

Rad Resilient City

A preparedness checklist to save lives after a nuclear detonation

MEETING REPORT

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Center for Biosecurity Launches Rad Resilient City Initiative to Prepare Cities to Save Lives Following Nuclear Terrorism

By Tara Kirk Sell, October 5, 2011

On September 27, 2011, the Center for Biosecurity of UPMC convened a meeting at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, to launch the Rad Resilient City Initiative with the release of the *Rad Resilient City Preparedness Checklist*, a planning tool that can help save 100,000 lives or more following a nuclear detonation.

Federal Guidance Made Actionable

Tom Inglesby, CEO and Director of the Center for Biosecurity, opened the meeting by describing the *Rad Resilient City Preparedness Checklist* as 7 clear, actionable steps based on the latest federal guidance and technical reports, for communities to protect their residents from radioactive fallout after a nuclear detonation. Dr. Inglesby explained that although the federal government has made significant progress on nuclear response issues, that knowledge has not been readily translated into a formula for easy implementation at the local level. He went on to note, "This checklist changes that. It is ready for cities to use." The checklist, available at www.radresilientcity.org, also includes guidance for using buildings as shelters, a community preparedness education plan, and strategies for developing effective public messages that could save lives.

A serious threat to national security: Dr. Inglesby outlined the potential threat of nuclear weapons in the hands of terrorists, explaining that enough fissile material exists in the world to make more than 120,000 nuclear weapons, and that Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups have stated that they seek and have attempted to acquire nuclear weapons. While maintaining that prevention must remain a top priority, Dr. Inglesby also emphasized the importance of preparedness: "The single greatest intervention that could save the most lives following a nuclear detonation is to protect people from fallout."

Greater Resilience through Individual and Community Preparedness

Brian Kamoie, Senior Director for Preparedness Policy with the White House National Security Staff, confirmed the importance of making cities more resilient to a nuclear detonation and highlighted actions already taken by the Obama administration to advance national preparedness, including: 1) publication of *Planning Guidance for Response to a Nuclear Detonation*, 2nd edition; 2) 2010 national exercise based on a nuclear



Rad Resilient City launch panelists, L-R: Joe Donovan, Claudia Albano, Tammy Taylor, Monica Schoch-Spana, Tom Inglesby

detonation scenario; and, 3) a Presidential initiative to enhance U.S. ability to develop medical countermeasures against public health threats, including acute radiation syndrome.

Empowering Americans: Mr. Kamoie stressed that individual and community preparedness are central to current preparedness efforts, with the primary goal being "to empower Americans with information about the risks we face and the actions we can all take to protect ourselves, our families, and our communities." He noted that "The release of [the] *Rad Resilient City Preparedness Checklist* aims to do just that—empower Americans with clear, actionable steps they can take in their communities to protect themselves."

Action Now Can Save Lives

Monica Schoch-Spana, Senior Associate at the Center for Biosecurity and Director of the Rad Resilient City Initiative, explained that Americans are not familiar with the protective actions that can be taken following a nuclear detonation. "In fact," she stated, "many Americans believe that nothing can be done after an incident. We must reverse this fatalistic thinking." Toward that end, Dr. Schoch-Spana outlined the 7 actions that cities and their neighbors can take now to build an integrated fallout preparedness program:

1. Obtain broad community backing for nuclear event preparedness.
2. Conduct pre-incident public education to inform people about the effects of a nuclear detonation and how they can protect themselves.
3. Enable building owners and operators to assess the level of fallout protection provided by different types of buildings and to teach others.

4. Build the capacity to deliver public warnings following a nuclear detonation.
5. Establish a rapid system for mapping and monitoring the Dangerous Fallout Zone.
6. Develop capabilities to support a large-scale, phased evacuation.
7. Integrate, test, and conduct training on the above elements of a comprehensive fallout preparedness and public warning system.

Additional benefits noted: Dr. Schoch-Spana also explained that the cross-sector collaborations and public warning protocols essential to nuclear terrorism readiness can benefit planning for other types of complex disasters. For instance, steady implementation of the checklist can create the momentum needed to tackle other response and recovery issues, such as building capacity to manage both medical surge and the need to shelter large numbers of displaced people.

National Experts Endorse Rad Resilient City Initiative

The *Rad Resilient City Preparedness Checklist* was developed under guidance of the Nuclear Resilience Expert Advisory Group, which is composed of recognized experts and leaders from across government, radiation science, emergency response, medicine, communication science, and the business, volunteer, and community sectors. Three members of this expert advisory group—Tammy Taylor, Claudia Albano, and Joseph Donovan—offered comments at the meeting.

Advanced knowledge about fallout protection: Tammy Taylor, leader of the Nonproliferation Division at Los Alamos National Laboratory, confirmed that the *Rad Resilient City Preparedness Checklist* is entirely consistent with federal government guidance and is complementary with the *2010 Federal Planning Guidance for Response to a Nuclear Detonation*. Dr. Taylor agreed that community preparedness is essential, for it will allow responders and citizens to avoid exposure to dangerous levels of radiation, to identify suitable shelter, and to take action immediately without having to wait for direction from emergency professionals.

Actions that can be implemented: Claudia Albano, Neighborhood Services Manager for the City of Oakland, California, affirmed that the *Rad Resilient City Preparedness Checklist* is a tool well suited for practitioners: “I am the one this checklist was made for. I’m that local government official, that staffer, that manager, that analyst, that emergency manager, who is going to be directed by the mayor, or the city manager, or the police chief, or fire chief to take these words and turn them into action in the field.”

Noting that local practitioners receive many reports that do not reflect consideration of local constraints and are not suitable for immediate implementation, she confirmed that the *Rad Resilient City Preparedness Checklist* is different because “It was developed with the end user in mind. It’s simple, it’s easy to read and understand, and most importantly, it is easy to implement ... It helps local government leverage the community involvement and the systems we already have in place.”

Partnering with the business community: Joseph Donovan, Senior Vice President at Beacon Capital Partners, highlighted the importance of including the business community, stating that the Rad Resilient City initiative “is something that will only help us in the long term to foster, to nurture, to cajole, those conversations that have to take place.” He stressed that, “We have to work together. The work doesn’t stop with the publication of this document. It starts today.” Mr. Donovan then committed to leading efforts to use the *Rad Resilient City Preparedness Checklist* within the business community, including partnering with the City of Oakland, conducting table top scenarios, and disseminating the checklist through the Building Owners and Managers Association, the Real Estate Round Table, and the Commercial Facilities Sector Coordinating Council.

Changing ideas about fallout preparedness: After delivering prepared remarks, the panelists responded to questions from the audience, which sparked discussion of the importance of teaching people to take shelter instead of evacuating and of incorporating fallout preparedness messages in school curricula. They agreed that the best preparedness motivators—clear information about what to do, how to prepare, and how preparedness reduces loss—should be delivered in messages from spokespeople who have already taken those actions themselves.

A Nationwide Effort

In concluding, Dr. Inglesby announced that the *Rad Resilient City Preparedness Checklist* will be disseminated nationwide through a focused effort to reach mayors and governors; emergency management officials; practitioners in the public health, radiation control, public safety, homeland security, and disaster relief communities; and members of the business, volunteer, and community sectors. He described plans to present the checklist at a number of major meetings over the next 18 months and noted that the Center for Biosecurity will be partnering with the Community Emergency Response Network of Howard County, Maryland, to implement the checklist.

Speakers and Panelists

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Tom Inglesby, CEO and Director, Center for Biosecurity

The White House Perspective

Brian Kamoie, Senior Director for Preparedness Policy, the White House National Security Staff

Introduction to the Rad Resilient City Preparedness Checklist

Monica Schoch-Spana, Senior Associate, Center for Biosecurity

A Federal View on Helping Communities to Become Rad Resilient

Tammy Taylor, Leader, Nonproliferation Division, Los Alamos National Laboratory

Local Government and Communities Mobilized for Rad Resilience

Claudia Albano, Manager, Neighborhood Services, City of Oakland, CA

Private Sector’s Role in a Rad Resilient Community

Joseph Donovan, Senior Vice President, Beacon Capital Partners