



Highlights of GAO-04-904T, a testimony before the Chairman, Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

# HOMELAND SECURITY

## Coordinated Planning and Standards Needed to Better Manage First Responder Grants In the National Capital Region

### Why GAO Did This Study

Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the National Capital Region (NCR), comprising jurisdictions including the District of Columbia and surrounding jurisdictions in Maryland and Virginia, has been recognized as a significant potential target for terrorism. GAO was asked to report on (1) what federal funds have been allocated to NCR jurisdictions for emergency preparedness; (2) what challenges exist within NCR to organizing and implementing efficient and effective regional preparedness programs; (3) what gaps, if any, remain in the emergency preparedness of NCR; and (4) what has been the role of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in NCR to date.

### What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of DHS (1) work with local NCR jurisdictions to develop a coordinated strategic plan to establish capacity enhancement goals and priorities; (2) monitor the plan's implementation; and (3) identify and address gaps in emergency preparedness and evaluate the effectiveness of expenditures by conducting assessments based on established standards and guidelines.

DHS and the ONCRC Senior Policy Group generally agreed with GAO's recommendations and noted that a new governance structure, adopted in February 2004, should accomplish essential coordination.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-904T](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-904T)

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact William O. Jenkins, Jr., at (202) 512-8757 or [jenkinswo@gao.gov](mailto:jenkinswo@gao.gov).

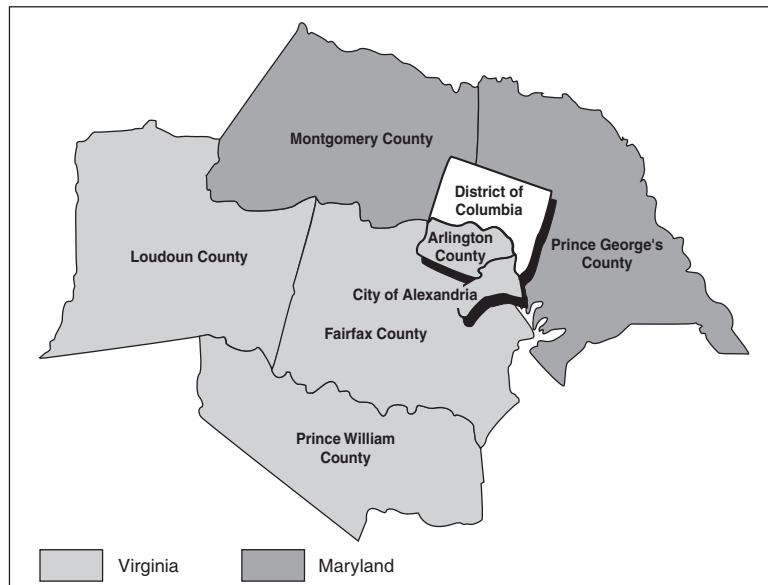
### What GAO Found

In fiscal years 2002 and 2003, grant programs administered by the Departments of Homeland Security, Health and Human Services, and Justice awarded about \$340 million to eight NCR jurisdictions to enhance emergency preparedness. Of this total, the Office for National Capital Region Coordination (ONCRC) targeted all of the \$60.5 million Urban Area Security Initiative funds for projects designed to benefit NCR as a whole. However, there was no coordinated regionwide plan for spending the remaining funds (about \$279.5 million). Local jurisdictions determined the spending priorities for these funds and reported using them for emergency communications and personal protective equipment and other purchases.

NCR faces several challenges in organizing and implementing efficient and effective regional preparedness programs, including the lack of a coordinated strategic plan for enhancing NCR preparedness, performance standards, and a reliable, central source of data on funds available and the purposes for which they were spent.

Without these basic elements, it is difficult to assess first responder capacities, identify first responder funding priorities for NCR, and evaluate the effectiveness of the use of federal funds in enhancing first responder capacities and preparedness in a way that maximizes their effectiveness in improving homeland security.

National Capital Region Jurisdictions



Source: National Capital Planning Commission.