Accomplishments under the 2006 National Capital Region Homeland Security Strategic Plan

The following list highlights the ways in which the National Capital Region (NCR) has worked to strengthen our preparedness for any hazard we face whether it is a terrorist attack, a planned event like a world summit or a presidential Inauguration, or a natural disaster like a blizzard or flood. In different projects, local and state governments, the private sector, and nonprofits have collaborated to ensure that citizens are protected. This list is illustrative not exhaustive. Additional information can be provided on the areas referenced here as well as on other projects.

Citizen Outreach, Education, and Volunteer Training

Volunteer support of response operations and a prepared public are two keys to being prepared for all types of events. Citizen Corps programs recruit and train members of the public into volunteer organizations that in turn assist the local, State and Federal governments in responding to major disasters. Grant funds also support projects to educate citizens on what steps they need to take to be prepared for disasters.

Medical Surge Capacity

The Region enhanced the capacity of hospitals to handle a sudden surge of patients requiring urgent care after a major incident. In particular, these investments provide equipment and training needed to build pediatric and burn capacities. Without this initiative, these hospitals would have difficulty treating trauma patients beyond their regular daily operating capacity. The Region also enhanced the capability of EMS providers to respond to an incident in a coordinated manner, and transport a large number of patients from the scene of an incident to hospitals or clinics.

Law Enforcement Information Exchange (LInX)

The LInX system allows over 70 law enforcement agencies in the Region to share law enforcement records and information with each other in a secure environment. The system uses advanced research and data-mining algorithms to enhance criminal investigation and intelligence gathering, giving law enforcement access to immense amounts of information. Before LInX, individual agencies had access to their own records but had to make specific inquiries for data from other agencies by phone, fax, or mail.

Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS)

AFIS has allowed law enforcement including local police departments to move from ink-and-paper fingerprints to digital fingerprint scanning and processing. The digital fingerprint scans can be compared and added to existing criminal databases much more quickly. Additionally, law enforcement can use scanners in the field to identify those arrested on-the-spot.

Subway Tunnel Communications

In an emergency, it is essential that first responders are able to communicate with each other within Metro's tunnels and from the tunnels to the surface. The NCR installed radio signal repeaters in Metro's tunnels so that first responders could do this. Without this investment, radios would not function in the tunnels.

Subway Tunnel Rescue Equipment and Exercise

The NCR improved its capability to rescue large numbers of people from an incident inside Metro's tunnels. Electric carts that can operate on the Metro rails, and are stored in the tunnels, can be used to carry Fire and EMS personnel down the track to the scene of an incident faster and also gives them the ability to rescue injured passengers much faster. Regional exercises trained and demonstrated the capability to respond to an incident in the Metro tunnels.

Bomb Squad and Hazardous Materials Response Teams

The NCR significantly enhanced the capabilities of its bomb squads with training, exercises, and a large amount of specialized equipment including robotic bomb disposal equipment and other devices necessary to effectively deal with an explosive device threat. Additionally, Hazardous Materials Response Teams have received equipment and training to ensure they can identify and deal with a hazardous materials release anywhere in the Region.

Regional Text Alerts

A Region-wide system can send out emergency information alerts to any citizen with a mobile phone who has signed up to receive these alerts via email or text message. Each NCR jurisdiction has access to the system and can send out its own local alerts or Region-wide emergency information. Without regional coordination to build this effort, this capability would have been developed in an inconsistent manner or not at all, as each local jurisdiction would have set up its own system and with potentially conflicting practices and messages.

Intelligence Fusion and Analysis

The NCR provided its intelligence fusion centers with trained intelligence analysts with top-secret clearances. These analysts receive intelligence from federal sources and local law enforcement, create analytical products, and distribute actionable intelligence to leadership and law enforcement officers. Without this initiative, the intelligence fusion centers would not have been able to create this analytical capability.

Critical Infrastructure Protection and Resiliency

The NCR has enhanced physical security features at key elements of infrastructure and other high-risk or high-consequence targets. This included installing security cameras, physical barricades, enhancing security systems, training security personnel to recognize suspicious behavior, and installing detectors for chemical, radiological, and other hazardous materials.

Radio Cache

The NCR established a cache of 1,500 radios that can be brought quickly to the scene of an incident and distributed to individuals who need them in order to communicate with each other. The cache is most likely to be used in a major, multi-jurisdiction, multi-agency response, in which individuals involved in the response either do not have their own radio or use a radio system that cannot be easily patched-in with the others.

Personal Protective Equipment

The NCR provided personal protective equipment (PPE) to law enforcement officers and additional protective equipment to fire fighters. This includes protective equipment for skin, eyes, and respiratory system. Law enforcement equipment provides the ability to perform law enforcement activities in a hazardous environment. Hospital and public health personnel also received protective medical ensembles for use in case of an outbreak of infectious disease such as an influenza pandemic.

Regional Planning, Exercises and Training

The NCR performed a thorough review of the status of all the emergency operations and public health response plans of its jurisdictions and updated them to meet current standards. Plans were coordinated to ensure that when the plans are implemented the actions taken by different localities complement each other rather than conflict with each other. Without this investment, some localities either would have an out-of-date plan or no plan at all.

It is axiomatic that plans that are not exercised are not useful. Training is also key in ensuring effective responses to all kinds of hazards. The NCR coordinates its exercise and training to ensure that available resources are provided to areas of greatest need. The Region conducts exercises that simulate large-scale emergencies involving multiple cities, counties and agencies. The assessments of exercises and actual events, known as after-action reports and improvement plans, are used to make changes to better protect the public.

Pandemic Disease Detection and Protection

The NCR's public health agencies developed an integrated public health monitoring system that receives updates on communicable diseases from the Region's public health facilities and hospitals. The system will alert the Region's public health agencies if a sudden increase or suspicious pattern of reported instances occurs. This allows the NCR to initiate a response quickly and effectively. The NCR also organized pharmaceuticals and supplies (particularly protective equipment) necessary to deal with an outbreak of contagious disease.

Evacuation and Sheltering

The NCR studied and modeled the evacuation traffic patterns in the Region to plan for evacuating affected population from the area of a disaster and to provide adequate shelter to evacuees. The Region also improved traffic monitoring, developed evacuation plans and transportation plans, improved traffic direction equipment, mapped shelter locations, assembled supplies needed to care for people affected by an evacuation, and trained staff and volunteers in shelter management.