

NATIONAL HOMELAND SECURITY CONSORTIUM™

2016 National Issues Brief

A White Paper by The National Homeland Security Consortium
March 2016

Endorsing Organizations



Executive Summary

Since 2002, the National Homeland Security Consortium has provided a forum for the public and private sector disciplines and professional organizations to come together to share efforts, ideas, policies, and perspectives of vital concern to the nation's health, safety, and security efforts. These 22 national organizations – representing an array of local, state, territorial, private safety, health and security professionals – are an indisputable example that collaboration, coordination, and honest, open debate amongst diverse constituencies can advance comprehensive and strategic success.

In 2008, 2010 and 2012 the Consortium issued a series of white papers outlining national homeland security issues of greatest concern to state, local and private sector officials.

Some of the primary issues addressed include:

- Intelligence and Information Sharing
- Use of the Military
- Unified Effort
- Communications Interoperability
- Critical Infrastructure Protection
- Medical Surge Capacity
- Immigration and Border Security
- Climate Adaptation
- Violent Extremist Ideologies
- WMD Proliferation

The U.S. has taken aggressive steps and spent billions of dollars to protect people, infrastructure, and economic interests. While great progress has been made over the years in many of these areas, it is critically important that they are continually assessed and strategies updated to reflect the changing threat.

The purpose of this 2016 paper is to create awareness of several existing, evolving, and emerging challenges that the Consortium believes require the attention of our elected officials and the nation's homeland security leaders and influencers.

CHALLENGES TO BE ADDRESSED

Cybersecurity

Cybersecurity is a very complex issue that is difficult for government and the private sector at any level to address due to the highly technical nature of the threat, sufficient number of trained and experienced cybersecurity personnel, required interdisciplinary and intergovernmental partnerships, and the significant resources required to prepare and mitigate, let alone prevent and respond to any incident. Technology continues to be utilized in ways that seek to make the public safer, but new encryption methods and concerns over privacy and transparency have imposed barriers and restrictions to critical technology and data and information sharing to advance public safety.

The physical consequences of a cyber-attack, particularly on our critical infrastructure and interdependent systems, would be significant and could stress even the most prepared jurisdictions. Managing the consequences of a cyber-attack requires cooperation and coordination among many disparate agencies and the private sector. Federal, state and local governments, and the private sector should work together to generate sound policy solutions, operational coordination, and mutually agreed upon objectives that ensure the security of connected networks and systems without sacrificing privacy and economic values.

Critical Infrastructure Fragility

There is a growing sense of urgency and concern for the fragility of critical infrastructure in the face of the growing number of catastrophic natural and human-made events. The ever changing range of threats along with the need for our infrastructures' inter-connected reliability adds to the complexity of making informed decisions that reduce risk within an environment where limited resources are subject to multiple demands and priorities. Yet, as a nation we must address an aging infrastructure that leaves communities vulnerable, has the potential to disrupt timely emergency response, and adds significant costs to long term disaster recovery. We must also recognize the complex interdependencies of our national systems, particularly the movement of goods, services, and people, which rely on a resilient infrastructure.

The nation must adopt a comprehensive resilience plan, harnessing both public and private resources, to re-invest in the nation's critical infrastructure.

Natural Threats

Climate Adaptation – Communities from coast to coast are vulnerable to the effects of changing climate conditions and extreme weather. Rising sea levels affect coastal communities and increase their vulnerability to hurricanes and coastal flooding while extreme weather can impact the severity of traditional natural hazards throughout the country. More severe and costly disasters are becoming the norm. While determining the cause of this global phenomenon may be an important factor in slowing, halting, or reversing the impacts, the Consortium is primarily concerned with the actions, policies, and strategies that are necessary to mitigate, respond to, and recover from its consequences.

Infectious Disease – In the 2000s, the nation had to prepare for and, in some cases, respond to such threats as the H1N1 influenza pandemic, SARS, Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, and now Zika Virus Disease. Ebola cases in the U.S. demonstrated the increasing need for a well-integrated public health and emergency response system to address future infectious disease outbreaks. The nation must continually review and update its public health and medical preparedness plans and strategies, and ensure there are adequate resources to address the future threats which are increasing in frequency and global impact.

Emerging Issues – Traditional events can morph into complex scenarios without warning and manmade or natural threats that seemed unimaginable just a few decades ago will inevitably stress existing response and recovery structures at all levels of government. Our challenge as a community is to organize, establish policy, train, educate and resource to better react to events and scenarios that are outside the norm before they occur. Preparing for threats of the future requires that first responders remain flexible so they can adapt as risks change and evolve. Government must stop planning for disasters of the past and focus more on the disasters of tomorrow. This will require new approaches, innovative thinking and an acceptance of technologies in shorter timeframes than we are traditionally accustomed to.

Countering Terrorism

There is a persistent threat of attack facing the U.S. from the Islamic State, Al Qaida, returning foreign fighters and homegrown violent extremists. Of grave concern is the ability of foreign terrorist groups to utilize social media, the internet and their U.S. based followers to spot, assess, recruit and radicalize, inspire, direct or influence persons to support and/or target and attack the homeland. The ever growing radicalization of individuals highlights the need for new strategies and resources to combat such threats within the homeland. State and local governments must be engaged in programs to counter violent extremism through knowledge and identification of radicalization triggers and methods, and through community engagement efforts to help break the cycle of radicalization where possible.

While tremendous progress has been made in building fusion center intelligence capacity and federal information sharing, greater investment is needed to implement and standardize state and local information collection and information/intelligence sharing tactics, techniques and procedures so critical to preventing or mitigating attacks against the homeland.

The face of terrorism continues to evolve and change, and the U.S. must be able to recognize, understand, and adapt to ensure that the actions we take are not only effective, but that we do not unintentionally create more long term issues as we attempt to achieve short term objectives.

Immigration Reform

Immigration and refugee policies are complicating national security and homeland security planning and preparedness measures. The clearest nexus between immigration policy and homeland security occurs along the borders of the country, but addressing border issues alone is akin to treating the symptoms, not the root cause. Immigration poses many cultural, economic, and political challenges. The negative impact to public safety and potential to compromise national security pose the biggest concern and greatest challenge to overcome.

The divergence of views on the specific policies and strategies necessary is a challenge that must be overcome. Leadership at all levels must make real reform a priority to move from debate and conversation to action.

NATIONAL ACTIONS TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

Sustained and Flexible Grant Funding

This nation has made great strides in improving our safety and security. We have more comprehensive interoperable communications systems, regional response assets, a national system of intelligence fusion centers, and an unprecedented level of collaboration and teamwork among state and local responders. From our neighborhood communities through all levels of government, we have acquired resources, achieved collaboration, and built systems to mitigate, prevent, prepare for, and respond to natural hazards and terrorist threats.

Despite progress, our current system lacks the agility to adapt swiftly or convert ideas into action. State and local governments often struggle to address the wide array of current and emerging issues confronting them when federal grant programs are inflexible and have shifting priorities from year to year.

Sustained grant funding for all hazards preparedness, including public health and medical, is necessary to strengthen the nation's homeland security. Training and exercise requirements across federal funding streams should be in alignment and allow for cross collaboration among various disciplines. Regional collaboration should be encouraged and incentivized to support efficiency and financial sustainability. In a financial environment where costs and accountability matter, the ability to leverage limited and disparate funding streams is necessary to create greater efficiencies in the use of federal, state and local dollars.

State and local governments know their jurisdictions best and need the flexibility to set priorities, design solutions, and adapt to rapidly changing conditions without unnecessary bureaucracy.

Effective Information Sharing

Effective information collection and sharing between all levels of government, the private sector and the public is an essential tool to assure diverse stakeholders continue to collaborate on emerging threats where relationships may not already be built or be fully supported by formal information sharing structures. Recent examples include emerging health threats and water emergencies. Unless formal, advanced information collection and sharing structures exist among all the constituencies of the homeland security environment, new threats or hazards will expand in the gaps in information sharing and will slow down an effective response.

Mutual Aid to Build Capabilities and Reduce Costs

The Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) is the nation's interstate mutual aid mechanism for sharing resources across state lines. All 50 states, the District of Columbia, U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and Guam are members. Continuing to build and sustain capabilities at the state and local level enables them to handle the vast majority of emergencies and disasters on their own. This is becoming increasingly important as more non-traditional disasters are occurring which don't rise to the level of a Stafford Act declaration but still require additional resources and assistance. Also, the utilization of mutual aid — both interstate and intrastate — provides invaluable real-world learning opportunities for those personnel providing assistance to impacted jurisdictions. In addition, EMAC provides a cost savings to the federal government as state and local resources are oftentimes more readily available and cost effective.

National Homeland Security Consortium

Purpose

The National Homeland Security Consortium is a forum for public and private sector disciplines to coalesce efforts and perspectives about how best to protect America in the 21st Century. The Consortium consists of 22 national organizations that represent local, state and private sector professionals. The Consortium is made up of professions that deliver the daily services that are vital to safety and security of the United States. The Consortium is comprised of first and secondary responders as well as those who will provide the sustained effort necessary to respond to any major emergency, including leadership and direction by elected and appointed officials.

The Consortium provides a neutral forum for organizations to exchange ideas, have candid discussions, and galvanize input to the federal government. The differing perspectives of member organizations do not always provide for unanimity on specifics of implementing national initiatives. We do not aim for group think, but aspire to group understanding. More often than not, however, we have found easy consensus on our major goals.

Background

Participating organizations began meeting together in 2002 at the invitation of the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA). The National Homeland Security Consortium is an outgrowth of those initial discussions regarding the need for enhanced communication and coordination between disciplines and levels of government. The Consortium is now a recognized entity by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and works in partnership with other federal agencies such as the Department of Health and Human Services and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the U.S. Department of Defense.

The Consortium meets at least twice annually and shares information on a regular basis on issues of common interest. Subject matter experts within the Consortium are available as needed to provide input on national strategies, plans and policies impacting state and local governments.

Vision

Enhanced homeland security to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies, disasters and catastrophes through strategic partnerships, collaborative strategies and information sharing.

Mission

Provide a *forum* of key national organizations through effective communication, collaboration, and coordination that positively promotes national policies, strategies, practices and guidelines to preserve the public health, safety and security of the nation.

Objectives

1. Provide a broad-based resource and sounding board on homeland security issues for all national stakeholders.
2. Share information, knowledge, experiences, and practices.
3. Contribute to the homeland security debate and discussion.
4. Focus efforts to resolve issues.
5. Develop recommendations in identified areas of common interest.

Participating Organizations

Adjutants General Association of the United States
American Public Works Association
Association of Public Safety Communications Officials
Association of State & Territorial Health Officials
Governors' Homeland Security Advisors Council
International Association of Emergency Managers
International Association of Fire Chiefs
International City/County Management Association
Major Cities Chiefs Association
Major County Sheriffs' Association
National Association of Counties
National Association of County & City Health Officials
National Association of State Chief Information Officers
National Association of State Emergency Medical Services Officials
National Conference of State Legislatures
National Emergency Management Association
National Fusion Center Association
National Governors' Association
National League of Cities
National Sheriffs' Association
Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense & Security
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

For More Information:

The National Homeland Security Consortium (NHSC™) is administered by the National Emergency Management Association, 1776 Avenue of the States, Lexington, KY 40511. For more information, contact the NEMA office at (859) 244-8233 or visit the NHSC page on the NEMA website at www.nemaweb.org.

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