

#### RELATED TERMS

- Incident Identification
- Radiation Detection Equipment
- Radiological Dispersal Device



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# LESSON LEARNED

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## Radiological Incident Response: Selecting Personal Alarming Dosimeters for Emergency Response Personnel

### SUMMARY

Jurisdictions should consider selecting personal alarming dosimeters whose batteries are readily available, are easy to change, and last a significant length of time. This can help ensure that responders have functioning radiation detection equipment at all times.

### DESCRIPTION

The city of Baltimore, Maryland, purchased 200 personal alarming dosimeters for fire, police, and public health personnel and vehicles in 2002. The city of Baltimore purchased these devices to address the heightened possibility of a radiological event after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Personal alarming dosimeters help emergency response personnel identify and respond to a radiological incident.

For more information on personal alarming dosimeters and their uses, please refer to the *Lessons Learned Information Sharing* Best Practice [Radiological Dispersal Device Incident Response Planning: Incident Identification](#).

The city of Baltimore selected dosimeters that can be set to operate with a numerical display and that are small and thin. Responders soon found these devices difficult to use because the batteries lasted only a short time and were difficult to change. Three main factors contributed to this problem:

- Due to their size and shape, the dosimeters required non-standard batteries that were not readily available;
- Changing the batteries required a special screwdriver that was difficult to use; and
- Setting the dosimeters to operate with numerical displays caused the batteries to drain in 1 month.

Many responders went without functioning dosimeters for extended periods of time because the dosimeters could not be provided with new batteries in a timely manner.

Jurisdictions should consider selecting personal alarming dosimeters whose batteries are readily available, are easy to change, and last a significant length of time. This can help ensure that responders have functioning radiation detection equipment at all times.

### CITATION

Links, Jonathan. Director, Center for Public Health Preparedness, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Interview with *Lessons Learned Information Sharing*, 15 Sep 2006.

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