

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Office of the Senior Deputy Superintendent, Educational Services

DISTRIBUTION:	All Schools and Offices	<u>ROUTING</u>
SUBJECT:	BULLETIN NO. Z-72 BIOTERRORISM PREPAREDNESS RESPONSE: HEALTH PERSPECTIVE	Local Superintendents Local District School Support Directors Administrators Principals Physicians Nurses
DATE:	September 3, 2002	
DIVISION:	Student Health and Human Services	
APPROVED:	MARIA REZA, Assistant Superintendent	

For further information regarding students, please call the Director, Student Medical Services, at (213) 763-8342 or Director, District Nursing Services at (213) 763-8374.

The Student Medical Services (SMS) and the District Nursing Services (DNS) have been working in collaboration with the LAUSD Safety Managers including School Operations and the Office of Environmental Health and Safety to coordinate preparedness plans and response procedures in the event of biological or chemical terrorist incidents. In addition to the Safe School Plan and other Emergency and Disaster Manuals developed by these offices, this bulletin is developed to inform the District staff and share with them the outline of the bioterrorism preparedness and response plan developed by SMS and DNS to address health issues. A separate manual is developed for the District's health care providers. While these plans being developed, it is important to know that that in event of a terrorist incident, the law enforcement and public health agencies are the leaders and we will look to them for direction and guidance.

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Bioterrorism (BT) is the use of biologic agents such as bacteria, viruses, parasites or biological toxins to intentionally produce disease or intoxication in a susceptible population to meet terrorist aims. And chemical terrorism (CT) employs certain classes of chemical compounds as weapons of mass destruction.

An act of biological (BT) or chemical terrorism (CT) might range from dissemination of aerosolized anthrax spores to food product contamination, and predicting when and how such an attack might occur is not possible. Although paramedics, ER physicians, primary health care providers and the local health department will probably be the first to observe and report unusual illnesses or injuries, school physicians and nurses may occasionally encounter such cases in school settings.

Early detection of and response to biological or chemical terrorism are crucial and preparedness for terrorist-caused outbreaks and injuries is an essential component of the U.S. public health surveillance and response system. Terrorists might use combination of agents. CDC has developed a list of critical BT and CT agents, the details of which have been provided in a separate manual developed for the District's health care providers.

Environment where exposure may have occurred

Law enforcement and public health officials work together to investigate the environment including envelopes and packages suspected of containing anthrax or other biological agents. Powder and other specimens collected from these sources usually are analyzed through the Public Health Laboratory Network. As a part of the investigation, environmental sampling (where the exposure may have occurred) may be necessary. Testing of the environment is useful for detecting trace amounts of anthrax spores. Specimens obtained may include samples of air and/or swabs of material on various surfaces. The law enforcement and public health agencies will arrange for processing these samples.

Clean-up of contaminated areas

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency with help from other federal agencies and departments, including the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is responsible for environmental and clean-up issues. Federal agencies, in conjunction with local and state agencies will determine the best approach to the cleanup.

Biological Agents

BT agents are more likely to be covert because of the delay between exposure and onset of illness, known as the incubation period. Thus they present different challenges, as there is no immediate impact: persons are unknowingly exposed and an outbreak is suspected only upon recognition of unusual disease clusters or symptoms. BT may also occur as announced events in which persons are warned that an exposure has occurred. BT agents include bacteria, viruses and toxins among others. Anthrax, Small Pox, Botulinum Toxin are some of the examples of BT agents. Details are available in the manual for the District health care providers.

The following are some of the indicators of a BT attack:

- a. Large numbers of ill persons with similar diseases or syndromes
- b. Unexplained disease, syndrome or death
- c. Unusual illness in a population
- d. Single case of disease caused by an uncommon agent
- e. Multiple unexplained diseases in the same patient
- f. Diseases transmitted through aerosol, food or water suggestive of sabotage

Detection of BT-related Outbreaks

BT may occur as covert events, in which persons are unknowingly exposed and an outbreak is suspected only upon recognition of unusual disease clusters or symptoms. BT may also occur as announced events, in which persons are warned that an exposure has occurred. The possibility of a BT event should be ruled out with the assistance of the FBI and state and local health officials.

Rapid response to a BT-related outbreak requires prompt identification of its onset. The most critical step in response is early recognition that something unusual is occurring. Response to a BT event will require a concerted effort of physicians, the health department, health care facilities, laboratories, and others to identify the BT agent used, treat affected individuals, prevent additional transmission, and bring the situation under control. Primary care providers and emergency room physicians will likely be the first medical responders.

Chemical Agents

Chemical agents, like other substances, may exist as solids, liquids or gases, depending on temperature and pressure. CT effects are likely to be overt, immediate and obvious because CT agents are absorbed through inhalation or by absorption through the skin or mucous membranes are usually immediate and obvious. Such attacks elicit immediate response from police, fire and EMS personnel. CT agents can also be delivered covertly through contaminated food or water. Chemical agents that might be used by terrorists range from warfare agents to toxic chemicals commonly used in industry. A list of chemical agents developed by CDC is provided in the manual for the District's health care providers.

There are at least six types of chemical agents described which include nerve agent and cyanide among others. Biological effects such as eye or skin injury, and injury to lungs and other systemic effects can occur following exposure to chemical agents dispersed as solids, liquids or vapor. Evacuation and triage are integral to the response along with decontamination and medical management.

CDC does not recommend hoarding antibiotics or buying a facemask. In the event of a biological or chemical emergency, the state and local public health departments will inform the public about the action(s) they should take.

Radiation Accident

Radioactive materials are among many kinds of hazardous substances emergency responders might have to deal with in a transportation accident. Radiation is energy that comes from a source and travels through some material or space. Light, heat etc are types of radiation. Unstable atoms produce ionizing radiation. Unstable atoms are said to be radioactive.

Regardless of how radiation accident happens, three types of radiation-induced injury can occur:

- External radiation: when all or part of the body is exposed to penetrating radiation from an external source.

- Radiation contamination occurs where material containing radioactive material is deposited on skin, clothing or other places where it is undesirable. Contamination means that radioactive materials in the form of gases, liquids or solids are released into the environment and contaminate people externally on skin, internally in lungs, gut or wound, or both.
- The third type of radiation injury is incorporation of radioactive material, which refers to the uptake of radioactive materials by body cells, tissues and organs.

These injuries can occur along with illness or physical injury and in such instances serious medical problems have a priority over concerns about radiation. Law enforcement and public health and safety agencies are involved in responding to these emergencies.

II. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Schools

- a. Review all relevant disaster and emergency response plans, and assure appropriately designated staff is familiar with their content and strategies.
- b. Conduct periodic practice drills and tabletop exercise.
- c. Establish internal and external lines of communication.
- d. Assess emergency call-up plans including activating 911 and assure that these are supported with communication and transportation strategies.
- e. Report suspicious cases of illnesses, unusual illness clusters to the CD nurse, who would in turn notify to the Directors, Student Medical Services (SMS) and District Nursing Services.
- f. Notify the SMS office (213-763-8342) or the CD nurse (213-763-8381). CD nurse in turn will notify Director, SMS:
 1. Atypical patterns of hospitalization that are known to you such as sepsis or shock .
 2. Sudden unexplained deaths in healthy students/employees.
 3. Aberrations in absenteeism due to illness among students/employees.
 4. Emergency transfers for illness/injuries occurring during the routine school day.
 5. Employee situations are to be referred to the Medical Director, Employee Health at 213-241-6326 after logging with the CD nurse (213-763-8381) at the central office.
 6. In the event of a suspected chemical /biological terrorist incident at a school site, follow the directions of the public health and law enforcement agencies either provided directly to schools or coordinated by your district/school administrative staff.
 7. Coordinate with Crisis team for debriefing sessions as needed.

For further information, please read the “SAFETY GRAM” issued by the LAUSD Office of Environmental Health and Safety. As of December 3rd, 2001, available BT related Safety Grams are:

- a. Safe Mail Handling Procedures (October, 2001)
- b. Short Terms Actions on Emergency Preparedness for Schools (October, 2001)

- c. Response to Discovery of Suspicious Substances (white powder, etc.) (October, 2001)
- d. Procedures for Responding to Toxic Air Release (November, 2001)
- e. Safe Schools Manual

District Health Care Providers – school physicians & nurses:

- a. Develop an increased awareness of the ongoing threat of bioterrorism.
- b. Build capacity with knowledge and skills to address emerging BT agents and the clinical syndromes.
- c. Be available to the school/administrative staff in your assigned district(s). Physicians may provide medical consultation, liaise with student/hospital physicians and facilitate referrals as indicated.
- d. Become familiar with important emergency phone numbers and hospital referral sites.
- e. Report suspicious cases to the SMS/CD office.
- f. Know the school disaster and safety plans emergency plans and participate with the school staff in disaster/emergency drills.
- g. Clinicians are not prescribe prophylactic antibiotics unless directed by the Public Health department via the SMS director.
- i. Do not perform screening activities unless directed by the Public Health department via the SMS director.

District Nursing Service:

- I. Work closely with the DSMS in monitoring the disease patterns in schools by:
 - a) forwarding a weekly update on the infectious disease data compiled for cases reported from schools.
 - b) appraising the DSMS of sentinel conditions and outbreaks to the SMS director on real-time basis and timely follow-ups. Example of sentinel diseases are TB, meningitis and others highly contagious and with high risk for rapid transmission.
 - c) notifying DSMS any unusual clusters, atypical illnesses, increase in number of students with gastroenteritis, flu, rash with fever to the SMS director.
 - d) monitoring communicable diseases, outbreaks and unusual illnesses in the District
- II. Conduct BT-related disease outbreak investigation in consultation with DHS, DSMS and DDNS.

Student Medical Services:

- I. Coordinate educational activities for the District physician and nursing staff.
- II. Assist DHS with public educational activities when requested.
- III. Assist DHS with surveillance, as necessary, for cases identified in the District.
- IV. Consult with/report to DHS any unusual disease events in the District promptly when such reports are received from schools/CD nurses.
- V. Work with District Nursing Services and monitor disease patterns in the District.

- VI. When requested by DHS, assist with monitoring of school absenteeism due to illnesses.
- VII. Work closely with the District's safety managers to coordinate activities.
- VIII. Work closely with the Environmental Health and Safety Branch (EHSB) to identify and address routine and atypical environmental health concerns; consult with DHS as necessary.
- IX. Communicate with student physicians/families as necessary.

Role of School District in Community-wide Effort

See appendix A for possible roles of District staff and facilities in the event of a terrorist incident should back-up resource be necessary.

For individual questions/instructions, please see appendix B from the County Health Department's 'Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response' brochure.

III. HELPING CHILDREN, TEENS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Be honest and give age and developmentally appropriate explanations about the traumatic event. Recognize that a tragic event could elevate psychological or physical symptoms such as headaches, abdominal pain or chest pain in children and teens, who are already depressed and anxious. Anger can be a sign of anxiety in children and teens. Some children, teens and families may need professional help and counseling.

Other sources of information:

- Information on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Children and Grief, Helping Children After a Disaster, available in English and Spanish
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry's website at www.aacap.org
- Talking with Children: Tips for Parents
National Association of School Psychologists: www.nasponline.org/NEAT/crisis_o911.html
Offers tips for parents in English, Spanish, Arabic, Farsi, Korean, Urdu and Vietnamese
- Counseling information and brochures in several languages including French and Russian
www.redcross.org/services/disaster/keepsafe/attack.html

IV. Reference:

MMWR, April 21, 2000/Vol.49/No. RR-4
United States Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical defense
APIC Bioterrorism Task Force Document
www.orau.gov
www.bt.cdc.gov

www.labt.org
www.childrennow.org
www.childrensdefensefund.org
www.nea.org
www.naspweb.org
www.aap.org
www.aacts.org
www.fema.gov

V. Community Resources Offered by L. A. County

For individuals seeking emotional or mental health assistance: Mental Health 24-Hour Crisis Hotline
1-800-854-7771

For individuals exposed to suspicious material (mail, powder etc): Refer to local law enforcement (police)

For latest information on bioterrorism: Bioterrorism and Preparedness Response: www.labt.org

For health alerts, advisories and updates on bioterrorism: CDC, Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response: www.bt.cdc.gov

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Community-wide Effort: Role of the Los Angeles Unified School District in CBRN* Terrorism Incidents

Before Offer school sites (evenings and weekends) for community education/ poster sessions etc. on CBRN terrorism awareness and preparedness plans.

Arrange for/facilitate educational activities for school health care providers on CBRN terrorism awareness and health implications.

Assist DHS with school absenteeism surveillance and other activities as requested.

Arrange for/facilitate educational activities for students and their families, and teachers and the staff on CBRN awareness, health implications and preparedness plans in consultation with/assistance from DHS as necessary.

During

In accordance with the existing agreement between LAUSD and the American Red Cross, provide school sites for shelter and feeding activities; in addition, offer school sites for triaging non-contagious cases and the “worried well” when necessary.

In accordance with the existing agreement between LAUSD and LAFD, provide parking lots of elementary schools as staging areas for CERT (Community Emergency Response Team).

Provide school nurses (with prior training) as a back up to public health nurses in the event of shortage.

Assist school physicians to conduct/assist medical personnel in triage and arrange for referral as necessary (physicians could also benefit from prior training).

Be available to parents.

After

Be available to parents.

Facilitate referrals for students and their families requiring mental health services.

Identify and refer students with physical or behavioral symptoms/signs of stress.

Assist DHS as feasible with other services, when requested.

Preparedness and Response:

What You Can Do to Protect Your Family

Los Angeles County has emergency response plans in case of chemical, biological or nuclear attack and other disasters. Practice drills and exercises are conducted on a regular basis. Our emergency response plans bring together many agencies, including law enforcement, health, fire departments, and other local and federal agencies.

This pamphlet is designed to help answer questions you may have about terrorist attacks with a special focus on bioterrorism. Bioterrorism (BT) is the use of biological agents to cause illness to meet terrorist aims. Bioterrorism agents include living microorganisms (bacteria, protozoa, viruses, and fungi) and toxins (chemicals) made by microorganisms, plants or animals.

How prepared is Los Angeles County for a biological terrorism attack?

The Health Department has developed systems for rapid detection and investigation of disease outbreaks that could be the first indication of a biological attack. Early detection of illness caused by a bioterrorist attack saves lives. The earlier an act of BT is detected, the earlier it can be controlled. Local hospitals and doctors will be the first to see illness in the event of a BT attack. Health care staff assist in early detection efforts by reporting unusual disease occurrence to the Health Department and by learning the syndromes associated with possible bioterrorist disease agents.

What can I do to protect myself and my family against bioterrorism?

The Health Department is well prepared to respond to public health emergencies. In emergencies the Health Department works with law enforcement, fire departments, health care facilities and voluntary agencies like the Red Cross. If immediate action on your part is needed to protect your health from a disease outbreak, that information will be made public by the Health Department via the media. As you would for other emergency situations, have your list of important telephone numbers – including your physician's number – available.

Should my doctor prescribe preventive antibiotics against anthrax, plague, or other BT threat diseases?

No. Using antibiotics at the wrong time or in the wrong way can lead to harmful side effects (especially for pregnant women and children) and can make bacteria and other organisms resistant to antibiotics. There are supplies of antidotes and antibiotics available in the event of an emergency.

Should I buy gas masks for myself and my family?

The Health Department does not recommend that citizens purchase gas masks. Most gas masks are not designed to protect against biologic agents and are only effective against chemical agents if worn at the time of release. They are also impractical because the cartridges must be changed every few hours. Gas masks must be fitted properly; if not, serious injury or even death could result.

What can I do to prepare for a terrorist attack?

In Los Angeles County we have always had to be prepared for earthquakes. Preparing for a terrorist incident is much like preparing for an earthquake or other disaster. Disasters can strike quickly and without warning. Families can – and do – cope with disaster by preparing in advance and working together as a team.

Keep enough supplies in your home to meet your needs for at least three days. Assemble a Disaster Supply Kit with items you may need in an emergency. Store these supplies in sturdy, easy-to-carry containers such as backpacks, duffel bags or covered trash containers. Include:

- ❖ A three-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day) and food that will not spoil. Include a can opener for canned goods.
- ❖ One change of clothing and footwear per person, and one blanket or sleeping bag per person
- ❖ A first aid kit that includes your family’s prescription medications.
- ❖ Emergency tools including a battery-powered radio, flashlight and plenty of extra batteries.
- ❖ An extra set of car keys and a credit card, cash or traveler’s checks.
- ❖ Sanitation supplies.
- ❖ Special items for infant, elderly or disabled family members.
- ❖ An extra pair of glasses.
- ❖ Keep important family documents in a waterproof container. Keep a smaller kit in the trunk of your car.

What specific things should I do in the case of a terrorist attack?

While a chemical, biological or nuclear attack is possible, the chances of such an attack are very low. The information below will give you positive steps you can take in the event of an attack.

Type of Attack	What you should do:
CHEMICAL LIQUID ATTACK	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Move away from the substance. 2. Cover up if you cannot avoid getting some of it on you. 3. If you get some material on your clothing, take the clothing off, and then immediately rinse your skin with soap and water. 4. Get a medical evaluation as soon as possible.
CHEMICAL GAS ATTACK	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Get away from the cloud. 2. If you are outside, cover your mouth with a folded cloth. 3. If you are in your car, roll up the windows, close the vents, and turn the ventilation system off. 4. If you are at home, get in the house, close the windows and doors and turn the ventilation system off. 5. Get a medical evaluation as soon as possible.
BIOLOGICAL ATTACK	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Move away from the substance. 2. Cover your mouth with a folded cloth. 3. Get a medical evaluation as soon as possible.
NUCLEAR ATTACK	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If you see the flash take cover and get low to reduce the effect of the shockwave. If you hear the blast or have felt the shockwave take cover to avoid debris. 2. Move away from the debris cloud. 3. If you cannot get away from the debris cloud, cover your mouth with a folded cloth and exit the cloud as soon as possible. 4. If you get debris on you, remove your clothing. Then, using a scrub brush, wash the affected area with soap and water. 5. Get a medical evaluation as soon as possible.