



**EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT STRATEGIC HEALTHCARE GROUP
(EMSHG)**

FY-2002 Annual Report



Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration

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Strategic Overview: Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG)

VISION

EMSHG will be recognized as a premier provider of Comprehensive Emergency Management services and a benchmark organization in health care emergency management.

MISSION

EMSHG provides Comprehensive Emergency Management services to the Department of Veterans Affairs, coordinates medical backup to the Department of Defense, and assists the public via the National Disaster Medical System and the Federal Response Plan.

Strategic Goals

- I. Improve effectiveness of VISN emergency management programs
- II. Ensure VA readiness to provide medical support for DoD contingencies
- III. Fulfill VA NDMS responsibilities
- IV. Enhance emergency management partnerships in the nation's communities
- V. Lead VHA in preparing for emerging threats
- VI. Contribute to the emergency management knowledge base
- VII. Deliver appropriate, timely, and effective disaster response services

Strategies and performance targets were developed for each of the seven strategic goals. During FY-2002, the EMSHG Senior Management Team (SMT) oversaw the implementation of the EMSHG Strategic Goals through partnerships with Area Emergency Managers (AEMs). This relationship was the basis for measuring progress in emergency management preparedness at the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) and the VA Medical Center (VAMC) levels.

PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES

- VA/DoD Contingency Hospital System: EMSHG develops national plans and training programs to ensure back-up support to the Department of Defense medical systems during war or national emergency.

- VA Contingencies: EMSHG provides guidance and consultation to VISNs to ensure that all VA medical centers (VAMCs) develop a comprehensive emergency management program with an all-hazards focus to include weapons of mass destruction.

- National Disaster Medical System (NDMS): EMSHG supports Federal Coordinating Center functions at designated VAMCs. EMSHG develops and coordinates national plans to assist in the implementation of the National Disaster Medical System's support to state and local medical resources in the event of major domestic disasters, or the DoD medical care system when needed during military contingencies.

- Federal Response Plan: EMSHG takes appropriate actions related to planning, preparedness, response, and mitigation strategies for disaster threats. EMSHG coordinates VA's participation in federal disaster response as specified in the provisions of the Federal Response Plan.

- Continuity of Government: EMSHG executes assigned actions for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) in support of the continuity of government plan in addition to responsibilities related to maintenance of specific sites.

- Federal Radiological Emergency Response Plan: EMSHG provides response capability to supplement other federal, state, and local government efforts in response to accidents at fixed nuclear facilities or during transportation of radioactive materials.

EMSHG and its national network of Area Emergency Managers coordinate VA's role in:

- ✓ Emergency Management Planning
- ✓ Disaster Response
- ✓ Disaster Training and Exercises
- ✓ The VA/DoD Contingency Hospital System
- ✓ The NDMS
- ✓ Management of NDMS Federal Coordinating Centers throughout the nation

EMSHG assists VA in responding to requests through the Federal Response Plan to support individual states and communities in times of emergency with:

- ✓ Providing direct medical care to victims of disasters.
- ✓ Augmenting staff of community hospitals, nursing homes, and other medical treatment facilities.
- ✓ Providing stress counseling to disaster victims and responders.
- ✓ Furnishing critically needed supplies, pharmaceuticals, equipment, facilities, and other resources.

These activities directly support the VA strategic goal to *contribute to the public health and socioeconomic well-being of the nation* and the VHA strategic goal to *build healthy communities*.

EMSHG Highlights for FY-2002

- On October 26, 2001, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs approved the creation of the VA Office of Operations and Preparedness as a result of the tragic events of September 11, 2001. This new organization, now named Office of Operations, Security, and Preparedness (OSP), focused increased department-level attention on VA's fourth mission.
- As a result of the above VA management decision, 18 EMSHG headquarters personnel transferred to OSP on July 28, 2002, to support the Secretary's vision. This reorganization had a dramatic impact on EMSHG's organizational functions. Functional responsibilities were redistributed to the remaining six EMSHG headquarters staff members.
- The transfer of 18 EMSHG headquarters staff to the OSP organization has created additional responsibilities for the SMT and especially the three District Managers located in the Eastern, Central, and Western Districts of the United States. Consequently, headquarters' level administrative duties were transferred to the existing field staff to perform in addition to their normal duties.
- A new integrated relationship was developed between the Department of Veterans Affairs' OSP and the Veterans Health Administration's EMSHG. The majority of functional areas between OSP and EMSHG had to be reviewed and reorganized based on mission management criteria.
- The "2002 Report to Congress on the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Estimated Bed Capacity in Support of Department of Defense Contingency Planning" was completed on August 29, 2002. Data were derived from VHA's

assessment of input submitted by individual VA medical facilities with assistance from EMSHG AEMs in January 2002.

- The Memorandum of Understanding between VA and DoD implementing Public Law 97-174 requires VA to submit annually to DoD a VA contingency plan based on an estimate of staffed operating beds that could be made available to support DoD in the event of war or national emergency. The report also reflects the overall impact of mobilization on VA staff at medical centers. There were approximately 13,248 VHA employees subject to military mobilization as of June 30, 2001.
- On August 27, 2002, EMSHG's Emergency Management Academy (EMA) produced the Emergency Management Program (EMP) Guidebook for VA Medical Centers and Outpatient Clinics in collaboration with the Center for Engineering and Occupational Safety and Health (CEOSH). The purpose of the Guidebook is to assist the Network management team in developing a capability to manage any emergency situation.
- EMSHG's EMA developed a draft VISN Guidebook, a training program, and instructional materials, available on the EMSHG intranet site, <http://vaww.va.gov/emshg> (on a sidebar entitled, "Generic VISN EMP Guidebook"). EMSHG staff conducted a pilot training program for VISN 1 leadership to evaluate this resource. The program was highly successful and additional training programs were conducted for VISNs 3 and 11.
- On September 17, 2002, EMSHG initiated the VA/DoD and National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) Bed Reporting Requirements to be accomplished on the first workday of each month beginning October 1, 2002. All medical center directors were informed of this monthly requirement to enhance and improve bed-reporting skills.
- VA EMSHG initiated a change in the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) bed reporting categories from 13 to 5 that was approved by the Department of Defense (DoD) in August 2002. The five categories are Med/Surg, Pediatric, Burn, Psychiatric, and Critical Care, which are "more user-friendly" to private-sector hospitals that participate in the NDMS and include an important new "critical care" assessment. This change also applies to bed reporting from VA hospitals under the VA/DoD Contingency Plan.

EMSHG Significant Achievements: 2002

EMSHG Reorganization

Based on the VA management decision of October 26, 2001, EMSHG headquarters staffing was reduced from 24 to 6 positions on July 28, 2002. The 18 positions were laterally transferred to the VA Office of Operations, Security, and Preparedness. The new OSP organization will enhance VA's readiness and ability to support the nation's response to the war on terrorism. OSP was created to establish a department-level focus, augment continuity of operations, emergency preparedness, readiness and security, and enhance strong partnerships with other agencies. As a result of this decision, VA offers continued services to veterans, a national infrastructure of resources, participation in homeland security, and 24/7 staffing at the five VA Readiness Operations Centers (ROCs). The integration of EMSHG and OSP makes VA "A Force Multiplier in Homeland Security" in terms of VA skilled personnel and strategically located facilities. Below is a summary of those VA assets:

21	Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs)
163	Hospitals
135	Nursing Homes
43	Domiciliaries
800+	Hospital, Community-Based and Independent Clinics
203	Readjustment Counseling Centers
120	Cemetery Sites
57	Regional Benefit Centers
225,000	Total VA Personnel
84,510	Total Trainees (Academic Year 2001)

EMSHG Web Site

Since September 11, 2001, the EMSHG web site has been a focal point for emergency management, weapons of mass destruction (WMD) (biological, chemical, radiological, and explosive agents), and training information. The site now includes: the EMA Knowledge Management (KM) Library (currently only Intranet); EMSHG Employee Education System (EES) Satellite Broadcasts; and the Emergency Management Program Guidebook. After the September 11 attacks and the anthrax attacks, EMSHG posted up-to-date information in the form of daily situation reports on the attacks, guidelines, and advisories concerning the anthrax issue.

Education and Research

During FY-2002, EMSHG was deeply involved in providing technical guidance, support, management, and coordination of health care for eligible veterans, military personnel, and the public during Department of Defense (DoD) contingencies and natural, manmade, or technological emergencies. The EMSHG EMA has continued to evolve. The EMSHG EMA is an innovative approach to emergency management education and training. It combines web-based, video, and face-to-face training to optimize learning.

Invited expert panelists from academia and numerous guest instructors from the active and reserve military components have shared scientific information via live satellite broadcasts that featured medical issues and responses on biological and chemical warfare. The EMA developed, produced or provided/procured faculty for several nationwide satellite broadcasts:

- Medical Response to Chemical and Biological Agents
- Medical Response to Radiological Agents
- Decontamination in Health Care Facilities
- Emergency Management Program Guidebook
- Chemical/Biological Agent Injuries (EMSHG, along with EES and the U.S. Army Medical Command, co-sponsored this 12-hour broadcast which aired nationally and internationally.)

EMSHG EMA continues to build and populate the KM site, adding scholarly documents and essential program guidance. Over 1.6 million dollars were obligated to develop the VHA (EMSHG/EES) co-sponsored EMA and establish the training needs assessment and pilot program to provide WMD training to NDMS hospitals.

In FY-2002, EMSHG conducted numerous seminars, exercises, and practical hands-on training with other federal agencies and departments dealing with medical management preparedness. In concert with VA's federal partners, these events were keyed to patient care/survivability and patient evacuation through appropriate channels to receiving hospitals where definitive care could be provided. Periodic medical exercises and training exercises were conducted in key metropolitan areas where EMSHG Area Emergency Managers (AEMs) assist VISNs with Federal Coordinating Center (FCC) responsibilities.

EMSHG was directed by the Deputy Secretary to conduct a national survey on WMD preparedness (equipment, training, protocol, and practice) at all VAMCs. The study results were presented to VA leadership and at the annual NDMS conference.

On August 16, 2002, EMSHG implemented its mandatory education/training and documentation requirements for all EMSHG personnel. This internal mandatory education and training program was instituted to ensure all courses were taken either online or at local facilities on an annual basis. In addition to VHA mandatory classes, all EMSHG employees are expected to complete the American Hospital Association eight-hour Basic Life Support Course with recertification every two years.

Planning

Significant EMSHG planning activities for FY-2002 include:

- The EMSHG Senior Management Team (SMT) applied the Baldrige principles to develop strategic targets to measure comprehensive emergency management

(CEM) programs and practices. These strategic plans and targets were implemented in the first quarter of FY-2003.

- EMSHG staff were significantly involved in VHA's planning for a system-wide program for decontamination and personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements for VA medical facilities.
 - Decontamination needs assessment exercise and plan required from VAMCs by September 7, 2002.
 - Identify 70 highest priority VAMCs based on vulnerability and the potential for mass casualties in the local community following a terrorist attack.
 - \$3.3M set aside to purchase complete emergency mass-casualty decontamination package with PPE (\$1.2M) and approved temporary/portable hospital decon facilities (\$2.1M).
 - Training costs = \$.05M.
- Establishment of pharmaceutical caches:
 - External support for the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Emergency Response (OER) pharmacy caches. (EMSHG manages the logistics and coordination of these resources.)
 - CDC National Pharmaceutical Stockpile
 - Four caches at VAMCs for HHS Office of Emergency Readiness, plus special events cache.
 - Congressional cache.
 - Internal support for VA pharmacy caches. VHA Directive 2002-026, Pharmaceutical Caches in a Weapons of Mass Destruction Event, was published on May 13, 2002. The purpose of this VHA Directive is to establish policy for the configuration, maintenance, and deployment of pharmaceutical caches to be used in response to a weapons of mass destruction (WMD) event. (EMSHG supports VAMC Emergency Pharmacy Service with management of these resources.)
 - Small caches for 1,000 casualties for two days; large caches for 2,000 casualties.
 - 39 VA internal caches deployed as of September 27, 2002.
 - 143 total caches scheduled.

FY-2002 brought many challenges with the fourth quarter transition of 18 EMSHG positions to the newly formed Operations, Security and Preparedness (OSP) Office. EMSHG transferred \$1,086,000 in personal services (salary) dollars. Nevertheless, EMSHG paid out more than 5.9 million in salary dollars in FY-2002. EMSHG obligated

\$365,461 in supplies/services that enabled it to conduct various exercises and training events and carry out EMSHG's "Seven for Success." In travel, EMSHG obligated \$316,625 that included medical support for the Salt Lake City Winter Olympics and the September 11th Disaster Response under a FEMA mission assignment. Over 1.6 million dollars were obligated to develop the VHA (EMSHG/EES) co-sponsored Emergency Management Academy and establish the training needs assessment and pilot program to provide WMD training to NDMS hospitals.

Major Exercises, Training, and Deployments

During FY-2002, EMSHG supported the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, UT, during February 4-26, 2002. The VISN 7 Emergency Medical Response Team (EMRT), consisting of 10 persons, supplemented the Bay Pines HazMat Team during this deployment. Four EMSHG Area Emergency Managers were also deployed. A combined (Bay Pines, VISN 8 EMRT/VISN 7 EMRT/VAMC Salt Lake City) 45-person team was functional throughout the preparation and ceremonies of the 2002 Winter Olympics.

EMSHG also sponsored the 7th Annual Emergency Medical Preparedness Symposium conducted at Albany, NY, September 23-26, 2002. A pre-conference course on hospital decontamination was conducted and included three days of didactic and hands-on educational training and continuing education credits. The symposium entitled, "September 11th - One Year Later: How Have We Changed," was jointly sponsored by the EMSHG; VISNs 1, 2, 3; the Employee Education System; the Healthcare Association of New York State; the Chesapeake Health Education Program, Inc., Perry Point, MD; and the Management Development Organization, Albany, NY. Almost 300 participants benefited from this symposium.

A major interagency training exercise, "Consequence Management 2002," was conducted at Ft. Gordon, GA, September 20-25, 2002. This training included an Interactive Response Demonstration (IRD) that involved VA, FEMA, and other federal departments plus state and local agencies in WMD responses.

In addition, EMSHG was deeply involved in organizing the Third International Conference, co-sponsored by VA's VISN 8 and EES, "Integrating Medical Mass Care Management in a WMD Incident" that was conducted at St. Petersburg, FL, from January 11-15, 2002. Approximately 300 participants, including international delegates, shared information concerning management of terrorism.

EMSHG and JCAHO Collaboration

EMSHG has continued its close collaboration with the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). (EMSHG had developed and contributed the principal language to the January 2001 JCAHO Environment of Care/Emergency Management Standards.) In FY 2002, EMSHG was invited to participate in several JCAHO national leadership and policy forums and served as

faculty on three JCAHO-sponsored satellite broadcasts on emergency management and WMD issues for health care facilities.

EMSHG Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

The EMSHG TAC continued to meet (on-site at VACO) quarterly and to work consistently by conference calls and electronic means. The purpose of the TAC, chaired by the EMSHG Chief Consultant, is to advise EMSHG leadership on emergency management issues (including those related to preparedness for potential incidents involving WMD that impact VHA). The EMSHG TAC membership is comprised of representatives of VHA and VA programs, groups, and entities, and expert representatives of other federal departments and agencies, e.g., DoD, HHS, FEMA, FBI, and the Department of State.

EMSHG TAC Task Forces and Chairs

- Basic Training - Larry Flesh, MD - VA
- Emergency Management Academy - Robert Darling, CAPT, MC, USN - USAMRIID
- Organizational Support - Robert Roswell, MD - VA
- Pharmaceutical Stockpiles - John Ogden, R.Ph. (retired) and Mark Brown, Ph.D. - VA
- PPE and Decontamination - John Hancock - VA
- Quarantine - Donna Barbisch, MG, Ph.D. - USAR
- Research - Eric Auf der Heide, MD - ATSDR/CDC
- Surveillance - Gary Roselle, MD - VA
- Telemedicine - Adam Darkins, MD - VA
- VA Role in the Community - Tom Weaver (retired) - VA

TAC Products and Contributions

- Developed scholarly review, options, and specific recommendations for PPE levels and decontamination protocols. Submitted to VHA leadership for use in the plan to purchase and train on PPE/decontamination equipment, VHA-wide.
- Developed "BIOLOGICAL THREAT INTERROGATORIES," a tool for use by VAMCs in planning for potential WMD incidents. (Document is posted on EMSHG web site.)
- Reviewed contents of VHA pharmaceutical caches and recommended modifications to the Pharmacy Benefits Management Strategic Healthcare Group. (Included was a recommendation that VA reduce the number of cyanide antidote kits resulting in significant cost savings to VA.)
- Reviewed/provided revisions for WMD "pocket cards" (a VHA-generated tool useful to health care providers who may encounter patients exposed to WMD agents). Cards are posted on the EMSHG web site.

EMSHG Hot Issues

EMSHG submitted weekly "hot issues" to VHA beginning October 25, 2001. The purpose of the weekly submissions was to highlight significant medical events that impacted VA and VHA. These topics were part of the weekly agenda in staff meetings between the VA Deputy Secretary and the VHA Under Secretary for Health. These "hot issues" provide a snapshot of activities throughout the report period and are attached in chronological order.

Summary

The FY-2002 Annual Report of the Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG) portrays a comprehensive review of the organization's development and evolution during a period of exceptional activity. The United States is a country at war since September 11, 2001. Facing the daily fast pace of operational requirements, EMSHG has reorganized its assets while prioritizing emergency management information for VA leadership. The continuity of care for eligible veterans must continue despite the threat of terrorism. VA is the largest integrated national health care system with personnel and facilities in virtually every community across the United States. As a pre-deployed national asset, VA is uniquely positioned to positively contribute to homeland security measures and respond to natural disasters. As such, EMSHG has a lead role in VA's "fourth mission," contingency planning and operations, for the benefit of veterans, their families, and their communities.

"HOT ISSUES" SUBMISSIONS FOR FY 02

October 25, 2001:

The Army Surgeon General, the Navy Surgeon General, and the Air Force Assistant Surgeon General for Readiness, Science and Technology were among 22 distinguished visitors attending the annual open house hosted by the Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG) on 10/23. The EMSHG Chief Consultant and staff provided briefings on VA emergency management policies and procedures. Participants discussed critical issues of mutual interest to VA, DoD, Health and Human Services, and academia.

On 10/22, EMSHG held its quarterly Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting at VACO. The TAC has been meeting for the past 1 1/2 years to develop recommendations for VA facilities to prepare for a Weapons of Mass Destruction event. VA and other federal government participants were briefed on VA's activities since 9/11. Dr. Gary Roselle presented recommendations from the Surveillance Task Force, a key issue for VA medical center readiness for bioterrorism. A new task force was formed to advise the Emergency Management Academy (EMA) - a joint educational effort between EMSHG and the Employee Education System (EES). Further information on the TAC and EMA can be found on EMSHG's new web site at <http://vaww.va.gov/emshg/>. The website is a good source of information on current CDC recommendations for suspected anthrax-containing letters and gives links to other WMD sites.

November 29, 2001:

Forum on Emerging Infections

The Chief Consultant, Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG), Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP, participated in the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies' Forum on Emerging Infections during the period, November 27-29, 2001. Dr. Gary Roselle, an IOM member, was also present. The title of the forum was "Biological Threats and Terrorism: How Prepared Are We?"

Forum members and panelists identified priority areas in countering bioterrorism within industry, academia, public health organizations, and other government sections. Dr. Koenig presented on "VA Capability to Enhance the Medical Response to a Biological Threat."

Biological and Chemical Warfare and Terrorism

A live satellite broadcast is being conducted from 12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m., ET, November 28, 29, and 30, 2001 concerning medical issues and response on biological and chemical warfare and terrorism. The U.S. Army Medical Command and the Department of Veterans Affairs' Employee Education System and Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG) sponsored the broadcast. This live, interactive, three-day satellite broadcast is intended to educate health professionals about the

proper medical response in the event of an intentional biological or chemical agent release. Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP, EMSHG Chief Consultant, is a featured panelist on the broadcast.

December 6, 2001:

JCAHO Sponsored Discussion on Health Care System and Community Preparedness for Terrorism Assaults. EMSHG has been invited to participate in a JCAHO-sponsored roundtable discussion on Monday, December 10, 2001 at the Renaissance Mayflower Hotel in Washington, DC from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Dr. Koenig will attend this forum that focuses on the new emergency management standards. (*It is noteworthy that Dr. Koenig and EMSHG Education and Research staff contributed significant content to the new standards and survey process.)

January 3, 2002:

Updated JCAHO EC 1.4, Emergency Management Standards for 2002: The Joint Commission has improved the standards guiding health care emergency management programs based on the extreme flooding in Houston and the terrorist events in New York and elsewhere (see www.va.gov/emshg for a copy). VA's Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group was a leading proponent of the new updates and also has been active in developing a Guidebook for VA Medical Centers in collaboration with the Center for Engineering and Occupational Safety and Health.

January 10, 2002:

Weapons of Mass Destruction Conference: The Third International Conference, co-sponsored by VA's VISN 8, EMSHG and EES, "Integrating Medical Mass Care Management in a WMD Incident" will be conducted at St. Petersburg, Florida from January 11-15, 2002. The conference will be conducted in cooperation with VISN 8, Bay Pines VAMC, Florida Department of Health - Emergency Operations, USAR Command - Regional Training Site - Medical (RTS-MED), and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. This program will provide education and training to responders, healthcare providers, emergency managers, and others who may be involved in managing an incident involving Weapons of Mass Destruction. Approximately 300 participants, including international delegates, will share information concerning management of terrorism. For more information, see <http://www.va.gov/emshg>.

American Legion Representatives Visit EMSHG: Six members of the American Legion Staff from Washington, DC visited the EMSHG headquarters in the VAMC, Martinsburg, WV on January 9, 2002. The American Legion requested this visit so their national representatives would have a clearer insight into VA's support roles during catastrophic events, especially following the terrorist events of September 11, 2001.

January 25, 2002:

The VHA EMSHG Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), chaired by Dr. Kristi L. Koenig, held its quarterly meeting at VACO on January 22, 2002. The EMSHG TAC was formed in July 2000 and has been advising VHA on preparing our facilities for a

Weapons of Mass Destruction event. Further information can be found on the EMSHG website at vaww.va.gov/emshg or www.va.gov/emshg.

January 31, 2002:

Disaster Management 2002: Preparation, Response, Recovery, and Mitigation

Dr. Kristi L. Koenig, Chief Consultant, EMSHG, participated in a two-day conference, January 28-29, 2002, sponsored by the National Institute for Government Innovation (NIGI). Dr. Koenig served on a case study panel that addressed the World Trade Center: Response, Recovery, Reaction - A Best Practice Session.

February 7, 2002:

Dr. Kristi L. Koenig, Chief Consultant, EMSHG, was an invited speaker at the Florida Emergency Medicine Foundation (FEMF) Conference in Orlando, FL from January 31 to February 3, 2002. Dr. Koenig made a presentation entitled: Terrorist Attacks on 09/11 and Beyond: The Role of the Department of Veterans Affairs. FEMF is a non-profit organization associated with the American College of Emergency Physicians that is dedicated to promoting and advancing emergency medicine, disaster management, prehospital emergency care and public health by providing education and research activities. Approximately 600 registrants attended the conference.

February 13, 2002:

The 2002 National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) Annual Conference is scheduled at the Westin Peachtree Plaza Hotel in Atlanta, GA, April 13-17, 2002. The 2002 conference program will focus on these key issues: counterterrorism, Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), clinical medicine, public health, health care facilities, Federal Coordinating Centers (FCCs), operations/response, military support, mass fatalities, and international coordination. The purpose of the conference is to advance the knowledge base of local, State, and Federal health care providers, public health practitioners, emergency managers, and policy makers. The Conference, coordinated by the Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG) is co-sponsored by the four NDMS partners (VA, Department of Defense, US Public Health Service and Federal Emergency Management Agency). The 2002 NDMS conference link has been added to the EMSHG Homepage. Check it out at <http://vaww.va.gov/emshg> or <http://www.va.gov/emshg>.

February 28, 2002:

Dr. Kristi L. Koenig, Chief Consultant, EMSHG, was an invited speaker at the National Symposium on Hospital/WMD Consequence Management in Las Vegas, NV, during February 25-26, 2002. The National Institute for Government Innovation sponsored the symposium that focused on preparing hospitals and hospital networks to define, recognize, and respond effectively to terrorist threats/disasters. Dr. Koenig presented on VA's role in "Federal Support for State/Local CBRNE Response: What are the Roles and how do We Respond." Dr. Koenig also facilitated a post-conference workshop on developing a hospital's emergency management plan and terrorism response annex. The forum was designed to meet the standards set by the Joint Commission on

Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations in combating, responding, and treatment in a terrorist incident.

The new Emergency Management Program (EMP) Guidebook is now available on the Center for Engineering and Occupational Safety and Health's (CEOSH) and EMSHG web sites (see links at bottom). The Guidebook represents a collaborative effort between the Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG) and CEOSH.

While VAMCs have had emergency plans in place for a long time to meet these needs, new JCAHO Emergency Management Standards and the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001, require that we review and significantly improve these plans. The purpose of this guidebook is to assist the VAMC senior management to improve these plans consistent with the new standards and provide some uniform approach to specific threats that require immediate attention. This guidebook provides a nine-step approach to produce an EMP that will save the VAMC significant staff time by providing "best practices" and tools in an easy to adept format.

March 21, 2002:

Mr. Pete Brewster of the Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG) Education and Research staff appeared as one of the expert panel members on the Joint Commission's Satellite Network broadcast entitled, "Managing the Unthinkable: Nuclear, Biological or Chemical Attacks." This broadcast aired on the VA Knowledge Network on March 14, 2002. The program focused on emergency management planning of hospitals responding to mass-casualty-producing events and response to incidents involving nuclear, biological and chemical agents. JCAHO's January 2001 Environment of Care / Emergency Management standards (in which Mr. Brewster and EMSHG had significant input) were highlighted. The broadcast also showcased the VA New York Harbor Healthcare system's staff, which developed an algorithm to protect staff and patients against exposure to anthrax.

Biological Threats and Terrorism: Assessing the Science and Response Capabilities
Institute of Medicine, Forum on Emerging Infectious Diseases

In the wake of September 11 and recent anthrax events, our nation's bioterrorism response capability has become a priority for policymakers, researchers, public health officials, academia and the private sector. The Forum on Emerging Infections released a summary of a workshop in which experts identified, clarified, and discussed the next steps to prepare and strengthen bio-terrorism response capabilities. Gary Roselle, M.D., is a Forum member, and Kristi L. Koenig, M.D., FACEP, Chief Consultant, Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG), presented on VA's role in counterterrorism at the Forum. Information on VA's role in bioterrorism events and other significant emergencies can be found on pages 155-160 of the summary. Please click on <http://www.nap.edu/books/0309082536/html/>

March 28, 2002:

Biologic Threat Agent Interrogatories

Dr. Kristi L. Koenig, Chief Consultant, EMSHG, provided a series of interrogatories to all VHA Network Directors and Medical Center Directors for use in preparing medical facilities for response to biologic threat (BT) agents. These interrogatories are a tool for use in defining specific areas that should be addressed in any facility plan and program for managing BTs.

Dr. Gary Roselle, Chairperson of the Surveillance Task Force, EMSHG Technical Advisory Committee, developed and piloted the interrogatories. To use the tool, VAMC emergency planners can discuss each interrogatory and thereby develop a comprehensive plan that is workable at the local level.

Questions related to BT Interrogatories may be referred to Ms. Connie Boatright, EMSHG's Director of Education and Research, at (317) 554-0000, ext. 4246, or Connie.Boatright@med.va.gov. Additional information may be found at the EMSHG website at vaww.va.gov/emshg or www.va.gov/emshg.

April 11, 2002:

On April 10, 2002, the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health conducted a hearing to consider legislation that would expand the role of VA in preventing and responding to biological, chemical, and radiological terrorism threats to the United States. Two Congressional Bills, H.R. 3253, the National Medical Preparedness Act of 2001, sponsored by Representative Chris Smith (NJ) and H.R. 3254, the Medical Education for National Defense in the 21st Century Act, sponsored by Representative Steve Buyer (IN), were addressed during the sub-committee hearing. Responsible officials from VA, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Universities of Kansas and Indiana Schools of Medicine provided testimony concerning the proposed legislation. Deputy Secretary, Leo S. MacKay, Jr., Ph.D.; Under Secretary for Health, Robert H. Roswell, MD; and Chief Consultant, Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group, Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP gave testimony concerning both proposed bills which have great potential for enhancing emergency medical preparedness.

April 25, 2002:

The annual National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) Conference was held in Atlanta, GA, April 13-17, 2002. Approximately 2,000 federal, state, local and volunteer health care and emergency management responders attended. This year's primary focus was on events that occurred in the past year, e.g., the 9-11 terrorist attacks, Houston floods and anthrax incidents. VHA's Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG) once again chaired the interagency Planning and Coordination Committee. Expert faculty included representatives from EMSHG and from the Houston and Little Rock VAMCs. VA is one of four NDMS partners, along with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Department of Defense (DoD), and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

May 1, 2002:

Emergency Management Program (EMP) Guidebook Satellite Broadcast

VA's newly developed EMP Guidebook debuted via a satellite broadcast on Wednesday, April 24, 2002. Pete Brewster represented the Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group on a panel that included Arnie Bierenbaum, Dr. Michael Hodgson, Dr. Margie Scott, and John Beatty. Panelists discussed the organization, use, and issues with EMP development on this live 90-minute program. Re-broadcasts are scheduled on the VA Knowledge Network, Channel 1 for the following days and times: Thursday, May 2, 2002, 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.; and Friday, May 10, 2002, 10:30 a.m. to 12 Noon.

EMSHG Technical Advisory Committee

The EMSHG Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) conducted its quarterly meeting in Washington, DC on April 22, 2002. Members presented Task Force reports: Surveillance (Dr. Gary Roselle); Telemedicine (Dr. Adam Darkins); Emergency Management Academy (CDR Rob Darling); Quarantine (MG Donna Barbisch); and Pharmaceutical Stockpile (John Ogden, RPh). Dr. James Burris briefed the members on Terrorism Research Initiatives, and Connie Boatright, RN, MSN, presented the findings from the recently conducted national survey on VA Capability to Enhance the Medical Response to a Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Event. The TAC first met in July 2000 and continues to provide important recommendations to VHA in preparing for any type of WMD incident. Further information is available on the EMSHG website at vaww.va.gov/emshg.

May 8, 2002:

On May 1, 2002, the Department of Veterans Affairs and the VA Learning University conducted the "VA Leadership Forum: VA National Preparedness" at Washington, DC. All VA Senior Executives assigned to VA Central Office were invited to this leadership forum on emergency preparedness and workforce planning. The forum was highlighted by the presentation of the Honorable Tom Ridge, Director, Office of Homeland Security, who described the "Future Look: The National Security Game Plan." Mr. Anthony J. Principi, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, also gave guidance concerning VA's support of national preparedness. The entire leadership forum provided a heightened awareness and education to the more than 100 senior executives who must manage VA's resources in responding to terrorist threats and other catastrophic events.

May 16, 2002

VA/EMSHG Recognized for Successful Continuity of Operations after the Terrorist

Attacks - On May 8, 2002, as part of Public Service Recognition Week, the Under Secretary for Health presented an Unsung Hero Group Award to the Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG) headquarters staff. In the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and on activation of the VA Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP), EMSHG headquarters staff mobilized and provided round-the-clock support to the Deputy Secretary and other key VA personnel at the VA's emergency relocation site. EMSHG staff were also responsible for implementation and coordination of VA emergency efforts in support of the Federal

Response Plan. Dedicated EMSHG staff members volunteered to work shifts and perform tasks beyond their normal duties to meet both internal and external emergency management challenges in the hours and weeks following the attacks. VA was recognized by the White House as one of the best COOP performers.

May 23, 2002:

VISN 4 Emergency Medical Response Team (EMRT) Trains at Fort Indiantown Gap. "VA can respond" was their motto as members of the VA Stars and Stripes Healthcare Network Emergency Medical Response Team (ERMT 4) deployed to Fort Indiantown Gap, PA, May 6-10, 2002, to sharpen their field medicine, team building, and leadership skills. EMRT team commander Sidney Jackson, MD, Clarksburg VAMC, and a West Virginia Air National Guard flight surgeon and EMRT chief nurse, Diane Yoder, RN, Philadelphia VAMC, led EMRT 4 in supporting a Network VAMC during a simulated disaster. EMSHG Area Emergency Managers, David Berg (Philadelphia) and David Rossi (Pittsburgh), and Management Assistant David Kaczmarek (also of Pittsburgh) provided administrative and logistical support. Trainers explained the VHA Disaster Emergency Medical Personnel System (DEMPS), and distributed DEMPS applications and other materials with the expectation that most EMRT 4 members will enroll in the DEMPS program.

EMSHG Deputy for Strategic Communications Participates in Armed Forces Day Events. Mr. Robert Elliott, EMSHG's Deputy for Strategic Communications, played a key role in organizing several special events for the May 18 Armed Forces Day event in Martinsburg, WV. The Honorable Cecil H. Underwood, former Governor of West Virginia, and Mr. William W. McLemore, VA's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs were among the guest speakers. Both of these distinguished presenters also participated in the dedication ceremony of Interstate 81 Highway that is now named the West Virginia Veterans Memorial Freeway.

May 30, 2002:

Terrorism Session at Annual National Society for Emergency Medicine Conference. Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP, Chief Consultant, Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group, served as moderator of a panel that focused on "The Role of Academic Emergency Medicine in the Age of Terrorism." As front-line clinicians and academics, the panelists addressed Academic Emergency Medicine's potential roles in the war against terrorism. Educational and research opportunities related to counter-terrorism, and in particular new funding sources were explored. The two-hour session was followed by a luncheon featuring Scott Lillibridge, MD, Senior Advisor to Secretary Thompson (Department of Health and Human Services) on National Security and Emergency Management.

June 6, 2002:

Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG) Staff Authors Bioterrorism Articles in National Pharmacy Journals

The May 15, 2002, *Journal of the American Society of Health-Systems Pharmacists*

(ASHP) features "Bioterrorism Preparedness: Answers for the Health-System Pharmacist." The article, authored by Dave Teeter, PharmD, (EMSHG Education and Research Office) highlights information presented by Dr. Teeter at the ASHP 2002 annual meeting in Philadelphia. Dr. Teeter also co-authored an article with Wesley Robbins, PharmD, of VHA's Pharmacy Benefits Management Strategic Healthcare Group. Their article, "Bioterrorism Preparedness: Building on the VA Model," appears in the June 2002, *US Pharmacist*.

June 12, 2002:

Pentagon Briefing for Health Care Administrators: The Chief Consultant, Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG), Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP, briefed a group from the Medical University of South Carolina Doctors of Health Administration Class on June 5, 2002. As guest speaker, Dr. Koenig provided a briefing concerning the "Role of the Department of Veterans Affairs in Homeland Security" to the attendees. The briefing and discussion enabled the visitors from the Medical University of South Carolina to have a better appreciation of VA capabilities in homeland security. MG Donna Barbisch provided a briefing on the role of DoD in Homeland Security in the joint session.

June 27, 2002:

Change of Command Ceremony at USAMRIID: The Chief Consultant, Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG), Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP, attended the change of command ceremony at the United States Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) at Fort Detrick, MD, on June 19, 2002. Colonel Edward M. Eitzen, Jr., MC, USA, relinquished his command to Colonel Erik A. Henchal, MS, USA. Major General Lester Martinez-Lopez, MD, USA, Commander, U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command (USAMRMC) was the reviewing officer. Colonel Eitzen will be detailed to HHS' Office of Public Health Preparedness later this summer. EMSHG and USAMRIID have a coordinated working partnership in the sharing of technical information concerning infectious diseases that are potential threats to homeland security. Colonel Eitzen and other USAMRIID staff serve on the EMSHG Technical Advisory Committee.

Command Post Exercise "Operation Nova"

EMSHG has developed the June 28, 2002, tabletop exercise for VA emergency managers and leaders. The purpose of the tabletop is to test the exercise planning process among OS&P, 10N, and EMSHG representatives prior to "Operation Nova" scheduled for July 17-19, 2002. Exercise Operation Nova will be a two and one-half day interagency command post exercise that will test VA emergency operating procedures in relation to a series of catastrophic events calling for activation of the Federal Response Plan (FRP) and movement of the WMD/NDMS pharmaceutical caches. The exercise will fulfill the annual HHS pharmaceutical cache exercise requirement. A full functional exercise to include movement of mock caches will be conducted at each cache location, with subsequent command and control activities occurring at both the VA Readiness Operations Center and the Public Health Service Office of Emergency Preparedness.

July 11, 2002:

EMSHG Chief Consultant is Keynote Speaker at Mount Sinai's 150th Anniversary
Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP, Chief Consultant, Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG), was distinguished visiting professor and keynote speaker at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine at New York, NY, July 10-11, 2002. An alumnus of this school, Dr. Koenig was featured speaker for Mt. Sinai's forum on "Disaster Preparedness for the 21st Century." Dr. Koenig's presentation focused on "A System of Triage for Mass Casualties," a concept which she helped develop. The audience of Mt. Sinai Board of Trustees, emergency medicine residents and staff also learned about VA as Dr. Koenig highlighted the Department's role in disaster and homeland security.

EMSHG Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting in Washington, DC

The Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), chaired by Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP, EMSHG Chief Consultant, held its quarterly meeting on July 8, 2002, at VA Central Office in Washington, DC. Highlights of the meeting included: 1) TAC members unanimously supported the recommendations on "VA's role in surveillance," as presented by Surveillance Task Force Chair, Gary Roselle, MD; 2) TAC members provided expert input on the VAMC pharmaceutical caches, as presented by Pharmaceutical Stockpile Task Force Chair, John Ogden, R.PH. (Chief Consultant, Pharmacy Benefits Management Strategic Healthcare Group.) The next quarterly EMSHG TAC meeting is scheduled for October 21, 2002, at VACO in Washington, DC.

July 18, 2002:

EMSHG Participates in JCAHO Symposium

Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP, Chief Consultant, Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG) participated as an invited expert at the JCAHO Emergency Preparedness Roundtable, July 15, 2002, in Washington, DC. The symposium included emergency management experts who focused on current issues impacting health care facilities. Dr. Koenig has been invited to present a plenary session at a follow-on symposium, "Homeland Defense: Blueprints for Emergency Management Responses," October 23-25, 2002, in Washington, DC.

EMSHG Plays Role in Natural Hazards Conference

The Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG) played a significant role in the annual Natural Hazards Conference, July 14-17, 2002, University of Colorado, Boulder. Mr. Peter Brewster, EMSHG, assisted in conference planning and represented the EMSHG Chief Consultant, Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP, at the Natural Hazards Research Institute's Advisory Board Meeting. Dave Teeter, R.PH., PharmD., (also of EMSHG) served as a panelist during the session "Bioterrorism: Strategies and Initiatives." Other panelists included Gary Roselle, MD, VHA's Program Director for Infectious Diseases, and experts from Stanford University and UCLA. An estimated 500 scientists, researchers, academicians, and scholars participated in this annual event. For the past decade, EMSHG has been involved with the Institute's activities and programs. Other federal participants include HHS (CDC and PHS), FEMA, DOT, and

the National Science Foundation. The Institute is a non-profit organization whose primary mission is disaster research.

July 24, 2002:

EMSHG Participates in Joint U.S. - Israel Working Group

Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP, Chief Consultant, Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG) participated as a subject matter expert in a Joint U.S. - Israel Working Group conducted at FEMA Headquarters on July 23, 2002. U.S. and Israel representatives shared information concerning their national systems of emergency management; managing health and medical care during catastrophic disasters; managing radiological, biological and chemical casualties; and organization of deployable medical systems and teams. Boaz Tadmor, M.D., Head of Medical Department, Israel Defense Force Home Front Command (IDF HFC) was the primary representative of the Israel team. Dr. Koenig presented a briefing on training personnel to manage radiological, biological and chemical casualties.

July 30, 2002:

EMSHG Participates in HRSA Hospital Preparedness Program

Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP, Chief Consultant, Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG), served as an invited subject matter expert at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Bioterrorism Hospital Preparedness Program in Washington, DC, July 30-31, 2002. Dr. Koenig presented on "Medications and Vaccines" and included a focus on the process of establishing pharmaceutical caches at VA medical centers. Her presentation also included an overview of the national infrastructure of the Department of Veterans Affairs and its local and national roles in managing pharmaceutical caches for victims of weapons of mass destruction.

August 8, 2002

EMSHG Chief Consultant, Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP, participated in a meeting with Assistant Secretary Claude M. Kicklighter, Acting Director of the VA Office of Operations, Security, and Preparedness, on July 30, 2002, with a VA/DoD Presidential Task Force. The briefing to members of the Presidential Task Force to Improve Health Care Delivery for Our Nation's Veterans (see <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/08/20010829.html>) was well received and focused on VA's role in Homeland Security.

August 15, 2002

VA EMSHG-Initiated Change in NDMS Bed Categories Approved by DoD

The Assistant Secretary of Defense, William Windenwerder, Jr., MD, has instructed the Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Transportation Command, to implement a change in the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) bed reporting categories from 13 to 5. This proposal was developed by EMSHG and staffed through an NDMS Directorate Staff Workgroup chaired by VA's Mike Vojtasko. The recommendations were presented by EMSHG Chief Consultant, Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP, in August 2001 and unanimously and enthusiastically endorsed by the NDMS Senior Policy Group on which USH, Robert H. Roswell, MD, is the VA representative.

The revised categories are "more user-friendly" to private-sector hospitals that participate in the NDMS and include a new "critical care" category that is consistent with the current threat. The five categories are Med/Surg, Pediatric, Burn, Psychiatric, and Critical Care. This change also applies to bed reporting from VA hospitals under the VA/DoD Contingency Plan. The effective date for the approved change has not yet been determined.

JCAHO Committee on Health Care Safety

Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP, Chief Consultant, EMSHG, participated in the JCAHO Committee on Health Care Safety meeting conducted August 9, 2002, at JCAHO Headquarters in Chicago. In January 2004, there will be a substantial change in the accreditation process that includes a new survey procedure. VA EMSHG proposed language for emergency management standards updates, consistent with VHA's Emergency Management Program Guidebook language, was favorably considered by the committee. JCAHO is hosting several Health Policy Forums, including one on bioterrorism. Next year's issues are undecided, but JCAHO is considering a focus on "national credentialing."

August 22, 2002

EMSHG Participates in Federal Workers' Compensation Conference (WCC)

Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP, Chief Consultant, Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG), served as an invited speaker at the 4th Annual Federal WCC at Dallas, TX, August 18-21, 2002. This conference included approximately 650 federal government participants. Dr. Koenig presented on "Emergency Management and Casualty Implications" and included a focus on VA's role in emergency management. She educated the audience on how to estimate and prepare for the threat of mass casualty incidents as well as the types of injuries that employees might experience from exposure to chemical, biological, or radiological agents.

August 29, 2002

EMSHG Participates in Joint Israeli/U.S. Working Group

On August 26-28, 2002, Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP, Chief Consultant, and Connie Boatright, MSN, RN, Director of Education and Research for the Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG), participated as invited guests at a Joint Israeli/U.S. Working Group on Systems Approaches to Countering Terrorism. Workshop sponsors included the U.S. State Department, Office of Counterterrorism, USAF Surgeon General, and Defense Sciences Office, DARPA. In addition to senior U.S. policy makers including the U.S. Surgeon General, participants included high-ranking Israeli government officials involved in counterterrorism activities. Work groups shared approaches to education, training and managing terrorism events.

NDIA Homeland Security Workshop

Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP, Chief Consultant, EMSHG, participated in the National Defense Industrial Association (NDIA)/U.S. Medicine Institute for Health Studies workshop entitled, "Collaboration to Enhance Homeland Security" at Howard University

Medical School, August 21 and 22, 2002. This workshop brought together expert speakers who addressed health, communications, and chemical/biological defense issues related to terrorist activity.

September 5, 2002

EMSHG Chief Consultant Invited Speaker at Yale University School of Public Health

On September 4, 2002, Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP, Chief Consultant, Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group, presented a two-hour session on types of disasters and their consequences as invited faculty at the Yale University School of Medicine post-graduate course on "Public Health Management of Disasters." In the evening of the same day, she addressed the leadership of the Yale School of Public Health on "Perspectives in Disaster Medicine," including the role of the Department of Veterans Affairs in Homeland Security.

September 12, 2002

VHA/EMSHG Prepares for Week of 9/11 and Patriot Day, 2002

In accordance with VA Operations Plan 5-2002, EMSHG compiled input from every VA Medical Center across the Nation regarding preparedness for the anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. EMSHG VISN Liaison Area Emergency Managers assisted the VISNs in ensuring that callback rosters are current, employees have been briefed on the potential terrorist threat, and facility staff are prepared to manage any potential crisis. EMSHG reported 100% "Green" readiness status to the VA Readiness Operations Center. All offices and facilities of the VHA have reviewed plans and are prepared for a heightened state of alert during the week of September 9-13, 2002.

September 19, 2002

EMSHG Training on VAMC WMD Pharmaceutical Caches

In collaboration with the Pharmacy Benefits Management Strategic Healthcare Group, the Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG) conducted a VAMC Pharmaceutical Cache Briefing for 13 EMSHG staff members in Chicago, IL on September 18 and 19, 2002. The training provided an overview and orientation on the VA Pharmaceutical Cache Program at the VA Emergency Pharmacy Operations at the Hines VA Medical Center. Pharmacy and EMSHG staff provided instruction on the Inventory Management System, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Pharmaceutical Stockpile Program, developing local emergency operations plans, and other clinical topics related to the cache program. The conference facilitated a better appreciation of VA's role in providing pharmaceutical support for Homeland Security. EMSHG Technical Advisory Committee members continuously review the contents of the VAMC caches and make recommendations for state-of-the-art improvements.

September 26, 2002

Emergency Nurses' Association Meeting

The Emergency Nurses' Association invited Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP, Chief Consultant, Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group, to present a lecture entitled, "Derm and Doom: The common rashes of chemical and biological terrorism" on September 19, 2002, at their national meeting in New Orleans. Due to an increased

demand for the topic, a second session was added the following day to accommodate additional participants.

Emergency Medical Preparedness Symposium

The Department of Veterans Affairs conducted the 7th Annual Emergency Medical Preparedness Symposium entitled, "September 11th - One Year Later: How Have We Changed?" at Albany, NY, September 23-26, 2002. The symposium was jointly presented by the Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG); VISNs 1, 2, and 3; the Employee Education System Resource Centers at Northport, NY, and Togus, ME; Chesapeake Health Education Program, Inc., Perry Point, MD; Healthcare Association of New York State; and the Management Development Organization, Albany, NY. Nearly 300 personnel representing all emergency management disciplines participated in the three days of didactic and hands-on educational training that focused on hospital decontamination and emergency preparedness planning. A faculty of experts shared the current status on topics related to weapons of mass destruction and medical support to victims of terrorist events.