



**East Baton Rouge Parish
Office of Emergency Preparedness**

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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
The Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment
hearing on
"Terrorism: Are America's Water Resources and Environment at Risk?"

As presented by

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and
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Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to address this distinguished committee and many guests regarding the important and immediate issues facing local jurisdictions across the nation following the tragedies of September 11th. It is truly an honor to be asked to speak on behalf of the Local Emergency Planning Committee in my community, the City and Parish of East Baton Rouge - and its responders, public officials and citizens. It is our collective belief, from personal and frequent experience, that all government begins and ends at the local level.

Regardless of the origin or nature of harmful events, local governments have the initial and most intimate responsibility, authority and accountability for all events affecting the safety of American citizens from prevention, preparedness, response and mitigation to recovery, when all others have returned to where they came from, and we alone remain to contend with the lasting consequences. And so we are sincerely appreciative of the overtures from Congress and our federal partners to support our efforts back home, and in these exigent times, we welcome and accept your assistance more than ever.

I would like to share with you today the status of my communities' domestic preparedness efforts prior to September 11, 2001; what transpired in the days following; where we ultimately wish to be; and, finally, I would like to make some recommendations with respect to how Congress and federal agencies can further prevention, preparedness and response capabilities for local and state governments, and then, of course, answer any questions you may have.

To begin, although no one community or government entity can prepare completely for every conceivable circumstance, I am pleased to tell this committee that our community has for years promoted partnering programs between government and business and industry stake-holders and resource-providers which have established effective measures and processes to confront all potential hazards, including threats and acts of terrorist violence. Many of

these emergency response capabilities grew out of chemical disaster planning under the auspices of SARA Title III and the affiliated role of our Local Emergency Planning Committee, known as the LEPC. From 1986 forward the LEPC directed the collaboration of emergency managers; police, fire, public works and emergency medical providers; mutual aid systems, which include business and industry representatives; and public and elected officials. Incidentally, I want to relate to you that our LEPC embraced EPA's Risk Management Program as yet another opportunity to focus on chemical release prevention and response, and together with our industry partners we conducted the public information roll-out procedures necessary for implementation of the plan. This initiative, as is so often the case, with catastrophic events, was not respectful of jurisdictional boundaries, and we helped to create and participated in a multi-parish RMP task force along the industrial corridor of the lower Mississippi River. Representatives from both industry and government worked together to provide the community with accurate and timely information. This task force fostered collaborating and information exchange and helped both government and industry work together to identify the source and solutions to some worst-case scenarios. It gave us an opportunity to talk together candidly and promoted future dialogue, while respecting jurisdictional boundaries.

May I inject here with emphasis that we strongly supported the EPA and FBI controls which prevented our industries' worst-case scenarios and related off-site consequence information from being posted on the Internet. In fact, I wish to suggest that perhaps public access to the most sensitive Tier II data collected under the federal Emergency Preparedness and Community Right-to-Know Act should be revisited, with a view toward striking a balance between public privilege and security of key industrial assets. It has been my personal experience that the only requests for this type of information has not been from within the community, but rather from agencies or persons with the intent to use the information for some type of professional financial gain.

In Baton Rouge, we quickly recognized the collective efficiency and responsiveness of the LEPC through its diverse members and their organizations, and began to apply those talents and practical resources toward a unified approach to natural disasters, human-caused catastrophes, school violence and even marine transportation safety and highway traffic incident management initiatives. While the LEPC by legal definition and requirement serves to address a community's chemical preparedness, we as community planners would be remiss if we did not take advantage of the collective knowledge and adopt an "all-hazards" approach. Additionally, I cannot stress enough the usefulness of such a

team in the identification and development of programs that provide for the improvement of emergency response.

Following the bombing of the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City, our community placed this template squarely over the potential threats poised against us by both domestic and transnational terrorists. Beginning in 1996 with our own personnel and resources, and then through partnering with others, we developed terrorism awareness training forums for our first responders, followed by those for public officials, and next for business and industry interests. The solid foundations and demonstrated successes of the LEPC gave rise to the creation in 1997 of a Weapons of Mass Destruction Coordinating Council which identified and implemented additional forums for joint training, and secured enhancements for communications systems in order to link together first responders from all tiers of government and fields of service, as well as industry firefighters and hazardous materials responders.

With a forward view toward the potential for terrorist deployment of chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction, the Council formed a healthcare alliance network within the LEPC to promote partnering and better communications among local hospitals, physicians and other healthcare providers. We established a special healthcare subcommittee, chaired by a former emergency room physician and now parish coroner, Dr. Louis Cataldie, for the express purpose of advancing hospital capability assessments, procedures for local administration of the National Pharmaceutical Stockpile, and ultimately were successful in the development of a portable morgue unit that has statewide deployment capabilities for an incident resulting in mass fatalities.

The East Baton Rouge LEPC recognized that public health information and support needed within our community and it's responders were often difficult to obtain. Information, communications, medical surveillance and laboratory testing issues that arise are now critical at local, state and national levels. We welcome the participation of public health representatives, however, this area remains a weak link in our community. Baton Rouge however, under the direction of Dr. Cataldie addressed those issues head on and identified alternate sources of information and data collection. With assistance and funding from the Department of Justice, we developed a medical training schedule and have implemented an on-going educational program resulting in over 130 physicians and nurses participating.

The Healthcare Committee continues to set goals and implement a community medical information system responsible for addressing distribution of

pertinent medical information within all sectors of government and industry. Additionally, we have taken the lead and are developing a statewide Metropolitan Medical Response Task Force that will assist less organized LEPC's and jurisdictions. As an initiative of the State Emergency Response Commission, the facilitation and sharing of information and resources statewide will assist our community should we too be left to deal with a tragedy like that which affected our country on September 11th. In Louisiana, four major metropolitan areas have been identified under the Nunn-Lugar-Domenici Program and using the LEPC/SERC model we are working "not to reinvent the wheel, but rather, to use the wheel, and advance our state forward."

As our momentum grew in the arena of counter-terrorism preparedness, we could not wait to be contacted by others, although we soon were, but instead we reached out to those who could best assist our efforts as we addressed our public safety and response concerns. I'm pleased to report to you that our resources have recently been further augmented by our community's inclusion in the federal Metropolitan Medical Response System initiative. Furthermore, FBI HQ in Washington informed our community that our recruitment, three years ago, of an FBI Special Agent to serve on our LEPC was a first in the country. Our LEPC and SERC sponsored various and frequent training forums, drills, exercises and strategy development meetings. Representatives for these forums included bringing to Baton Rouge experts from EPA, FEMA, DOJ, the Center for Domestic Preparedness at Fort McClellan, the NDPO, the CDC, ATSDR, the Louisiana National Guard 62nd Civil Support Team, the Business Executives for National Security, the United States Coast Guard and the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium.

As the scope of our programs expanded and our reputation for innovation and pro-activity broadened, we began to be approached by other agencies and organizations who wished to contribute to our initiatives and to reciprocally benefit their own. Our community was recruited by the National Domestic Preparedness Office for membership on their State and Local Advisory Committee. The Texas A&M University System invited us to serve on the Advisory Group for the George Bush School of Leadership Development in Emergency Response. The Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs in conjunction with Texas A&M piloted through the communities of Baton Rouge and Cedar Rapids, Iowa the threat and risk assessment component and grants instrument process for the nationwide Domestic Preparedness Equipment Grant Program. The National Guard Bureau requested our guidance for design of their counter-terrorism initiatives; FEMA asked that we test their terrorism exercise module. Our Mayor-President and members of our emergency response

community traveled to FBI Headquarters at Quantico to produce a counter-terrorism preparedness and partnering video, which was distributed nationally. The National Chemical Educational Foundation recognized our involvement of young students and senior citizens, in both training and operational elements of our emergency preparedness system through a national award for best practices. The Environmental Protection Agency created a Local Emergency Planning Committee bulletin that promoted our development of a Health Alert Network.

May I pause here for a moment to say, that although immensely proud of my community's accomplishments, I am not boasting, but rather presenting to you our credentials as a progressive and model community. I am in hopes that we may be viewed as a beneficial resource in support of other jurisdictions, and that we may demonstrate good stewardship of the assistance that we have received from others, in anticipation of gaining even more.

I am pleased to point out that we in Baton Rouge have, in fact, derived direct advantage from two congressionally-mandated federal programs: the Nunn-Lugar-Domenici bill, and the Metropolitan Medical Response System initiative. The merit of these two programs for our first responders and medical community cannot be overstated, for this we are grateful. The direct lines of communication with federal agencies responsible for program delivery and oversight have allowed our community the opportunity to advance such programs and not have unnecessary impediments which so often result from additional layers of government and program interpretation. Having embraced these programs, are thankful we did.

Now, please permit me to draw a time-line delineating our efforts since the horrific terrorist attacks of September 11th. First, we experienced validation for our existing systems through execution of crucial communications and operations at critically heightened levels of alertness and readiness. These pre-positioned mechanisms facilitated necessary and efficient collaboration among our local and state law enforcement authorities, especially in significant cooperation with airport security police, as well as university police departments with respect to large public assemblies for sporting events. These established systems further augmented key asset identification and related security intensification for petrochemical and nuclear sites, as well as transportation infrastructure and public utilities, including energy and drinking water providers. I should point out, as well, that numerous, timely and informative advisories were posted both to government employees and the public regarding relevant current events and official precautions and actions by means, respectively, of internal communications and news media relations.

The direct link of the many agencies from both public and private sectors responsible for continuity of government and critical infrastructure support were never more valuable and clearly more critical than during the terrorist attacks of September 11th. Without the prior training and solid foundations established, our community may have been gravely affected by the occurrences of that tragic day. However, thankfully, our community leaders' dedication and commitment to public safety, and trust, served as the basis for public calm. Under the direction of our mayor, our community and its leaders worked tirelessly to ensure public information was delivered in a timely manner. Particular attention was given to information exchange.

Finally, where we, as a community, would like to be with respect to counter-terrorism preparedness, sentiments which I genuinely believe are shared by our friends and colleagues in other communities across the nation, may I express to you the following observations and recommendations.

First, perhaps what is most desperately needed at the local jurisdiction level is immediate access to training, equipment and information, absent prolonged studies and protracted, layered processes. Personal protective equipment and similar emergency operations tools should be made immediately available to all of our first responders, so that our personnel will not have to attempt to breathe fresh air through their hats, as we observed New York Police Department personnel having to do on September 11th. Assignment of counter-terrorism equipment and training should be made to localities based on direct input from the communities themselves, following rapid evaluations of risks, vulnerabilities and need. In recent years, for example, the federal government has poured millions of dollars in training funds into the fire services of some communities to the point of saturation, to the exclusion of other emergency services groups in those very communities whose needs remain unaddressed. As a coordinating agency responsible for all public safety/service agencies, we should not limit ourselves to fire and police, but rather broaden our response to all agencies, including public works who play such an important role in overall response and recovery.

Secondly, it is essential that federal assets and resources be committed for planning, modeling and practical implementation for an adequate public health response to WMD events. While the Metropolitan Medical Response System and certain elements from the U.S. DHH and OPH which are contained in the DOJ Domestic Preparedness Equipment Grant Program have made their way to some communities, they have been delivered in a sealed package manner that does

not easily lend the program to effective integration with state and local agencies and practitioners responsible for administration. Face-to-face communications among medical professionals from every tier of government and pre-event establishment of clear and workable protocols are essential to the successful maintenance of the public's health in times of imminent or actual threat. However, this cannot be accomplished without a clear understanding of the roles which both sectors, medical and response, play in the pre and post incident phases of any emergency. Public health must be come to the table before an incident to develop the same relationships, same networks and similar training as that of the first responders. Without shared knowledge of each system, we will continue to face these issues repeatedly. Lines of communications must clearly be opened and a dialogue must be maintained with room for expansion and future growth to address deficiencies.

Third, it is imperative to strip away some of the long-standing, irrational impediments to the meaningful sharing of intelligence information possessed by federal law enforcement and national security agencies. While I have personally observed some loosening of restrictions in our community, the best sources of intelligence and investigative data seem still to reside with CNN and the FOX News Network. It is paramount to public safety and citizens' peace of mind that federal intelligence information be exchanged with local and state law enforcement in order to facilitate prevention and preparation before tragic consequences occur in our communities. While I certainly appreciate that some sensitive information may not be relevant to every community, and that certain matters must be safeguarded in the interest of national security, you must believe me when I tell you that following the terrorist attacks against United States citizens on American soil, the term *Atop secret* no longer evokes the passive acceptance and reverence it once did in our community. As much federal attention and energy must be applied to preventing terrorist acts in our community as has been committed to response and recovery in the aftermath. This will require up close and personal contact with those in authority in our hometowns.

Fourth, and finally, I am greatly encouraged by President Bush's creation of the Office of Homeland Security, and I wish to strongly urge advice to Congress and the federal agencies that will assist its duties. This office must be protected from the pitfalls that have doomed similar initiatives to failure in recent times. Most apparent should be the fate of the National Domestic Preparedness Office, whose *Aone-stop shopping* blueprint represented a remarkably comprehensive and workable plan, only to fall victim to turf battles, financial war and petty, destructive jealousies at the federal level. It is vital that the President's vision does not become diluted by beltway contracts and the selfish agendas of

public and private enterprises. It is critical that the mission of this Office be carried out effectively with the joint and full support of all available federal resources, while retaining the autonomy necessary for success. The President's inclusion of a crucial interface with local and state agencies must be integral in its organization, and exercised to full advantage. The body of federal knowledge, experience and assets and their value to national security are self-evident; but so should be the fact that when it comes to homeland security, the experts are, after all, "back home".

This concludes my remarks. Thank you again for the great privilege to meet with you today, and please be assured that my services and the resources of the City and Parish of East Baton Rouge are yours to command.