



November 18, 2021

Anthrax Remains a Weapon of Terrorists



Anthrax has been used as a weapon around the world for nearly a century. Soon after the terrorist attacks of 2001, powdered anthrax spores were deliberately put into letters that were mailed through the U.S. postal system. Twenty-two people, including 12 mail handlers were infected with anthrax, and five of these 22 people died.

Today's intelligence reports confirm that some nation-states and terrorist organizations are actively seeking to weaponize biological agents and attack the United States and its interests overseas. Models suggest that an aerosolized release of anthrax spores over a large urban population may result in a mass casualty event involving hundreds of thousands of illnesses and deaths. The biological threat is real.

Over the past year, **NEMA** has been working in partnership with the **Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO)** to identify state and local mutual aid capabilities and resources that may be needed to effectively respond to an anthrax attack. The project, funded through the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**, is intended to 1) develop new **Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC)** mission ready package templates that can be used by resource providers; and 2) provide training and technical assistance to states to develop EMAC anthrax response MRPs to be uploaded into the Mutual Aid Support System (MASS) and made available for intra or interstate mutual aid.

Four new EMAC MRP templates have been developed to support an anthrax response including:

- Environmental Investigation and Testing
- Medical Countermeasures Dispensing and Vaccination
- Public Information Crisis Communication
- Patient Treatment and Medical Consultation

ASTHO had previously developed a series of MRPs that could also support an anthrax response such as Behavioral Health Teams; Epidemiological Surveillance Teams; and Medical and Public Health Technical Support. The existing and new MRPs are available to download through the [EMAC website](#).

For years, scientific experts have warned that our nation is vulnerable to pandemics and those predictions were realized with the COVID-19 virus. NEMA, ASTHO, and CDC are committed to doing our part to help state and local jurisdictions increase their anthrax preparedness by enhancing mutual aid capabilities through EMAC – a time tested and proven system.

NEMA and ASTHO are now in the process of identifying 6 jurisdictions interested in using the templates to develop their own public health related MRPs for an anthrax response, with direct technical assistance provided through NEMA. This will be a joint effort between public health and emergency management, and other relevant stakeholders. If interested, please reply to tsheets@csg.org by **November 30, 2021**.

**That nothing comes from violence and nothing ever could
For all those born beneath an angry star
Lest we forget how fragile we are.**

**On and on the rain will fall
Like tears from a star like tears from a star
On and on the rain will say
How fragile we are how fragile we are**

- Sting

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