



Riverside

AFICTION REPORT
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Riverside County Recovery Tabletop Exercise



**HOMELAND SECURITY EXERCISE AND
EVALUATION PROGRAM**

AFTER ACTION REPORT Riverside County Recovery Tabletop

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In an effort to increase the overall capability of the Riverside County Operational Area (OA) to respond to a manmade or natural medical emergency or declared disaster, the Riverside County Recovery Tabletop Exercise (TTX) gave participants an opportunity to evaluate current concepts, plans, and capabilities for recovery from a terrorist incident within the Riverside County OA. Additionally, the intent was to begin development of a coordinated, regional approach to recovery among emergency management, public health, and public safety agencies, as well as private sector entities.

Training and planning are critical elements of the preparedness program for any type of emergency incident, natural or otherwise. Riverside County recognizes its responsibilities to protect the public from, mitigate the consequences of, and respond and recover in an appropriately integrated manner to the hazards associated with acts of terrorism, as well as to naturally occurring or technological disasters. Specific agencies and organizations holding responsibility for post-exercise improvement are specifically identified in *Appendix C: Improvement Plan* contained in this report.

Homeland security preparedness involves a cycle of assessment, planning, capability development and organization, training, exercising, evaluation, and improvement. Successful exercises lead to an ongoing program of process improvements. This report is intended to assist Riverside County in achieving preparedness excellence by analyzing exercise results as well as:

- identifying strengths to be maintained and built upon,
- identifying potential areas for further improvement, and
- identifying issues to be resolved at a later date.

The suggested actions in this report should be viewed as recommendations only. In some cases, agencies may identify alternative solutions that are more effective or efficient. Each agency should review the recommendations and complete actions in alignment with internal strategies, National Incident Management System (NIMS) requirements, national goals, and current program objectives.

EXERCISE OVERVIEW

Riverside County's Recovery TTX was a 1-day, 5-hour bioterrorism exercise held on December 8, 2006, in Moreno Valley, California. The Riverside County Department of Public Health, Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Branch, sponsored the exercise. This exercise was the first opportunity for emergency management, emergency support services, public information officers (PIOs), and response personnel from the participating agencies to address short- and long-term recovery issues for Riverside County, resulting from a simulated bioterrorist incident involving pandemic influenza (flu).

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The exercise was designed to focus on key local coordination, critical decisions, and the integration of Federal and State assets necessary to restore lives, rebuild property and infrastructure, and protect public health following a terrorist incident. The exercise included participation from the Riverside County Department of Public Health, Riverside County Office of Emergency Services (OES), Riverside County Sheriff's Department, and various other city and county agencies and organizations.

Major Strengths

Participants identified several key strengths during this exercise, which are as follows:

- Continuity of operations (COOP) planning is underway for most Riverside County agencies.
- Riverside County agencies have adequate plans and procedures for short- and long-term record keeping, both during and after an incident.
- Riverside County has adequate mental health resources to address county employee needs during the recovery phase of a pandemic outbreak.

Key Recommendations

During the exercise, opportunities for improvement in Riverside County's ability to recover from a pandemic flu incident were also identified. The key recommendations, based on these improvement areas, are as follows:

- Further develop COOP plans and consider several factors likely to occur during a pandemic outbreak.
- Following a pandemic flu incident, PIOs—in conjunction with emergency management personnel—should disseminate essential information through a public campaign to regain public confidence, provide preventive measures and protective actions, and return to normal operations.
- Formalize a Joint Information Center (JIC) training program and continue to train and exercise JIC operations.
- Although there are enough mental health resources available, there is a need to train additional personnel in critical incident stress management (CISM).

It will be important to conduct follow-on exercises of longer duration that test specific improvements instituted as a result of this exercise.