



Audit of Emergency Preparedness at the Washington Metropolitan Facilities of the Department of State

OIG audited the Emergency Preparedness Program at the Department's Washington, DC, metropolitan facilities. The objective was to determine whether the Department had implemented the program in accordance with federal regulations and had adequately developed and distributed plans for each facility to all personnel. The Department had not effectively implemented its Emergency Preparedness Program. It had identified the bureaus and offices involved; but it had not clearly defined their specific roles and responsibilities; developed policies and procedures to guide the program; or complied with federal regulations and directives on the National Incident Management System and participation in the National Response Plan.

In addition, the Department had not effectively implemented its Facility Emergency Action Plans. Emergency action plans were either non-existent or were outdated or noncompliant. This occurred because the Domestic Emergency Action Committee (DEAC) had not provided the operational oversight and guidance outlined in its charter. Specifically, Facility Emergency Action Plans and standard operating procedures were not coordinated and consolidated into an overall Department Emergency Action Plan. The DEAC also did not verify that Facility Emergency Action Plans were tested through periodic drills and exercises or provide guidance for emergency action training programs, such as mandatory online emergency training.

Lastly, not all Washington, DC, metropolitan area facilities had emergency escape route signage and markings. This shortcoming was highlighted during the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the Pentagon.

OIG recommended that the Department clearly define and codify in the Foreign Affairs Manual the roles and responsibilities of bureaus and offices involved in the Department's Emergency Preparedness Program; establish policies and procedures for managing the program; comply with federal regulations and directives; reconvene the Domestic Emergency Action Committee to fulfill its oversight responsibilities; establish Facility Emergency Action Plans; periodically test these emergency plans; require online emergency training; and install appropriate escape route signage and markings at all Washington facilities.

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