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If you would like to ask a question of the NGA or your peers in other states or post a best practice in this newsletter, please e-mail Carmen Ferro at cferro@nga.org.

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Homeland Security: News from the States

Homeland security stories from news sources around the country for the week ending January 15, 2010.

[Maryland Releases Cyber Security Report](#)

Governor Martin O'Malley has unveiled a new report reviewing the state's cyber security sector. The report, titled [CyberMaryland](#), outlined four priorities to strengthen Maryland's cyber security efforts such as supporting the creation and growth of cyber security technologies; developing an educational mechanism to train new cyber security talent and advance workforce development; advancing Maryland's cyber security policies; and ensuring sustained growth and competitiveness of Maryland's cyber security industry. To further these priorities, the report provides several recommendations, which include:

- Establishing a National Center of Excellence for Cyber Security;
- Coordinating a cabinet-level review of cyber security actions; and
- Creating a marketing campaign to increase public awareness.

[Georgia Enters into Rail Security Partnership](#)

Governor Sonny Perdue has entered into an agreement with CSX Transportation to improve rail security in Georgia. Titled SecureNOW, this public-private partnership is intended to improve freight rail security by creating a secure online system that allows state, local and law enforcement officials to independently track the location of trains and the contents of rail cars in real-time. Benefits of the partnership include rail security training and preparedness exercises for Georgia's Emergency Management Agency Office of Homeland Security and direct access to CSX rail security professionals.

[New York H1N1 Report Highlights Patient Symptoms, Health and Recovery](#)

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) has released a report on its initial analysis of H1N1 cases in April and May of 2009. As the first cases of the 2009 H1N1 pandemic appeared in hospitals, DOHMH conducted an analysis of the first 99 cases of H1N1 to determine characteristics of the disease. The analysis was used to target public messaging as well as prioritization of treatment and response. The report finds that:

- 60 percent of the patients were under the age of 18;
- Asthma was the most common underlying condition of the sick;
- 17 percent of patients had multiple underlying conditions;
- Of the four patients in the sample who died, three were obese; and
- Patients who were treated with oseltamivir within two days of symptoms had shorter hospital stays than those who were not.

Washington, D.C., Metro Launches Track Safety Workshop

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority is hosting a three-day workshop focused on enhancing safety procedures for employees who work along the tracks. Safety experts from the Federal Transit Administration and transit agencies in New York, San Francisco, Baltimore and Philadelphia are also participating in the workshop. The workshop will concentrate on topics that include:

- Implementing rules, procedures and special orders designed to put safety mechanisms in place;
- Developing tools, systems and technologies for worker protection;
- Improving training;
- Establishing of reporting measures; and
- Sharing of industry best practices.

Wisconsin Introduces New Emergency Alert System

Wisconsin emergency officials have improved incident response timing and public communication efforts with the installation of a new digital emergency alert system. The system can alert up to 100,000 citizens at a time via telephone calls, text messages, and e-mail when an incident occurs near their home or business. Once a call is received from an emergency official, dispatchers create a target area of homes and businesses near the incident and use the new system to pull up correlating telephone numbers and e-mails. The dispatcher can create and send a message in a matter of minutes. As an incident progresses or concludes, frequent updates are given to residents and emergency officials.

California Deploying Communication Units Throughout the State

The California Emergency Management Agency is deploying emergency communications resources throughout the state's mutual aid regions. Mobile Interoperability Gateway Units (MIGUs) will provide communications capabilities between multiple responding agencies in the event of a major incident in California. MIGUs are equipped with a variety of communication technologies that allows communication to flow between first responders from different agencies. Deploying the MIGUs throughout the state will allow the communication unit to be on the scene of an emergency within one hour. The MIGUs are funded by grants from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Counterterrorism News

DIA Report Indicates 1 in 5 Detainees Return to Terrorism

One in five former detainees held by the United States at Guantanamo Bay return to terrorism after release, according to a classified report by the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) due for public release soon. Since 2002, of the 560 released detainees, 27 have been confirmed to return to terrorism activities or battlefronts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and an additional 47 are suspected of terrorism activities. One released detainee, Abu Sufyan al-Shihri, now based in Yemen, is a self-proclaimed leader of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. Sufyan al-Shihri is under investigation for involvement in the attempted Christmas Day airline bombing over Detroit.

White House Releases Directives for Federal Agencies to Improve Anti-Terrorism Efforts

The White House released a list of corrective actions for federal agencies in the wake of the attempted terror attack on December 25, 2009. Highlights of those corrective actions include:

- The Department of State must review its visa processes and specifically look into technology enhancements;
- The Department of Homeland Security must improve airline passenger screening and develop long-term aviation strategy with the Department of Justice;
- The CIA must examine a more timely distribution of intelligence reports and improve watchlist information procedures;
- The FBI must conduct a thorough review of the Terrorist Screening Database; and
- The National Counterterrorism Center must create a process to prioritize and pursue terrorism threats and identify follow-up action by law enforcement and the homeland security community.

White House Assistant for Homeland Security & Counterterrorism John Brennan will take the lead in ensuring progress is made on this initiative.

Additional News

Report: Severity of H1N1 Less Than Predicted

Estimates of the severity of the H1N1 pandemic influenza during the seasonal flu season will likely be less than predicted, according to a joint study by the United Kingdom Medical Research Council and the Harvard School of Public Health. The study finds that the H1N1 virus appears to be at the milder end of a pandemic—as only 1.44 percent of patients with H1N1 symptoms were hospitalized during 2009. Assuming H1N1 does not mutate into a new strain, the overall death toll from H1N1 in the United States may be considerably below the 36,000 deaths that occur during the annual flu season.