

Implementation Action Plan

Emergency Response

Issue:

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) need a joint comprehensive plan to effectively deploy CBP or APHIS resources during an agriculture-related emergency.

Recommended Response:

- Appoint a joint group to identify and define emergency response needs and available resources CBP Agriculture Specialists, CBP Officers, and CBP Technicians for both a domestic and port-of- entry agriculture emergency event.
- Develop a strategy for rapid identification and deployment of resources.
- Establish policy and procedures for an emergency deployment response plan that includes coordination and sharing of national Continuity of Operations (COOP) plans and development of COOP plans for impacted ports of entry and a communication plan to provide timely and effective response measures.
- Develop an emergency training program to address immediate response needs (rapid certification program, respirator fitness testing, etc.).
- Develop and maintain a listing of trained and certified available personnel resources.
- Measure and review emergency response plan implementation for effectiveness and incorporate needed changes for improved response and deployment.
- Develop a joint emergency response exercise program to practice policy and procedures, including a tracking system for after-action reports, feedback and experiences.
- Develop an SOP for when significant pests are discovered at ports of entry.

Correlation to Report Recommendation or Other Feedback:

A GAO March 2005 report recommended that APHIS develop a strategy to increase the number of area and regional emergency coordinator positions to be able to better assist States in preparing for an agriculture/terrorist attack. Domestic emergency programs are supported by CBP under the Memorandum of Agreement between DHS and USDA. In a May 8, 2007, stakeholder open forum, stakeholders expressed a need for CBP/APHIS to provide for a quick and efficient plan to shift and deploy resources during a domestic emergency. An efficient response plan will better safeguard U.S. production and help mitigate the impact of domestic outbreaks on exports.

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Findings:

- APHIS and CBP need to develop a comprehensive plan to identify and deploy trained and certified personnel in response to the broad range of domestic/agro-bio terrorist event emergencies.
- Stakeholders felt CBP had not committed sufficient resources to emergency programs. Need of a transparent joint domestic emergency response plan.
- APHIS and CBP core functions need to be maintained and clearly defined during emergency functions.
- CBP and APHIS emergency coordinators need to be identified. Protocols need to be established for a response plan.
- COOP plans need to be developed and coordinated to ensure adequate guidance is given to the DFOs to carry out AQI inspectional functions.
- Need to develop tracking and dissemination of after-action reports for test exercises and real life emergencies.
- Need to identify or develop a tracking system for deployment of resources and associated costs.

In March 2003, the Agriculture Quarantine and Inspection functions of APHIS were transferred to CBP under the authority of the 2002 Homeland Security Act. Since the transfer, CBP, Agriculture Programs and Liaison has maintained the responsibility of communication and coordination of inspection, data collection, training and emergency response policies with APHIS, Quarantine Policy and Analysis Staff to ensure effective program delivery. CBP has provided personnel resources when available to assist during domestic emergency programs.

Expected Outcome:

CBP or APHIS would be able to respond to agriculture-related emergencies and deploy qualified personnel within established timelines of the initial request. Ports of entry would maintain CBP Agriculture Specialist coverage for core inspectional functions. A tracking system would be in place to track resources deployed to emergencies and resulting costs. Deployment rates would be tracked to measure efficiency of the plan and to identify overall resources utilized to respond. APHIS or CBP would provide after-action reports to assess results identifying weaknesses and best practices. Joint meetings would be held to recommend any plan improvements for future deployment responses.

Implementation Plan:

Tasks

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- Convene the joint CBP/APHIS group to:
 - Identify and define the emergency response needs and available resources.
 - Review, evaluate and/or enhance the current policy and plan to incorporate a notification and deployment plan, develop and coordinate national and port-of-entry COOP plans and a communication plan for emergency response.
 - Develop a measurement and review process to evaluate deployment response plan.
 - Develop a joint emergency response exercise program to practice policy, procedures and share outcomes to develop best practices.
 - Develop a mechanism to provide a transparent plan to stakeholders.
- Share COOP plans at the headquarters level
 - Plan and implement a COOP test exercise.
- Establish an appropriate task group to:
 - Identify, develop and maintain a current listing of all available resources.
 - Develop a tracking system to track deployments and program costs.
- Establish a CBP task group to:
 - Develop a strategic plan for rapid identification and deployment of resources.
 - Establish adequate CBPAS staffing level guidelines for ports of entry to maintain core agriculture inspectional functions during emergency responses.
- Establish a joint training task group to develop an emergency training program to address immediate response needs (rapid certifications, fitness testing, incident command system, etc.).
- Develop an SOP for when significant pests are discovered at ports of entry.

Communications Needs

- Review and approval by Agency/senior leadership with concurrence on establishment of identified groups.
- Assign taskings with deadlines to each group.
- Provide feedback to stakeholders on joint response efforts.
- CBP and APHIS communicate with employees about the action plan, the roles and responsibilities of each group, progress made by the groups, and training or other expectations resulting from the work of the group.

Accountable Individual/Group

Approval for establishing CBP/APHIS joint group and assignments to group: Assistant Commissioner for Office of Field Operations (OFO) and Deputy Administrator, Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ).

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- Approval of CBP Task Group and assignments: Assistant Commissioner for OFO
- CBP Task Force and assignments: Assistant Commissioner for OFO.
- CBP OFO and PPQ Professional Development Center task groups and assignments: Assistant Commissioner for OFO and Deputy Administrator, PPQ.

Resources

- Staff resources from the areas of Office of Field Operations, Office of Training and Development, PPQ
- IT support services
- Commitment to provide and empower the resources needed to complete the action plan.

Sequencing / Linkages

- Training Action Plan
- Planning Action Plan
- Performance Measures Action Plan
- Resources Action Plan
- Outreach / Communication Action Plan

Challenges to Implementation

- Time-consuming nature of existing processes
- Ensuring that the adequate core staffing levels are met
- Nature and unpredictability of the emergency and conflict with other program-related priorities

Review Block -- for the use of Agency/Department leadership in adopting, modifying, or rejecting the plan.

Emergency Response Implementation Action Plan adopted by both agencies on June 26, 2007, by:



Thomas S. Winkowski
Deputy Assistant Commissioner
Office of Field Operations
US Customs & Border Protection
US Department of Homeland Security



Paul R. Eggert
Associate Deputy Administrator
Plant Protection & Quarantine
Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service
US Department of Agriculture