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## LESSON LEARNED

### Secondary Attacks: Communicating Operational Information to Off-Site Response Agencies

#### SUMMARY

Incident commanders should provide operational information to healthcare facilities and other off-site response agencies during terrorist incident responses. This information chain becomes especially important for tracking patients exposed to chemical, biological, or radiological agents.

#### DESCRIPTION

The 2003 Top Officials II Exercise (TOPOFF II) conducted in Seattle, Washington and Chicago, Illinois was one of the largest mass-casualty exercises ever conducted. The Seattle exercise scenario involved a radiological release while the Chicago scenario simulated a massive biological material release. Both scenarios included the suspected and actual presence of secondary explosive devices targeting responders.

Lack of communication between incident commanders and off-site response agencies hampered effective operations at the healthcare facilities receiving victims. Facility managers were not provided with essential information on the nature of the incidents, the potential for contamination of the facility, or the number of potential victims. Incident commanders also failed to notify healthcare facilities when rescue operations were suspended due to the suspected presence and actual presence of secondary devices at incident sites. These stoppages created an uneven and unpredictable flow of victims to emergency rooms.

Incident commanders should be diligent in providing receiving healthcare facilities and other off-site agencies with operational information and updates. Information on WMD exposure and the impact of secondary attacks on victim arrival rates is particularly important.

#### CITATION

Department of Homeland Security. "Top Officials Exercise Series: TOPOFF 2—After Action Summary Report for Public Release." December 19, 2003.  
(<http://www.mipt.org/pdf/TOPOFF2AfterActionRpt.pdf>)

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