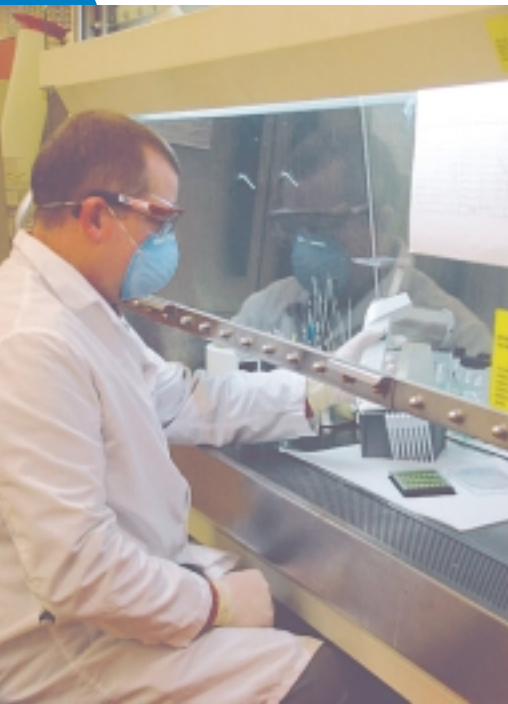


The Public's Health

Who's Minding the Health & Safety of Our Community?

Stanislaus County Health Services Agency • April 2003

Are We Prepared?



This is the question that we should be asking ourselves. Terrorist events seem a very remote possibility to us here in the Central Valley. However, life as we knew it changed on September 11th. Now, we must prepare not only for natural disasters such as floods or earthquakes, but also for possible terrorist attacks. Public Health's Emergency Preparedness Program is focusing its efforts on educating the community about possible terrorist threats including weapons of mass destruction, how to plan and prepare for these and other events, and providing up-to-date credible information on Emergency Preparedness issues. We not only believe it is important to plan, but to provide awareness, education, and guidance to the community.

When disaster strikes, families and individuals need to know what to do. Everyone should have an emergency plan so that necessary survival resources are available in a time of need. That is the basis of Emergency Preparedness. Although local authorities have protocols and plans in place for a disaster, it is helpful if we all share in the preparedness responsibility. It may take some time before help arrives, so planning ahead and preparing before a disaster strikes is key.

The Health Services Agency (HSA) has been working hard this past year to collaborate with other county agencies to ensure the safety and the preparedness of our community.

Some of this year's activities include

- Continued collaboration with the Community Preparedness Task Force, which includes members from several county and city agencies such as Public Health, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), fire, public safety, hospital representatives, and environmental health. The task force works to ensure that emergency response is coordinated and comprehensive.

- Collaborated with other agencies to provide general terrorism awareness training for first responders (members of fire departments, EMS and law enforcement), healthcare professionals, and the general public.
- Developing & updating plans for responding to biological incidents & attacks.
- Working with local hospitals to implement the Smallpox Vaccination Program.
- Vaccinations of members of smallpox response teams, who would be called upon to care for a smallpox patient, in the event a case of smallpox is identified in the community.

What are Weapons of Mass Destruction and how can they be used?

A Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD) is a device or agent capable of causing large numbers of injuries and deaths. This may include biological, chemical, explosive, nuclear, and radiological weapons. The following describes how these weapons may be used and the effects of each (from www.ready.gov) :

A [biological attack](#) is the deliberate release of germs or other substances that can make you sick. Many agents must be inhaled, enter the body through a cut in the skin or ingested to make you sick.

A [chemical attack](#) is the deliberate release of a toxic gas, liquid or solid that can poison people and the environment.

A [nuclear blast](#) is an explosion with intense light and heat, a damaging pressure wave and widespread dispersion of radioactive material that can contaminate the air, water and ground surfaces for many miles surrounding around the initial site.

A [radiation threat](#) or "Dirty Bomb" uses a standard explosive device to spread radioactive material in a wide area.

What should I do to prepare?

Create a **Family Disaster Plan**. Discuss and practice the plan with your family. The plan should include an emergency meeting place, assembly of a disaster supplies kit, emergency communications plan, and if you have school age children, knowledge of the school's emergency plan. Do not forget to include family pets in your plans. *The American Red Cross* has several guides that will assist you in planning. Please visit our website, www.hsahealth.org, for links to the Red Cross emergency planning guides. Also, be aware of the different types of threats. Awareness, planning, and preparation can help alleviate the sense of fear or anxiety that many people feel. (cont. pg. 8)



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1 Preparing for Terrorism

Wherever you are, be aware of your surroundings. The very nature of terrorism suggests there may be little or no warning.