

National Capital Region Homeland Security Strategic Plan

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is in charge of the Strategic Plan? How was it developed?

The National Capital Region Emergency Preparedness Council (EPC) oversees the Plan and the Senior Policy Group and Chief Administrative Officers Homeland Security Executive Committee are responsible for implementing the Plan, overseeing investments and recommending updates to the Plan each year to ensure that the Region's efforts in homeland security are best aligned with current needs.

The EPC oversaw the review of the original Plan in 2006 and the development of the updated Plan. They directed that the revised Plan build on the last plan and that it focus on regional collaboration and public preparedness which have been central to regional work for many decades.

What is different about this Plan?

The revised Strategic Plan zeroes in on the most important *capabilities* for the Region to work on collaboratively. The National Capital Region (NCR) took a close look at the work of the Department of Homeland Security and assessed its own capabilities. The people who are responsible for preparedness day in and day out at the local and state level, in the public, nonprofit, and private security collaborated to establish these priorities:

- Ensure Interoperable Communications Capabilities
- Enhance Information Sharing and Situational Awareness
- Enhance Critical Infrastructure Protection
- Ensure Development and Maintenance of Regional Core Capabilities

Who participated in revising the Strategic Plan?

Several hundred private, public, and nonprofit representatives ranging from front-line responders to elected leadership participated in revising the Plan. Hundreds of comments were provided in formulating the Plan and revising it.

How will the National Capital Region implement the Strategic Plan?

The Plan sets regional priorities for a three-to-five-year period and guides the Region's investments over the life of the Plan. A set of Investment Plans will detail the implementation strategies for achieving those priorities identified in the Strategic Plan. Investment Plans will define the requirements and costs for achieving the capabilities identified in the Strategic Plan. They will cover a multi-year time period and will typically encompass multiple projects. Additionally, Investment Plans will detail the needs and means to achieve the capability, describe in quantifiable terms how to assess progress in implementation and results and provide the expected timeline and costs for completion.

How will new progress be measured?

The NCR will develop a performance plan with appropriate standards. The NCR's financial and program monitor -- the State Administrative Agent -- will report on financial and programmatic standing of every project each quarter and on progress under the Strategic Plan every year. This will improve management of individual projects and give us more insight into whether we are on track with ensuring key capabilities or if we need to adjust course.

How will the National Capital Region continue to update the Strategic Plan? If a new threat develops, how will the region address these new concerns?

The NCR has been agile in responding to new challenges from planned events such as the presidential inauguration to changing terrorist threats. The NCR will make sure that the plan keeps up with these changes by reassessing the threat and monitoring our progress in meeting these key goals. At least annually the NCR will update its Strategic Plan to reflect changing threats, what we have learned works and does not work in preparing for crises, and what resources we have available.

How does the Strategic Plan address Weapons of Mass Destruction also known as WMDs?

The Plan places a priority on having the capabilities needed to detect, prevent, respond, and recover from all hazards or threats, including those involving weapons of mass destruction. The Plan will help us ensure that we have the technology that will allow us to talk to each other and share data, provide our first responders and others with situational awareness during an event, improve timeliness and accuracy of information provided to the public, increase our capacity to provide medical care in a event where many are injured, and provide our first responders the equipment that they need to respond to all hazards events.

Why is the National Capital Region still working on interoperability?

The Department of Homeland Security gave the NCR its highest grade for its interoperable emergency communications system, and we are just one of six areas in the nation to achieve this recognition. The District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia can share voice and data information at the scene of an incident, command posts, emergency vehicles and emergency operation centers. However, communications and technology continue to evolve, and we need to make sure first responders have the best and most up-to-date technology. As first responders in local jurisdictions continue to upgrade their systems, we must ensure that every government meets the same standards across the Region, so our police officers, fire fighters and EMS personnel can continue to communicate with each other seamlessly.

How will we address power outages such as the ones we witnessed this past summer?

This Plan for the first time lists protection of critical infrastructure such as power, transportation and water as one of the four main priorities of work for the region. The Plan builds on the efforts of the states, localities and private sector in terms of building resilience of our critical infrastructure and services. The objectives and initiatives look at ways which the Region can work better to protect its infrastructure from all hazards -- from storms to non-weather disruption -- and to include the owners and operators of critical infrastructure and key resources more fully in our response and recovery efforts.

The majority of the NCR's critical infrastructure is owned and operated by the private sector. Because critical infrastructure and key resources provide water, power, and transportation that are essential on a daily basis as well as during a crisis, the public and private sectors must work closely to ensure their security before, during, and after created and natural disasters.

How does this plan get the Washington Area on its feet after a major snow storm?

Local and state governments are still responsible for providing services in their jurisdictions, such as snow plowing. However, this Plan helps make sure that all NCR partners are coordinating and communicating with each other during a snow storm or terrorist attack. For example, the plan will help the region to know what roads aren't open, which hospitals have capacity to treat patients, and that the public has good information about how to protect the safety of themselves and their families.

How much money has been spent on homeland security under the first plan? What are the principal benefits that we have realized from those investments?

In addition to state and local resources, the Region has allocated \$225,927,000 in federal homeland security grant funding since the release of the 2006 Strategic Plan. Among the accomplishments the Region has realized are:

- The Law Enforcement Information Exchange (LEIX) - a data sharing platform that allows over 70 law enforcement agencies in the Region to share law enforcement records in a secure fashion;
- Regional text alerts that allows emergency information to be sent to anyone in the public with a mobile phone that has signed up to receive the alerts;
- Communications systems that allows first responders to communicate with each other from within the underground tunnels of the Metro system; and,
- Equipment that allows responders to rescue large numbers of people within a Metro tunnel, and an increased capacity of regional hospitals to handle a sudden surge of patients requiring urgent care.

Who are the NCR Homeland Security Partners?

NCR partners include local, state, regional and federal entities; community groups; private sector; non-profit organizations and non-governmental organizations.

Is this Plan voluntary or does it impose specific requirements on local NCR governments and/or organizations?

This is the Plan that the NCR's partners have mutually agreed to follow in our work to strengthen our regional preparedness for all types of hazards. It is aligned with strategic plans at the state level, it takes into account Department of Homeland Security policies as reflected in the Quadrennial Homeland Security Review, grant guidance, and its other policies.

This Strategic Plan is not an operational emergency plan. It does not explain how the Region should respond to any particular emergency. Because emergency response is a local responsibility, each local jurisdiction has developed its own emergency operations plan that also defines how they interoperate with and support adjoining jurisdictions throughout the Region. These operations plans prescribe how the jurisdictions in the Region will respond to any disaster today; the Strategic Plan establishes the path for improving future response and working together on recovery, prevention, and protection.

Who is in charge during an incident?

The incident command system is an organizational structure for responding to complex, multi-jurisdictional incidents. It is a standard practice in the region, and the United States, and has been in place since the 1970s.

All incidents are first addressed at the local level, in the NCR, and everywhere else in the U.S. When a local jurisdiction is overwhelmed, the state provides resources. When the state, in turn, is overwhelmed, the federal government assists.

Tactical operational and response plans are coordinated across the NCR, through specialized work groups of public safety experts, elected and appointed officials, and other stakeholders.

Does the Plan take into account natural disasters like Katrina or is it more focused on terrorist incidents?

The plan takes into account both natural disasters as well as terrorist incidents.