



NEWS **The United States Conference of Mayors**

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Five Years Post 9/11 and One Year Post Hurricane Katrina: The state of America's Readiness

The U.S. Conference of Mayors Releases 183-City Emergency Preparedness/Homeland Security Survey at National Press Club

Washington, D.C. — As the nation approaches the five-year anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11 and the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, led by Conference President and Dearborn Mayor Michael A. Guido, held a media forum at the National Press Club today discussing the state of disaster preparedness in America's cities.

“The nation's mayors continue to focus on the need to strengthen emergency preparedness and homeland security,” said Conference of Mayors President, Dearborn Mayor Michael Guido. “The devastation of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast area, and the terrorist attacks of 9-11 are like nothing this country has ever seen before. As mayors, we saw ourselves in our own unnamed disaster that could easily strike any one of our cities.”

For the last five years, the Conference and the nation's mayors have dedicated themselves to making America's cities safer by both preventing possible acts of terrorism, and being ready to respond if a disaster – either terrorist or natural – should strike, including the new threat of avian flu.

One month after September 11, the leadership of the Conference of Mayors called an emergency homeland security summit in Washington, D.C. with mayors, police, fire and emergency management officials. At the summit they drafted a sweeping National Action Plan for Safety and Security in America's Cities. The National Action Plan was updated in October of 2005 following the hurricanes and then presented directly to Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and Congress.

Mayors acknowledge that more must be done at every level of government to make sure that cities, and the nation, are able to respond to the growing challenges of homeland security and emergency response. “This new survey shows that we must further strengthen our partnership with the federal government to make sure that our domestic ‘first preventers’ and ‘first responders’ have the resources and training they need to succeed, and that all necessary federal support is ready in the event of a major disaster,” Guido said.

Survey Results:

Survey responses were received from 183 cities representing 38 states in the nation, and the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Cities with populations up to 100,000 comprise the largest group of respondents (104); cities in 100,001 – 300,000 population range comprise the next largest group (49). Twenty-nine (30) respondents are in the 300,001 and up range.

Some of the key findings of the survey include:

1. When asked have cities received sufficient federal resources to achieve full communications interoperability - so that first responders can talk to each other and key assets, 80 percent said no. This figure was fairly consistent for all population ranges.
2. When then asked how far away cities are from having full communications interoperability, the average response was 4 years.
3. When asked how much each city's level of disaster preparedness has improved since 9/11 - with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest amount of improvement, the average response was 6.3.
4. When asked if cities have recently created or updated an evacuation plan, the average response was 56 percent yes. This number climbed to 73 percent yes for the largest cities.
5. When asked about the level of confidence that FEMA will respond quickly in the event of a major disaster, the average response on a scale of 1-10 was 5.2.
6. As to the level of confidence that each city is prepared to survive on its own for up to 72 hours following a disaster, the average response was 6.9 on the same scale.
7. When asked if the federal government, or the city, has established a plan with a nearby military base to provide personnel and equipment to help stabilize a city in an emergency, the average response was 72 percent no.
8. As to whether or not cities have been notified that a Principal Federal Official has been pre-assigned to work with them in the event of a disaster, 72 percent said no. However, this number jumped to 60 percent yes for the larger cities.
9. When asked if cities are prepared to handle a bird flu pandemic on their own - for days and possibly weeks - as we have been warned might be required, 70 percent said no. This response was almost exactly the same for all population groupings.
10. Finally, when asked has the federal government or the state contacted each city to discuss a possible pandemic flu outbreak, the average response was 69 percent yes, climbing to 87 percent yes for the larger cities.

This entire survey, as well as six previous homeland security surveys released by the U. S. Conference of Mayors since 9/11, can be viewed online at The Conference of Mayors website at www.usmayors.org.

Mayors have been working with the federal government on many key homeland security issues. Mayors also have been working with each other to share best practices, develop innovative response systems, and implement city-to-city mutual aid agreements.

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