Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Project Profile
MAINE
Updated: March 5, 2001

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Program

Focus Areas Funded	• Surveillance and Epidemiology – Core Activities • Laboratory Capacity – Biological Agents
Maine has strengthened its capacity to respond to threats of bioterrorism by:	**STAFFING:** A microbiologist has been hired and assigned the role of lead microbiologist to receive appropriate training and to train others. Maintains an inventory and order supplies and equipment. Additional responsibilities are to present information at meetings or seminars, to write literature for publication or distribution, to attend meetings and represent the laboratory, and to update the laboratory's WMD Policy and Procedure Manual. A Preparedness Planning team has been formed comprised of several laboratory staff members with varied technical and administrative training and experience. This team has been tasked with the responsibility of addressing those issues associated with preparedness and planning to counter bioterrorism. This team consists of the laboratory director acting as the program director, microbiology supervisor providing administrative and quality assurance oversight, a bacteriologist assigned the lead analytical role, a mycobacteriologist and a virologist who provide technical expertise and testing capability in their respective specialties, and a forensic chemist who provides technical expertise and evaluation on evidence handling and chain of custody procedures. **COMMUNICATION:** A Faxmodem capable of "blast faxing" has been installed in the microbiology supervisor's computer. This method of communication has been tested several times in communicating with MICRONET, a statewide organization of clinical microbiology supervisors from hospital and private laboratories and with the office of the State Epidemiologist. A LITS training team from the CDC has installed this system into a laboratory computer. An informational briefing on its capabilities and limitations was given to HETL laboratory supervisors. User training was given to the laboratory's computer systems manager and his assistant. Feedback on necessary modifications to this system was provided in order to meet the needs of this laboratory. A Web Page on bioterrorism has been added to Maine's Clinical Laboratory Management Association Web Site. **EMERGENCY PLANNING:** The Director and Microbiologist Supervisor attended the annual Northeast State Epidemiologist/State Public Health Laboratory meeting in Ogunquit, ME. Bioterrorism topics

were discussed that included individual state planning and preparedness.
The laboratory WMD Team attended three meetings with the Maine Emergency Management Agency, and representative from various agencies within the state Bureau of Health. The Office of Health Data Management, State Epidemiologist, Immunization Program, Community and Family Health, Division of Health Engineering, Division of Disease Control, Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory, Radioactive Materials/radiation Control program, Division of Public Health Nursing and Constituent and Legislative Affairs. At these meetings, presentations were given on the role of these agencies in planning a WMD incident. A questionnaire for future discussion was given to participants on their respective agency's ability to contribute in the four types of WMD incidents (radiological, chemical, biological and nuclear). To determine for which of these WMD types services are currently capable of being provided, what is needed and available to them to obtain capability. A tabletop exercise was conducted to assess the capability of these agencies to respond to a bioterrorist incident.
Three additional meetings were attended with the Maine Emergency Management Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigation, state, county and local law enforcement agencies, first responders, Maine National Guard and representatives from other responsible agencies. These meetings developed a “State of Maine Joint Interagency Weapons of Mass Destruction Response Plan”.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING:
Four laboratory staff members on September 9,1999 traveled to Boston, MA, to attend “The Role of the Clinical Laboratory In Response to Bioterrorism” training sponsored by the National Laboratory Training Network. This training was to prepare them for giving presentations in November to hospital and other interested attendees.
A microbiologist attended training on HVAC Systems and Laboratory design sponsored by the Eagleson Institute in Sanford, ME.
A seminar sponsored by the National Laboratory Training Network and the HETL titled “The Role of the Clinical Laboratory in Response to Bioterrorism” was presented to clinical laboratorians in Augusta, ME. The Director, State Microbiologist, Quality Assurance Officer and Microbiologist/Safety Officer gave presentations.
In response to laboratory safety concerns that had been expressed, an informational meeting was held for HETL

	laboratory staff on the potential biological agents, planning, preparation and laboratory structural changes relative to bioterrorism. That these diseases are endemic worldwide including within the United States and while this laboratory is not routinely involved in the identification of these because they are not usually seen in this state, receiving them as part of our traditional service is not to be unexpected. The possibility has always existed that the HETL would receive these infectious diseases as part of its historic public health mission. To test for and monitor the prevalence of infectious diseases. The probability of occurrence is low; however the consequences of a possible successful deliberate release of an infectious disease into the community is serious. A microbiologist attended "The 6th National Symposium on Biosafety" at Atlanta, GA. Among the sponsors was the Association of Public Health Laboratories. This training is to be used to review laboratory design and safety practices. A microbiologist attended the regional meeting in Philadelphia, PA on "Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response". A microbiologist attended the "Clinical Virology Symposium" in Clearwater, FL. A microbiologist attended the "PulseNet Annual Update Meeting" in Minneapolis, MN. Two microbiologists attended an NLTN sponsored course on "Arthropod Borne Diseases" in Lebanon, NH. The Director will attend "The Chemical/Biological Terrorism Preparedness Meeting 2000" in Atlanta, GA. An informational briefing on preparedness and planning to counter bioterrorism and what the HETL is doing to address this issue was given to members of MICRONET in Bangor, ME. Additional meetings are planned to provide them with more specific information on their role and to provide any new information on national and state efforts. **SOP'S** A laboratory WMD Policy and Procedure Manual has been written. The manual discusses test procedures, coordination with interacting agencies (federal, state and local), evidence protocol, safety, specimen collection and handling, transportation of biological materials, exposure risks, agent descriptions plus other relevant topics. This manual will be edited to reflect additional biological threat agents, as procedures become available. Initial agent specific reagents have been ordered and testing

	has occurred as procedures and reagents become available, additional testing will occur. The laboratory has hired a safety consultant to review policies and practices, and to provide training information and safety SOPs. The laboratory has revised and increased its safety and security policies and procedures for laboratory samples, staff and visitors. **RENOVATIONS AND SAFETY:** The laboratory is located in the Department of Human Services building where departmental offices are located. To address building wide safety concerns, employee union issues, employee safety concerns resulting in an OSHA inspection and citation, and to make improvements on the laboratory's BSL3 capacity, extensive infrastructure renovation planning has occurred. Consultation meetings with a state engineer, an architect and a safety engineer who are knowledgeable with laboratory issues have been hired to create and review design plans. Legislation has been introduced and approved by the Maine state legislature for the treatment of biohazadous wastes and the sterilization and cleaning of laboratory glassware and equipment. Autoclaves and a glassware washing machine will be purchased to replace equipment that has reached the end of their usefulness. Frequent malfunctions and breakdown have resulted in an increase in maintenance costs as well as hindering laboratory operations and affecting safety due to repeated breakdowns and malfunctions. Eventually there will be an inability to secure replacements parts due to the age of this equipment, which are 30 plus years old. Also scheduled is reconstruction of this area to accommodate the new equipment, address work-place safety issues and increase efficiency. The laboratories within the microbiology section will be reconstructed to reflect increased biosafety levels practices associated with bioterrorism response preparedness and response planning. Additionally, these measures will allow for the continued operation of the laboratory in response to a bioterrorist act, to meet the needs associated with emerging infectious diseases and changes in testing methodology and instrumentation. The laboratory director and a state engineer traveled to Denver, CO to attend the conference on "Biosafety and Design". Laboratory design plans were reviewed with staff from CDC's Office of Health and Safety. The HETL has purchased of two freezers replacing units that are 30 plus years old and three safety cabinets. The

	laboratory air handling system will be balanced to accommodate new equipment and to account for the infrastructure changes that will affect airflow and usage. Several laboratory redesign meetings have been held relative to laboratory safety and efficiency. These meetings were held with responsible laboratory personnel and state agencies to discuss laboratory design and the selection of an architectural firm.
Project Year 2 Plans (August 31, 2000-August 30, 2001) include:	• Hiring a Project Medical Epidemiologist, • Updating the Maine Bureau of Health List of Notifiable Diseases to ensure that all plausible bioterrorism-related conditions are reportable, • Reviewing legal authorities associated with surveillance activities, • Integrating bioterrorism-focused surveillance with current infectious disease surveillance systems, • Enhancing relationships with partner organizations such as: the Maine Council of Professionals in Infection Control, hospital microbiologists' statewide networking group (Micronet), the Maine chapter of the American Thoracic Society, and others to develop systems for rapid reporting of events that could result from bioterrorism, • Developing continuing education materials on Bioterrorism for health care providers in Maine, • Providing articles on bioterrorism in the State's monthly newsletter "The Epi-Gram", • Ensuring broadcast fax (health alert) capabilities for bioterrorism-related response are in place, • Developing a comprehensive response plan for bioterrorism, • Developing standard operating procedures and training programs for laboratory staff to aid testing for bioterrorism-related agents, • Continuing the development and testing of the Laboratory Information and Tracking System (LITS), and • Conducting periodic internal laboratory readiness exercises.

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Anecdotes	• N/A