



Highlights of [GAO-05-889T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs; U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

After the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the National Capital Region (NCR)—the District of Columbia and nearby jurisdictions in Maryland and Virginia—was recognized as a significant potential target for terrorism. In fiscal years 2002 and 2003, about \$340 million in emergency preparedness funds were allocated to NCR jurisdictions. In May 2004, GAO issued a report ([GAO-04-433](#)) that examined (1) the use of federal funds emergency preparedness funds allocated to NCR jurisdictions, (2) the challenges within the NCR to organizing and implementing efficient and effective preparedness programs, (3) any emergency preparedness gaps that remain in the NCR, and (4) the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) role in the NCR. The report made recommendations to the Secretary of DHS to enhance the management of first responder grants in the NCR. We also reported in September 2004 ([GAO-04-1009](#)) that the NCR's Governance Structure for the Urban Area Security Initiative could facilitate collaborative, coordinated, and planned management and use of federal funds for enhancing emergency preparedness, if implemented as planned DHS agreed to implement these recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-889T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact William O. Jenkins, Jr., 202-512-8757 or jenkinswo@gao.com.

HOMELAND SECURITY

Managing First Responder Grants to Enhance Emergency Preparedness in the National Capital Region

What GAO Found

A coordinated, targeted, and complementary use of federal homeland security grants is important in the NCR and elsewhere. These grants are one means of achieving an important goal: enhancing the ability of first responders to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from terrorist and other incidents with well-planned, well-coordinated, and effective efforts that involve a variety of first responders from multiple jurisdictions. To oversee and coordinate federal emergency preparedness programs among federal, state, local, and regional authorities in the NCR, the Homeland Security Act established the Office for National Capital Region Coordination (ONCRC) within DHS. The ongoing security risk requires a comprehensive, coordinated, and carefully planned approach to the expenditure of federal first responder grants. This requires a NCR-wide strategic plan, performance goals, an assessment of preparedness gaps to guide priority setting, and continuing assessments of the progress made in closing identified gaps

This testimony summarizes our prior work and provides information on the implementation of the three recommendations in our May 2004 report. First, we recommended that DHS work with the NCR jurisdictions to develop a coordinated strategic plan. DHS and NCR jurisdictions have completed a final draft for review that has been circulated to key stakeholders. Second, we recommended that DHS monitor the plans implementation, which must await a final plan. To implement and monitor the future plan, data will be needed regarding the funding available and used for implementing the plan and enhancing first responder capabilities in the NCR—data that is not currently routinely available. The NCR, through the District of Columbia's Office of Homeland Security, has a system for tracking the use of Urban Area Security Initiative funds in the NCR as well as other homeland security grant funds available to Washington, D.C. However, the NCR does not currently track non-Urban Area Security Initiative funds available to and used by other NCR jurisdictions in an automated, uniform way. Rather, it obtains information about those funds through a variety of means, including teleconferences involving senior emergency preparedness officials. Third, we recommended that DHS identify and address preparedness gaps and evaluate the effectiveness of expenditures by conducting assessments based on established guidelines and standards. No systematic gap analysis has been completed for the region; however, by March 2006, the NCR plans to complete an effort to use the Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP) as a means of conducting a gap analysis and assess NCR jurisdictions against EMAP's national preparedness standards. The result would be a report on the NCR's compliance with EMAP standards for emergency preparedness and an analysis of areas needing improvement to address in the short- and long-term. The ONCRC has not determined how this effort would be integrated with DHS' capabilities-based planning and assessments for first responders, pending the issuance of DHS' final version of the National Preparedness Goal in October 2005.