

Table Top Exercise for Four Corners Emergency Management

December 3, 2009

Exercise scenario

- 0900-1400 Nov. 30 Posing as state inspectors sampling milk from on-farm bulk tanks, nearly a dozen members of an international terrorist organization named The Liberation Front of Peace visit dairy farms in Northwestern Arkansas, northeastern Oklahoma, southeastern Kansas and southwestern Missouri. The group has intelligence that milk picked up this day or next will be processed in the four states and destined for packaging in half pints and distributed to schools in the four states on or by Dec. 1. The terrorists contaminate the bulk tanks with enough ricin to provide 48,000 lethal doses per state.
- 1035 Dec. 2 Schools in the four states begin to report ill children. Symptoms include nausea, abdominal pain, diarrhea, vomiting, and occasional difficulty in breathing. Local public health agencies have been alerted.
- 1310 Dec. 2 Hospitals and clinics in all four states report numerous admissions of children with symptoms noted earlier, plus bloody diarrhea, and more than 125 children have been listed in critical condition with some on respirators and showing signs of multiple organ failure, seizures and buildup of fluid in the lungs. Adults and other residents in the four-corners area also present with similar symptoms.
- 1735 Dec. 2 State public-health agencies in contact with hospitals report that 67 children have died. Public health suspects a food-borne illness and epidemiologists are conducting tracebacks to determine the origin of the suspected illnesses. FBI now is involved as is local and state law enforcement. CDC is sending personnel to each affected area.
- 0800 Dec. 3 Hospitals and public health in the four states report an additional 98 child deaths overnight. More than 12,300 additional illnesses are reported, with an increasing number of adults affected as well. Lab analyses suspect ricin poisoning. Epidemiologists think milk is the common link among all illnesses and deaths.
- 0827 Dec. 3 Public health reports “a substantial number” of illnesses throughout the four-corners area with hospitalizations and 17 adult deaths.
- 0920 Dec. 3 National news media and major news outlets in the four states receive a letter from The Liberation Front of Peace claiming responsibility for the attacks. The letter noted “The attacks are destined to strike fear into the heartland of the United States and are in retaliation for the aggression of the United States throughout the world that has caused untold death and misery.”

0925 Dec. 3

News media receive a second note from the Front claiming that ricin is the toxin used in the attack. The note further says “The United States can expect additional retaliation across the country. The attack in America’s heartland is the beginning of the end!”

0930 Dec. 3

All four states report hospitals in the four-corners area are closing emergency rooms because they cannot handle the number of cases. Many small counties and hospitals report there is not enough morgue capacity to handle the number of deaths. Public health reports more illnesses and deaths, and predicts total deaths will reach more than 10,000 by tomorrow at this time. Elementary-school children are the primary victims.