is amended by replacing the fifth sentence of the third paragraph on the first page with the following: "The Attorney General, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall be invited to attend meetings pertaining to their responsibilities.".

Technical and Conforming Amendments to National Security Presidential Directive-8 (NSPD-8)

(22) NSPD-8 ("National Director and Deputy National Security Advisor for Combating Terrorism") is amended by striking "and the Office of Homeland Security," on page 4, and inserting "the Department of Homeland Security, and the Homeland Security Council" in lieu thereof.

Technical and Conforming Amendments to Homeland Security Presidential Directive-2 (HSPD-2)

(23) HSPD-2 ("Combating Terrorism Through Immigration Policies") is amended as follows:

(a) striking "the Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS)" in the second sentence of the second paragraph in section 1, and inserting "the Secretary of Homeland Security" in lieu thereof ;

(b) striking "the INS," in the third paragraph in section 1, and inserting "the Department of Homeland Security" in lieu thereof;

(c) inserting ", the Secretary of Homeland Security," after "The Attorney General" in the fourth paragraph in section 1;

(d) inserting ", the Secretary of Homeland Security," after "the Attorney General" in the fifth paragraph in section 1;

(e) striking "the INS and the Customs Service" in the first sentence of the first paragraph of section 2, and inserting "the Department of Homeland Security" in lieu thereof;

(f) striking "Customs and INS" in the first sentence of the second paragraph of section 2, and inserting "the Department of Homeland Security" in lieu thereof;

(g) striking "the two agencies" in the second sentence of the second paragraph of section 2, and inserting "the Department of Homeland Security" in lieu thereof;

(h) striking "the Secretary of the Treasury" wherever it appears in section 2, and inserting "the Secretary of Homeland Security" in lieu thereof;

(i) inserting ", the Secretary of Homeland Security," after "The Secretary of State" wherever the latter appears in section 3;

(j) inserting ", the Department of Homeland Security," after "the Department of State," in the second sentence in the third paragraph in section 3;

(k) inserting "the Secretary of Homeland Security," after "the Secretary of State," in the first sentence of the fifth paragraph of section 3;

(l) striking "INS" in the first sentence of the sixth paragraph of section 3, and inserting "Department of Homeland Security" in lieu thereof;

(m) striking "the Treasury" wherever it appears in section 4 and inserting "Homeland Security" in lieu thereof;

(n) inserting ", the Secretary of Homeland Security," after "the Attorney General" in the first sentence in section 5; and

(o) inserting ", Homeland Security" after "State" in the first sentence of section 6.

Technical and Conforming Amendments to Homeland Security Presidential Directive-3 (HSPD-3)

(24) The Homeland Security Act of 2002 assigned the responsibility for administering the Homeland Security Advisory System to the Secretary of Homeland Security. Accordingly, HSPD-3 of March 11, 2002 ("Homeland Security Advisory System") is amended as follows:

(a) replacing the third sentence of the second paragraph entitled "Homeland Security Advisory System" with "Except in exigent circumstances, the Secretary of Homeland Security shall seek the views of the Attorney General, and any other federal agency heads the Secretary deems appropriate, including other members of the Homeland Security Council, on the Threat Condition to be assigned."

(b) inserting "At the request of the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice shall permit and facilitate the use of delivery systems administered or managed by the Department of Justice for the purposes of delivering threat information pursuant to the Homeland Security Advisory System." as a new paragraph after the fifth paragraph of the section entitled "Homeland Security Advisory System."

(c) inserting ", the Secretary of Homeland Security" after "The Director of Central Intelligence" in the first sentence of the seventh paragraph of the section entitled "Homeland Security Advisory System".

(d) striking "Attorney General" wherever it appears (except in the sentences referred to in subsections (a) and (c) above), and inserting "the Secretary of Homeland Security" in lieu thereof; and

(e) striking the section entitled "Comment and Review Periods."

GEORGE W. BUSH

Appendix II: Homeland Security Presidential Directive 8

December 17, 2003 Homeland Security Presidential Directive/Hspd-8

the White House
President George W. Bush

For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
December 17, 2003

December 17, 2003 Homeland Security Presidential Directive/Hspd-8

Subject: National Preparedness

Purpose

(1) This directive establishes policies to strengthen the preparedness of the United States to prevent and respond to threatened or actual domestic terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies by requiring a national domestic all-hazards preparedness goal, establishing mechanisms for improved delivery of Federal preparedness assistance to State and local governments, and outlining actions to strengthen preparedness capabilities of Federal, State, and local entities.

Definitions

(2) For the purposes of this directive:

(a) The term "all-hazards preparedness" refers to preparedness for domestic terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies.

(b) The term "Federal departments and agencies" means those executive depart-ments enumerated in 5 U.S.C. 101, and the Department of Homeland Security; independent establishments as defined by 5 U.S.C. 104(1); Government corporations as defined by 5 U.S.C. 103(1); and the United States Postal Service.

(c) The term "Federal preparedness assistance" means Federal department and agency grants, cooperative agreements, loans,

loan guarantees, training, and/or technical assistance provided to State and local governments and the private sector to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies. Unless noted otherwise, the term "assistance" will refer to Federal assistance programs.

(d) The term "first responder" refers to those individuals who in the early stages of an incident are responsible for the protection and preservation of life, property, evidence, and the environment, including emergency response providers as defined in section 2 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 101), as well as emergency management, public health, clinical care, public works, and other skilled support personnel (such as equipment operators) that provide immediate support services during prevention, response, and recovery operations.

(e) The terms "major disaster" and "emergency" have the meanings given in section 102 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5122).

(f) The term "major events" refers to domestic terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies.

(g) The term "national homeland security preparedness-related exercises" refers to homeland security-related exercises that train and test national decision makers and utilize resources of multiple Federal departments and agencies. Such exercises may involve State and local first responders when appropriate. Such exercises do not include those exercises conducted solely within a single Federal department or agency.

(h) The term "preparedness" refers to the existence of plans, procedures, policies, training, and equipment necessary at the Federal, State, and local level to maximize the ability to prevent, respond to, and recover from major events. The term "readiness" is used interchangeably with preparedness.

(i) The term "prevention" refers to activities undertaken by the first responder community during the early stages of an incident to reduce the likelihood or consequences of threatened or actual terrorist attacks. More general and broader efforts to deter, disrupt, or thwart terrorism are not addressed in this directive.

(j) The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of Homeland Security.

(k) The terms "State," and "local government," when used in a geographical sense, have the same meanings given to those terms

in section 2 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C.

101).

Relationship to HSPD-5

(3) This directive is a companion to HSPD-5, which identifies steps for improved coordination in response to incidents. This directive describes the way Federal departments and agencies will prepare for such a response, including prevention activities during the early stages of a terrorism incident.

Development of a National Preparedness Goal

(4) The Secretary is the principal Federal official for coordinating the implementation of all-hazards preparedness in the United States. In cooperation with other Federal departments and agencies, the Secretary coordinates the preparedness of Federal response assets, and the support for, and assessment of, the preparedness of State and local first responders.

(5) To help ensure the preparedness of the Nation to prevent, respond to, and recover from threatened and actual domestic terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies, the Secretary, in coordination with the heads of other appropriate Federal departments and agencies and in consultation with State and local governments, shall develop a national domestic all-hazards preparedness goal. Federal departments and agencies will work to achieve this goal by:

(a) providing for effective, efficient, and timely delivery of

Federal preparedness assistance to State and local governments;

and

(b) supporting efforts to ensure first responders are prepared to

respond to major events, especially prevention of and response

to threatened terrorist attacks.

(6) The national preparedness goal will establish measurable readiness priorities and targets that appropriately balance the potential threat and magnitude of terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies with the resources required to prevent, respond to, and recover from them. It will also include readiness metrics and elements that support the national preparedness goal including standards for preparedness assessments and strategies, and a system for assessing the Nation's overall preparedness to respond to major events, especially those involving acts of terrorism.

(7) The Secretary will submit the national preparedness goal to me through the Homeland Security

Council (HSC) for review and approval prior to, or concurrently with, the Department of Homeland Security's Fiscal Year 2006 budget submission to the Office of Management and Budget.

Federal Preparedness Assistance

(8) The Secretary, in coordination with the Attorney General, the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the heads of other Federal departments and agencies that provide assistance for first responder preparedness, will establish a single point of access to Federal preparedness assistance program information within 60 days of the issuance of this directive. The Secretary will submit to me through the HSC recommendations of specific Federal department and agency programs to be part of the coordinated approach. All Federal departments and agencies will cooperate with this effort. Agencies will continue to issue financial assistance awards consistent with applicable laws and regulations and will ensure that program announcements, solicitations, application instructions, and other guidance documents are consistent with other Federal preparedness programs to the extent possible. Full implementation of a closely coordinated interagency grant process will be completed by September 30, 2005.

(9) To the extent permitted by law, the primary mechanism for delivery of Federal preparedness assistance will be awards to the States. Awards will be delivered in a form that allows the recipients to apply the assistance to the highest priority preparedness requirements at the appro-priate level of government. To the extent permitted by law, Federal preparedness assistance will be predicated on adoption of Statewide comprehensive all-hazards preparedness strategies. The strategies should be consistent with the national preparedness goal, should assess the most effective ways to enhance preparedness, should address areas facing higher risk, especially to terrorism, and should also address local government concerns and Citizen Corps efforts. The Secretary, in coordination with the heads of other appropriate Federal departments and agencies, will review and approve strategies submitted by the States. To the extent permitted by law, adoption of approved Statewide strategies will be a requirement for receiving Federal preparedness assistance at all levels of government by September 30, 2005.

(10) In making allocations of Federal preparedness assistance to the States, the Secretary, the Attorney General, the Secretary of HHS, the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary of Energy, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and the heads of other Federal departments and agencies that provide assistance for first responder preparedness will base those allocations on assessments of population concentrations, critical infrastructures, and other significant risk factors, particularly terrorism threats, to the extent permitted by law.

(11) Federal preparedness assistance will support State and local entities' efforts including planning, training, exercises, interoperability, and equipment acquisition for major events as well as capacity building for prevention activities such as information gathering, detection, deterrence, and collaboration related to terrorist attacks. Such assistance is not primarily intended to support existing capacity to address normal local first responder operations, but to build capacity to address major events, especially terrorism.

(12) The Attorney General, the Secretary of HHS, the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary of Energy, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and the heads of other Federal departments and agencies that provide assistance for first responder preparedness shall coordinate with the Secretary to ensure that such assistance supports and is consistent with the national preparedness goal.

(13) Federal departments and agencies will develop appropriate mechanisms to ensure rapid obligation and disbursement of funds from their programs to the States, from States to the local community level, and from local entities to the end users to derive maximum benefit from the assistance provided. Federal departments and agencies will report annually to the Secretary on the obligation, expenditure status, and the use of funds associated with Federal preparedness assistance programs.

Equipment

(14) The Secretary, in coordination with State and local officials, first responder organizations, the private sector and other Federal civilian departments and agencies, shall establish and implement streamlined procedures for the ongoing development and adoption of appropriate first responder equipment standards that support nationwide interoperability and other capabilities consistent with the national preparedness goal, including the safety and health of first responders.

(15) To the extent permitted by law, equipment purchased through Federal preparedness assistance for first responders shall conform to equipment standards in place at time of purchase. Other Federal departments and agencies that support the purchase of first responder equipment will coordinate their programs with the Department of Homeland Security and conform to the same standards.

(16) The Secretary, in coordination with other appropriate Federal departments and agencies and in consultation with State and local governments, will develop plans to identify and address national first responder equipment research and development needs based upon assessments of current and future threats. Other Federal departments and agencies that support preparedness research and development activities shall coordinate their efforts with the Department of Homeland Security and ensure they support the national preparedness goal.

Training and Exercises

(17) The Secretary, in coordination with the Secretary of HHS, the Attorney General, and other appropriate Federal departments and agencies and in consultation with State and local governments, shall establish and maintain a comprehensive training program to meet the national preparedness goal. The program will identify standards and maximize the effectiveness of existing Federal programs and financial assistance and include training for the Nation's first responders, officials, and others with major event preparedness, prevention, response, and recovery roles. Federal departments and agencies shall include private organizations in the accreditation and delivery of preparedness training as appropriate and to the extent permitted by law.

(18) The Secretary, in coordination with other appropriate Federal departments and agencies, shall

establish a national program and a multi-year planning system to conduct homeland security preparedness-related exercises that reinforces identified training standards, provides for evaluation of readiness, and supports the national preparedness goal. The establishment and maintenance of the program will be conducted in maximum collaboration with State and local governments and appropriate private sector entities. All Federal departments and agencies that conduct national homeland security preparedness-related exercises shall participate in a collaborative, interagency process to designate such exercises on a consensus basis and create a master exercise calendar. The Secretary will ensure that exercises included in the calendar support the national preparedness goal. At the time of designation, Federal departments and agencies will identify their level of participation in national homeland security preparedness- related exercises. The Secretary will develop a multi-year national homeland security preparedness-related exercise plan and submit the plan to me through the HSC for review and approval.

(19) The Secretary shall develop and maintain a system to collect, analyze, and disseminate lessons learned, best practices, and information from exercises, training events, research, and other sources, including actual incidents, and establish procedures to improve national preparedness to prevent, respond to, and recover from major events. The Secretary, in coordination with other Federal departments and agencies and State and local governments, will identify relevant classes of homeland-security related information and appropriate means of transmission for the information to be included in the system. Federal departments and agencies are directed, and State and local governments are requested, to provide this information to the Secretary to the extent permitted by law.

Federal Department and Agency Preparedness

(20) The head of each Federal department or agency shall undertake actions to support the national preparedness goal, including adoption of quantifiable performance measurements in the areas of training, planning, equipment, and exercises for Federal incident management and asset preparedness, to the extent permitted by law. Specialized Federal assets such as teams, stockpiles, and caches shall be maintained at levels consistent with the national preparedness goal and be available for response activities as set forth in the National Response Plan, other appropriate operational documents, and applicable authorities or guidance. Relevant Federal regulatory requirements should be consistent with the national preparedness goal. Nothing in this directive shall limit the authority of the Secretary of Defense with regard to the command and control, training, planning, equipment, exercises, or employment of Department of Defense forces, or the allocation of Department of Defense resources.

(21) The Secretary, in coordination with other appropriate Federal civilian departments and agencies, shall develop and maintain a Federal response capability inventory that includes the performance parameters of the capability, the timeframe within which the capability can be brought to bear on an incident, and the readiness of such capability to respond to domestic incidents. The Department of Defense will provide to the Secretary information describing the organizations and functions within the Department of Defense that may be utilized to provide support to civil authorities during a domestic crisis.

Citizen Participation

(22) The Secretary shall work with other appropriate Federal departments and agencies as well as State and local governments and the private sector to encourage active citizen participation and involvement in preparedness efforts. The Secretary shall periodically review and identify the best community practices for integrating private citizen capabilities into local preparedness efforts.

Public Communication

(23) The Secretary, in consultation with other Federal departments and agencies, State and local governments, and non-governmental organizations, shall develop a comprehensive plan to provide accurate and timely preparedness information to public citizens, first responders, units of government, the private sector, and other interested parties and mechanisms for coordination at all levels of government.

Assessment and Evaluation

(24) The Secretary shall provide to me through the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security an annual status report of the Nation's level of preparedness, including State capabilities, the readiness of Federal civil response assets, the utilization of mutual aid, and an assessment of how the Federal first responder preparedness assistance programs support the national preparedness goal. The first report will be provided within 1 year of establishment of the national preparedness goal.

(25) Nothing in this directive alters, or impedes the ability to carry out, the authorities of the Federal departments and agencies to perform their responsibilities under law and consistent with applicable legal authorities and presidential guidance.

(26) Actions pertaining to the funding and administration of financial assistance and all other activities, efforts, and policies in this directive shall be executed in accordance with law. To the extent permitted by law, these policies will be established and carried out in consultation with State and local governments.

(27) This directive is intended only to improve the internal management of the executive branch of the Federal Government, and it is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity, against the United States, its departments, agencies, or other entities, its officers or employees, or any other person.

GEORGE W. BUSH

Appendix III: Objectives, Scope and Methodology

This report addresses the following questions: 1) What actions has DHS taken to provide policies and strategies that promote the development of the all-hazards emergency management capabilities of first responders? 2) How do first responders' emergency management capabilities for terrorist attacks compare to capabilities needed for natural or accidental disasters? 3) What emphasis has DHS placed on funding awarded to state and local first responders to enhance all-hazards emergency management capabilities?

To address these questions, we met with local first responder officials in ten states (California, Florida, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, and Washington) and 31 local jurisdictions with a total of 69 first responder departments. We selected states and localities to reflect variations in dimensions such as: geographic diversity; population density including metropolitan and non-metropolitan locations; fiscal capacity differences between states; critical infrastructure issues such as ports and international borders; governmental structure differences at the local level (local focus versus strong county government structure); differences in the states' homeland security/emergency management organization and leadership models; and a sample of states containing sovereign American Indian tribal lands. Within each state we selected a sample of two to three localities, such as a combination of jurisdictions for our visits, in order to maximize the range of dimension described above. For example, we visited one of the large urban areas within the state along with an adjacent suburban jurisdiction. We also visited medium, small cities, rural jurisdictions or Indian tribes. These local site visits included seven localities that received Urban Area Security Initiative funding for fiscal years 2004 and 2005—Detroit, Michigan; Charlotte, North Carolina; Kansas City, Missouri; San Diego, California; Tampa, Florida; New York, New York; and Seattle, Washington—that we identified after selecting which states to visit. At the local jurisdictions we visited, we requested to meet with first responder officials from the following departments: fire and emergency medical services, law enforcement, emergency management, public health and public works. We also selected two American Indian tribes that possessed their own public safety departments—police and fire—to identify some of the challenges and issues that these jurisdictions face. Our selection of localities was to some extent dependent on the availability of officials to meet with us, travel schedule limitations, and our effort to avoid any respondent's bias due to overlaps with recent and current GAO engagement teams. Because of the manner in which we selected our locations, our results, however, cannot be generalized beyond the individual locations.

Using a structured interview guide, we solicited local first responder officials' insights and perspectives on a variety of topics, including: the extent to which DHS uses an all-hazards approach in assisting state and local first responders' emergency management capabilities, how DHS coordinates its activities, how locations use federal homeland security grant funds, what mechanisms DHS has in place to ensure that grant funds are spent in accordance with grant guidelines, how local departments assess and report their preparedness status, what gaps, if any, they believe exist between current and needed capabilities in selected locations, and what challenges, if any, they face in their emergency management responsibilities.

Using a similar structured interview guide, we asked similar questions to states' office of emergency management, their homeland security office, their State Administrative Agency point of contact who is the official recipient of DHS grants, and state-level public health officials.

In addition, we met with officials from various professional organizations that represent state government organizations and first responders to capture their insights and perspectives on the extent to which DHS has used an all-hazards approach in assisting state and local first responders' emergency management capabilities, and how DHS coordinates these activities externally with state and local first responders.

To determine what actions DHS has taken to provide policies and strategies that promote the development of the all-hazards emergency management capabilities of first responders, we reviewed DHS products developed to comply with Presidential Homeland Security Directives 5 and 8. We reviewed the final documents for the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the National Response Plan (NRP). We also obtained and analyzed documents related to the development of the National Preparedness Goal and its related products that were developed by DHS and the Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness in order to implement HSPD-8. These documents include the National Planning Scenarios, Universal Task List and Target Capabilities List, the Interim National Preparedness Goal, National Preparedness Guidance and program implementation plans for balancing national investments and resources, training and exercises, and assessment and reporting. Our work did not include assessing either the appropriateness of the scenarios used to identify needed first responder capabilities or the tasks and capabilities developed based on neither those scenarios, nor DHS's process and resulting work on the three program implementation plans.

In addition, we met with DHS officials from the Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness, including the Office for Domestic Preparedness. We also met with officials from DHS's Emergency Preparedness and Response directorate, which includes the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Finally, we met with officials from 3 of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's 10 regional offices—Atlanta, Kansas City and Seattle—selected in order to capture one regional office in an eastern, central and western location, and selected based on the states and localities we selected for our site visits.

To determine how first responders' emergency management capabilities for terrorist attacks differ from capabilities needed for natural or accidental disasters, we reviewed relevant research on homeland security and domestic preparedness developed by professional organizations and other subject matter experts and research organizations. We also reviewed the documents developed by DHS's Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness designed to establish a National Preparedness Goal. These included various drafts of the National Preparedness Goal and Guidance, the Target Capabilities List, the Universal Task List, and the National Planning Scenarios. We also met with officials from first responder departments and professional associations, as described above, to address this question.

To determine the emphasis on grant funding awarded to state and local first responders to enhance all-hazards emergency management capabilities, we reviewed DHS budget information and authorizing and appropriations legislation. We also asked first responders a series of questions related to DHS funding and their perceptions of DHS grant guidance and, at our meetings with the professional organizations that represent state government organizations and first responders, we asked similar questions to obtain their views on these issues.

We conducted our work from May 2004 through May 2005 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Appendix IV: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

William O. Jenkins Jr. (202) 512-8777

Acknowledgments

Mr. Christopher Keisling was the Assistant Director for this report. In addition to the contact named above, David A. Brown, James Cook, Alice Feldsman, Kathryn Godfrey, Wil Holloway, Dawn Locke, Nettie Richards, and John Vocino made key contributions to this report.

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