

BIOTERRORISM AND YOUR BUSINESS

Man-Made and Technological Threats



Bioterrorism involves the intentional use of germs (e.g., bacteria, viruses) or other biological substances (e.g., toxins) to cause illness, death, fear, social disruption and economic damage. Here are some steps you can take to prepare and protect your business and employees for bioterrorism threats.

Before a Bioterrorism Situation

- **Establish a business preparedness/continuity plan.**
 - In the event of significant absences, supply shortages or limitations, or other events that would change the way you need to conduct business, you need to have a plan so that you can maintain operations.
 - Document the essential processes and personnel that keep your business running -- from answering the phones, to tracking finances, to distributing your product or service.
 - Make a plan for a temporary location if your company is forced to relocate.
- **Establish an emergency communication plan.**
 - Update employee telephone rosters and records.
 - Create a phone tree and designate individuals who will initiate the communication process.
 - These plans include key contacts (with back-ups), a chain of communications including suppliers and customers, and steps for tracking and communicating business and employee status.
- **Identify an internal shelter in the event that authorities tell you to “shelter-in-place.”**
 - There should be enough room for all employees, any customers or suppliers who may be at your business during the hazardous situation.
 - Stock the shelter with emergency supplies (e.g., flashlights, battery powered radio, first aid kit, food, water, and blankets).
- **Make plans regarding customers.**
 - Determine the likelihood of customers being at your business during a disaster situation.
 - Have an emergency plan for customers; review it with employees regularly.
 - Label exit locations for the building.
- **Install a HEPA filter in your furnace return duct.**
 - High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters can remove particles in the 0.3 to 10 micron range; this may help filter out most biological agents that may enter your business. HEPA filters will not filter chemical agents.
 - If you do not have a central heating or cooling system, a stand-alone portable HEPA filter can be used.

During a Bioterrorism Situation

- **Do not panic!**
 - Remain calm and be patient.
- **Stay informed.**
 - Listen to the radio or television for official information.
 - This will include the signs and symptoms of the disease, areas in danger, if medications or vaccinations are being distributed, and where you should seek medical attention if you become ill.
- **Be prepared for possible disruption of services.**
 - There may be a large number of casualties.
 - Workplaces, businesses and schools may close in efforts to keep the disease from spreading.
 - Public services (e.g., law enforcement, emergency, health care) may be strained.
- **If you become aware of an unusual and suspicious substance nearby:**
 - Cover your mouth and nose with layers of fabric (e.g., t-shirt, handkerchief, towel) to filter the air but still allow breathing.
 - Move away quickly.
 - Wash with soap and water.
 - Contact the proper authorities.
 - Contact a healthcare provider if you become ill.
- **If you, an employee or customer are exposed to a biological agent:**
 - Remove and bag clothing and personal items.
 - Wash with soap and water; put on clean clothes.
 - Follow official instructions for proper disposal of contaminated items.
 - Contact a healthcare provider. You may be advised to stay away from others or even be quarantined.
- **If you are instructed to stay inside and not evacuate:**
 - Close and lock windows and doors.
 - Turn off all fans, heat or air conditioning.
 - Seal gaps under doorways and windows with duct tape.

After a Bioterrorism Situation

- **Pay close attention to all official warnings and instructions on how to proceed.**
 - The delivery of medical services for a biological event may be handled differently to respond to increased demand.

Development of this educational material was by the Center for Food Security and Public Health with funding from the Multi-State Partnership for Security in Agriculture MOU-2010-HSEMD-004. June 2010

