Around the Region in Homeland Security  
September 2008

The Northwest Regional Technology Center (NWRTC) is a virtual resource center, operated by the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL), to support regional preparedness, response, and recovery. The center enables homeland security solutions for emergency responder communities and federal, state, and local stakeholders in the Northwest. This monthly status report summarizes activities related to Homeland Security in the Pacific Northwest, and this issue highlights

- Workshops on the role of the private sector businesses and property owners in disaster restoration and recovery
- Northwest input to the White House Homeland Security Council
- Availability of a report on dealing with a potential catastrophic biological event.

The Role of Private Sector Businesses and Property Owners in Disaster Restoration and Recovery

August 12 - 14, 2008, private sector business owners and property owners met in a series of workshops at PNNL’s Seattle Offices to discuss their roles in a disaster. The workshops were sponsored by the Interagency Biological Restoration Demonstration (IBRD), a joint program between the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). The Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) teamed with PNNL to organize the meetings.

The objectives of the meetings were to assess private sector readiness to restore property and recover business operations that could be affected by a disaster in the Seattle urban area and to understand what private property owners and businesses need to support recovery and restoration from a disaster such as anthrax. The hope was to help identify measures that could increase community resiliency. The information shared during the workshops will be used by DTRA and DHS to support the development of guidance or other resources to enhance the ability of the private sector to recover and restore operations after such a disaster.
The three workshops targeted property owners, critical service providers, and large and mid-size private businesses. To prepare for the workshop, coordinators conducted pre-workshop interviews to determine what participants wanted as outcomes. Businesses, property owners, and critical service providers hoped to improve public-private sector communications and information sharing, determine how to standardize procedures and training, understand how to manage client and public expectations, identify best practices, and coordinate with key stakeholders.

Participants represented the building community such as building owners, building service providers, and commercial and residential real estate managers; major Northwest industry such as Boeing, Safeco Insurance, Costco, Premera Blue Cross, United Grocers, Port of Seattle, and Unigard; and the service sector, such as transit, railway, medical services, and power, sewer, and water providers. After hearing an overview of the IBRD program and a scenario involving anthrax, they discussed the major concerns regarding the ability to recover from a biological disaster and restore property and normal business operations. They then prioritized these concerns and discussed what might be needed to address the top issues.

For private business, the top concerns involved lack of planning guidance, inconsistent messaging from multiple sources, confusion over how recovery priorities are set, limited remediation resources, and indemnification and liability issues. Building owners and managers were most concerned about how to plan for remediation, communications issues, information on how to access federal support, and financial viability issues. Critical service providers were most concerned about communications, worker safety, and command and control issues.

The workshops captured significant information for the IBRD program and identified several areas where opportunities can enhance resilience. Participants indicated that the discussion were valuable and had enhanced their thinking on preparedness. The DHS and DTRA representatives praised the PNNL team and their PNWER and other partners for organizing and conducting the workshop. PNNL is currently drafting the workshop report, which will be vetted with participants. The results of the workshops will help DHS and DTRA develop solutions that are responsive to the top concerns of each group.
White House Homeland Security Council Requests Input from Northwest

Based on the results of the workshops described in the previous story, the DHS Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) was invited to brief the White House Homeland Security Bioterrorism Subcommittee on September 3. NWRTC Director Steve Stein traveled to Washington, D.C., to share information with the subcommittee. As the representative of DHS S&T, Lance Brooks introduced Stein to the subcommittee members.

The subcommittee spent some time discussing communication issues, economic considerations, indemnification and liability issues, and infrastructure interdependencies. The Northwest information provided a real world lens through which the subcommittee could view business recovery and restoration issues associated with a wide-area terrorist dispersal action using anthrax.

They concluded that they needed to reconsider certain policy issues and requested a second briefing to their management the following day, September 4. The briefing on the second day focused on economic issues, characterization and remediation technology deficiencies, and the adequacy of supplies of vaccine and antibiotics for the affected population. In both meetings, the subcommittee indicated that the information was very helpful and would impact their policy development. They expressed interest in asking follow up questions and perhaps requesting additional efforts that would be funded by DHS or DTRA.

Stein credited the success of the workshops and the briefings to the PNNL team, including Ann Lesperance, Kathleen Judd, Sarah Frazar, Jessica Sandusky, and Clarissa Berkman. The workshop summary report will be shared with the subcommittee when finalized.

Report from Previous Anthrax Workshop Available

On March 19, 2008, the IBRD program hosted a day-long symposium in Seattle to enhance regional response and restoration capabilities in a catastrophic event. The symposium sought to help attendees understand the associated challenges that impact entire communities, including people, infrastructure, and critical systems, when the community is exposed to a biological agent like anthrax. The nationally known presenters that day provided information on the nature of anthrax (Dr. John Malone), a review of the incident at the Hart Office Building in Washington, D.C. (Dr. Greg Martin), and the psychological effects (Dr. Carol North) on those individuals who became infected and those that were impacted but not stricken by the attack.
The report from the workshop is now available for free on the NWRTC website at http://nwrtc.pnl.gov/docs/anthrax_symposium_report.pdf. The report shares insights from the key presenters as well as implications to the economy, public health, and medical services from a potential catastrophic biological event. The report also offers a decision-making framework for recovery.

*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//

Upcoming Events
October 9, 2008
Regional Workshop on Federal Support for Restoration and Recovery from Disasters
Seattle Convention Center

*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//*//

Around the Region in Homeland Security is a monthly report from the Northwest Regional Technology Center, operated by the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. The goal of the NWRTC is to bring together major stakeholders from across the region that have a vested interest in homeland security issues and provide a collaborative environment that addresses Northwest regional homeland security requirements, needs, and challenges. For more information, contact Director Steve Stein at steve.stein@pnl.gov or 206-528-3340, Deputy Director Mary Peterson at mary.peterson@pnl.gov or 509-372-4655, or see the website at http://nwrtc.pnl.gov.