



## Operation: One Flu Over the Cook House

### Riverside County Response Full-Scale Exercise



**HOMELAND SECURITY EXERCISE AND EVALUATION PROGRAM**

**Exercise Date: November 15–16, 2006**

**Report Date: January 29, 2007**

## AFTER ACTION REPORT

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Homeland security preparedness involves a cycle of outreach, planning, capability development, training, exercising, evaluation, and improvement. Successful exercises lead to an ongoing program of process improvements. This report is intended to assist Riverside County in its process for preparedness improvement by analyzing exercise results as well as:

- identifying strengths to be maintained and built upon;
- identifying potential areas for further improvement; and
- identifying issues to be resolved at a later date.

The suggested actions in this report should be viewed as recommendations only. In some cases, departments may determine that the benefits of implementation are insufficient to outweigh the costs. In other cases, agencies may identify alternative solutions that are more effective or efficient. Each agency or department should review the recommendations and determine the most appropriate action and the time needed for implementation.

The exercise was designed to assess and validate Riverside County's ability to respond to a bioterrorist attack. The exercise included participation from the county's cities, healthcare community, public safety agencies, and county departments.

## EXERCISE OVERVIEW

The Riverside County Full-Scale Exercise (FSE), *Operation: One Flu Over the Cook House*, was a 2-day exercise held on November 15–16, 2006, in various locations throughout Riverside County, California. Riverside County is located in Southern California—covering 7,200 square miles, it is the fourth largest county in the State of California and stretches more than 200 miles across.

The exercise was designed to enhance operational readiness by exercising the capabilities of the Riverside County Operational Area (OA), including local government, as well as county, State, and Federal partners, in response to implications affecting the public health community, medical personnel, and first responders as a result of a bioterrorist incident. The exercise also afforded participants the ability to operate within the basic elements of Riverside County emergency plans, policies, and procedures.

The County of Riverside Fire Department, Office of Emergency Services (OES), and Department of Public Health sponsored *Operation: One Flu Over the Cook House*. The exercise included participation from the cities, healthcare community, public safety agencies, and other county departments. This exercise was an opportunity for these groups to evaluate their policies, procedures, and emergency operations plans (EOPs) in response to a bioterrorism attack.

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The Local Healthcare System also had large-scale participation in this exercise. The hospitals were prepared to receive simulated patients and welcomed a disease investigator into their facilities to help with epidemiological investigation, including contact tracing. The hospitals also supplied the Public Health Lab with samples.

The exercise was hindered by a lack of volunteer participation. The exercise design team had made several contacts with numerous agencies and expected to have approximately 1,000 volunteers each day, instead there were approximately 50 each day. The lack of volunteers affected the ability of the point of dispensing (POD) sites and hospitals to participate in the exercise. Some objectives were not measurable due to the lack of volunteers. As a result of this issue, the exercise design team will make changes to the volunteer recruitment processes to help increase the number of volunteers for future exercises. These changes will include the exploration of weekend exercises.

## Major Strengths

The county and cities identified several key strengths during this exercise, which are as follows:

- The Community Health Agency Departmental Operations Center (DOC) was able to complete an Incident Action Plan (IAP). This was a huge success. Evaluators and participants alike commented that this IAP was the most complete and well put-together action plan they had seen. Future IAPs should follow this example.
- Facilitated policy discussions were held in the Policy Group in the OA Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The discussions included marshal law and quarantine, 9-1-1 system overload/triage, and the public health officer's authority. These discussions were reported as huge successes, and Riverside County should build on this format for further exercises and training.
- Riverside County public safety agencies participated in joint operations training between disciplines, including Hazardous Materials (HazMat) teams and Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT), by responding to a HazMat incident with possible armed suspects. This exercise was the first opportunity for the HazMat team and SWAT teams to work together in this type of environment. Due to these operations, joint planning and future implementation of policies and procedures, training, and tactical planning across disciplinary lines are underway.
- During mass-fatality activities at the Cook House Venue, the Riverside County Sheriff's Department and the Coroner's Bureau conducted operations. Evaluators and participants reported extreme professionalism and great training for other disciplines observing the operations.
- During POD site operations, direct communication was established between law enforcement and health personnel. This on-scene, multi-disciplinary communication allowed security and operational information to be effectively passed from one agency to another.

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## Key Recommendations

Throughout the exercise, participants identified several opportunities for improving the county and cities' abilities to respond to an intentional biological release. Recommendations from Chapter 5 are summarized as follows:

- Follow-on joint training opportunities between the HazMat team and SWAT teams are needed to ensure a safe and efficient joint response to a bioterrorism incident.
- Riverside County should develop an Information Exchange Matrix. This matrix should capture the information needed by EOCs and DOCs in order to make informed decisions. The matrix should include the types of information needed to be exchanged both internally and externally, and should include the required method of information dissemination and the frequency of information needs.
- Department of Public Health personnel responsible for POD command and control need additional training.
- Riverside County personnel need additional training on their roles and responsibilities in PODs and EOCs/DOCs. Training should be completed for appropriate positions at all levels of staff.
- As noted in most preparedness exercises, there was a lack of information from the field provided to the EOC/DOC; this information gap should be addressed by dispatching a liaison officer to the scene.
- Operation center personnel need additional training on Web EOC application sections focusing on resource tracking. The full implementation of Web EOC in the Department of Public Health DOC is also required, so that the DOC is connected via Web EOC to the OA EOC.
- Patient flow training is needed for POD staff. POD staff experienced difficulty directing their patients to follow-on stations.

It will be important to conduct follow-on exercises of longer duration that test specific improvements instituted as a result of this exercise.