

**Role of Key Federal, State & Community Partners in Emergency
Preparedness
Panel Session**

September 9, 2003, 10:45am

Moderator: Mike Hoffman

Panelists: Bruce Akey, Jaqueline Byers, and Charles Wright

Jaqueline Byers

- Survey: Are counties in a fiscal crisis? 72% have budget a short fall – source revenue and state funding. This is occurring at a time when counties are supposed to be increasing emergency preparedness and security.
- Are counties prepared? There are 110 counties with 500,000+ population. 3000+ others feel “out of sight out of mind” – that terrorists wouldn’t be interested in them.
- People may not realize they live in a county, but the county is a major part of their daily life.
- How do you protect a county with very low population density, that lacks of health coverage, and medical care? Warning signs of disease, incubation period could be missed in rural counties. Could play major role in a biohazard incident.
- Public health in rural counties:
 - Officials say they have a lack of training, staff, and money.
 - How can Extension and land grant institutions help solve this problem?
 - Train citizens for what to do in case of emergency.
 - Extension can provide
 - planning, facilities
 - information sharing
 - speakers in field of expertise of what’s needed
- Training can help provide info without instilling fear.
- Scary reports circulate fast and create panic.
 - The anthrax scare cost \$100,000s of overtime in counties across the country
- Who should you train? PTA, homeowners associations, Kiwanis, religious and school groups, locals businesses and employees. Bring in media and make them stay through whole emergency preparedness exercise to see how it works.
- Training and education does not require a lot of money, extension can ease county funding problems.
- Extension can also bring people together. People in county government often feel important and bring their egos to the table. Who is in charge during planning/decision making? Extension can be a nonpartisan moderator. It can bring information, insight, and educational values.

**Role and Responsibilities of the Land Grant System in Building Community Strengths to Address Biohazards
September 8-9, 2003, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY**

- Risks do not recognize jurisdictional lines. You need to know what can happen in a community 50 miles away.
- Extension can designate who and what kinds of people need to be in leadership. Communities differ. Extension can help communities work together regionally. E.g., – 9/11 plane crash in Pennsylvania. Somerset County could not have handled the incident by itself. Tom Ridge had forced counties to work as a region, and on 9/11 they did. Extension can help facilitate this type of cooperation.
- New survey: Is money for homeland security being passed down from the state to the local level? With our current economic problems, we need to learn to do more with less.

Bruce Akey

- Cultivate media outlets before a crisis, get to know reporters and which ones are the most responsive.
- Scientists do not make ultimate decisions during an outbreak. Politics plays a big role, e.g., corporations can even deny access to things like vaccinations
- Disaster declarations – governor can call a disaster at the state level; Secretary of Agriculture and President can declare a disaster at the federal level. If a state does not declare a state emergency, fed can still declare a federal emergency in that state, if it's seen to be a big enough problem and could spread.

Individual responsibility:

- Animal safety – biosecurity. Farmers need to keep diseases off of their farms. The issue of indemnity and negligence are beginning to be discussed.

Local government:

- Coordinate emergency response at local level, even with state funding.
- Local law enforcement authority – can help enforce quarantines. It is also helpful that they know the people in the community...
- Mutual assistance agreements – like volunteer fire depts., can get help from surrounding communities in case of a big fire.

State government:

- Law enforcement – can also enforce quarantines, could close interstates, or inspect vehicles that could be transporting animals.
- Quarantine – very useful, but have not been used in a long time on humans because there haven't been many big outbreaks of infectious disease. They are still used frequently for animals. They are flexible. Can stop the movement of animals, equipment, and people. Can be defined to fit circumstance, whatever movement needs to be stopped in order to contain disease.

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- State veterinarian – broad responsibilities for flexibility in an emergency. Also concerned with human health and zoonotic diseases.
- State dept of agriculture – commissioner — works with state veterinarian to make decisions.
- Governor – creates more flexibility by declaring an emergency, waives usual regulatory processes. Again, there is an influence of corporations on when an emergency is declared.

Federal government:

- Resources have dwindled in last 20 years. There are many fewer veterinarians now employed. Have to draw from other sources of help – army veterinarians. Veterinary Medical Assistance Teams, helped with working dogs in 9/11, after hurricanes etc.
- Law enforcement – Bioterrorism = FBI. Catching the criminals is a higher priority than controlling disease. Destroying disease vs destroying evidence
- USDA – narrowly defined authority over animal diseases, only certain kinds of pathogens. Can be invited into help outside of their authority, but things would be handled under state authority

Command and control:

- Incident Command System (ICS) – can help with problems other than the forest service. All emergency responders now use ICS. Agencies need to know where they fit into the system.
- County Animal Response Team – people won't leave in time of emergency because they can't take their animals with them; they can provide places for animals to go.

Charles Wright

New York State Emergency Management Office

- Risk reduction – comprehensive, hazard training
- Response – coordination and communication
- Recovery – establish order
- Mitigation – reduce impact of hazards on community after disaster

Programs:

- Disasters assistance – move FEMA through state
 - Emergency stockpile
 - Emergency management training
 - Emergency and public information
 - Local planning assistance
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- Disaster preparedness commission – advises governor, made up of 26 agencies.
 - Disasters start and end locally. Monitor the local event, provide technical assistance and resources depending on the needs of community.
 - Regional events – advise the governor
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- Focusing on local government. Elected officials are responsible of taking care of people in emergency, not the Red Cross etc. NYSEMO is helping to update local emergency plans. Coordinate with dept of health. Command and control – who is charge if someone is out of town during emergency?

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- Emergency operations center – facility that has communication, all facets of law enforcement, EMS, and fire departments, and that allows them all to come together to help the community

Mutual aid compacts

- Emergency Mutual Aid Compact – states join together to assist others in emergency.
- Community awareness – Citizens Corp Council. Brings volunteer organizations together. Share ideas, resources, people, to better educate the public on preparedness. E.g., how do you take care of yourself and neighbors if responders are delayed?
- Partnering with health departments – national pharmaceutical stockpile. Medical equipment and medicine to assist during an emergency within 24 hours.
- Going back to the basics – mitigation programs. Awarding grants to counties for planning.
- Human needs subcommittee – sheltering and feeding people during emergency.

- How long should you be prepared to take care of yourself and family during emergency? Approximately 48-72 hours. People that are doing the community planning often haven't planned for their own families.
- People rush to schools during emergencies because they don't know that the school and community have a plan in place.