

## **A Brief History of Bioterrorism**

Bioterrorism is defined as the intentional use of infectious biological agents, or germs, to cause illness. Bioterrorism is by no means a new concept with roots in biological warfare dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The walled city of Kaffa was under siege by the Tartars who catapulted plague-infested bodies into the city. Not only did this cause the fall of the city, but some medical historians have speculated that the spread of bubonic plague across medieval Europe, killing 25 million people, was also the result of this event.

Three centuries later, the English provided blankets to the Native Americans holding Fort Carillon during the French and Indian War. Because the English suspected they were loyal to the French, the blankets were exposed to the smallpox virus. After many of the Native Americans were stricken with smallpox, the English gained control of the fort, renaming it Fort Ticonderoga.

Following the attacks of 9/11, several incidents of bioterrorism involving anthrax occurred. On Oct. 4, an employee of a media company became ill, was hospitalized and died the next day. Testing detected anthrax in the building. Envelopes containing anthrax were also mailed to national news organizations, Senate office buildings and the Pentagon. Anthrax was detected at postal facilities in several states. In Kansas, anthrax was detected at postal facilities in KCK and Topeka. Fortunately, there were no cases of anthrax in Kansas. By Nov. 2, there were four deaths, 21 confirmed cases and five suspected cases of anthrax in the U.S.

## **More information available on these Web sites:**

[www.aap.org/terrorism/index.html](http://www.aap.org/terrorism/index.html) - American Academy of Pediatrics - Children, Disasters and Terrorism: Visit this site for disaster preparedness resources to meet the needs of children.

[www.redcross.org/services/disaster/keepsafe/unexpected.html](http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/keepsafe/unexpected.html) - American Red Cross - Terrorism: Planning for the Unexpected - Learn how your family can prepare and take protective action if a terrorist attack occurs.

[www.bt.cdc.gov/](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/) - CDC: Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response - Visit the CDC Web site to access comprehensive information about federal bioterrorism preparedness.

[www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) - This site from the Department of Homeland Security describes some of the things you can do to prepare for the unexpected, such as assembling a supply kit and developing a family communications plan.

[http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/interapp/editorial/editorial\\_0711.xml](http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/interapp/editorial/editorial_0711.xml) - Another Department of Homeland Security site with 30 tips for emergency preparedness.

[www.who.int/topics/bioterrorism/](http://www.who.int/topics/bioterrorism/) - World Health Organization - This page provides links to descriptions of activities, reports, news and events, as well as contacts and cooperating partners in the various WHO programs and offices.

# **Bioterrorism and Public Health Emergency Preparedness**



**Kansas Department of Health & Environment**

**Center for Public Health Preparedness**

**KDHE Public Information Hotline:  
1-866-KDHE-INFO  
(1-866-534-3463)**

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# Keeping Your Family Safe During a Bioterrorism Attack or Other Public Health Emergency

The key to protecting you and your family from a bioterrorism attack or other public health emergency is preparedness. Receiving information during a crisis will be crucial to your survival. Federal, state and local officials will be constantly relaying lifesaving information to the public through the Emergency Broadcast System and the media. In order to receive this information, you must have a way of monitoring the media. A battery-powered radio or TV will be an integral part of your survival kit in the event of a power outage. Extra batteries should be kept on hand in case of an extended outage.

Sheltering in place may be a family's first line of defense in response to an attack using a chemical or biological agent. It is recommended that enough food and water to sustain all family members for a minimum of three days be kept on hand. All families should create a disaster plan and practice it at least twice yearly. All family members should understand what their role is in a family emergency plan. Using these suggestions and creating an emergency kit using the checklist will better prepare you and your family for most emergencies that call for sheltering in place.

- Create an emergency plan and practice it with your family.
- Establish a meeting place close to your home and another outside your neighborhood.
- Create an emergency communications plan using an out-of-town contact that family members can reach by phone or e-mail to check on each other.
- Discuss with children how and when to call 911.
- Find out how to shut off gas, water and electricity to your home.
- Listen to media reports for instructions from government officials.
- Know emergency plans and contact numbers of schools your children attend.
- Make arrangements, if possible, to store important documents at a location outside the home, such as a safety deposit box.
- Consider what measures are needed to ensure the safety of family members with special needs.

## Assemble a Home Emergency Kit

Prepare for any disaster by assembling your own home emergency kit with the following items:

- Battery-powered radio/TV with extra batteries
- Flashlights and extra batteries
- List of important phone numbers
- Prepaid phone cards
- First aid kit and manual
- Copies of identification
- Essential medicines and copies of prescriptions
- Medical history for each family member, to include current weight of all children under 90 pounds
- Non-perishable food items
- Baby food and supplies
- Can opener, knife and eating utensils
- Drinking water (3 gallons per person)
- Personal toiletries
- Basic toolkit, tape and gloves
- Extra clothing, shoes and blankets
- Plastic bags with ties
- Plastic bucket with lid
- Toilet paper
- Paper towels, plates and cups
- Moist towelettes, sanitary wipes
- Extra car keys
- Emergency preparedness guide

These items should be placed in a large plastic container with a lid or other container and stored in a place known by all family members. Date and replace food, water and batteries every six months. Check and update supplies yearly.