



# Homeland Security

March 27, 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR: First Responder Anthrax Engagement Attendees

FROM: Jon R. Krohmer, MD   
Assistant Secretary (Acting) for Health Affairs  
and Chief Medical Officer

SUBJECT: First Responder Anthrax Engagement

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Health Affairs (OHA) hosted members of the state and local government first responder community on December 18, 2008 in Washington, DC for a round table discussion of local and state capabilities for responding to an aerosolized anthrax event. The engagement was held pursuant to a Homeland Security Council Deputies Committee request relating to the distribution of antibiotics following an anthrax attack. One of the recommendations was for DHS, in coordination with Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Labor (DOL) and other relevant departments and agencies to coordinate outreach to stakeholders, including first responders and critical infrastructure and key resource personnel. For purposes of this discussion, first responders were identified as emergency medical, fire rescue, and law enforcement personnel.

The objectives of the conference were to gather information regarding anthrax response programs currently in place on local and state levels, to share options related to availability of medical countermeasures (MCM) for first responders, personal protective equipment (PPE) guidelines, and to query state and local government first responders on how well they are supported by Federal programs. Additionally, the OHA wanted to initiate discussion related to response strategies, post-exposure prophylaxis medications and protective measures for the first responder workforce.

Representatives from DHS, HHS and DOL provided information regarding the anthrax threat and risk, response strategies and occupational protection of responders respectively. Following the presentations, attendees participated in facilitated group discussions. Core discussion focused on three key questions, 1) How are your representative organizations prepared to handle such an event? 2) What are realistic approaches for fellow first responders to model? and 3) What exactly/generally does your organization expect from the Federal government during an aerosolized anthrax attack?

The collective input suggested that first responders would like:

- Home stockpiling of medical countermeasures for themselves and their families;
- More information on the availability and options for anthrax vaccine;
- Leadership from the Federal government;

- Guidance to help them formulate their local plans;
- Further education on the subject matter (aerosolized anthrax) and training associated with PPE, post-exposure prophylaxis, etc;
- Pursuit of an Emergency Use Authorization or other efforts to make MCM available to responders pre-event;
- Applicable funding support; and
- Prefer that first responder workforce not receive MCM through local PODs.

Over the past year, a Federal interagency working group, including the Departments of Homeland Security, Health and Human Services, Labor, Defense, the Environmental Protection Agency, US Postal Service, and the Veterans Administration drafted proposed guidance regarding appropriate protective measures for responders in the immediate post-attack environment following an aerosolized anthrax attack. The proposed guidance reflects the most current understanding of the unique environment and operational realities that will exist after a wide-area aerosol anthrax release. Feedback from the responder community was instrumental in helping us to finalize the draft of these proposed guidelines. DHS will formally seek feedback on this draft proposed guidance from first responders before finalization.