The Capitol Region
Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS)

Introduction
The Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS) Program began in 1996 and currently is funded by the United States Department of Homeland Security, Office of Defense Preparedness (ODP). The primary focus of the MMRS program is to enhance existing local and regional emergency preparedness systems to respond effectively to a public health crisis, including a weapons of mass destruction (WMD) event. Through a process of planning for and implementing specially designed contract deliverables, local law enforcement, fire services, Hazmat teams, EMS, hospitals, public health agencies, and other "first responder" personnel can respond more effectively during the first hours of a public health crisis.

The History of MMRS in Emergency Planning
The Defense Against Weapons of Mass Destruction Act of 1996 directed the Secretary of Defense to enhance capability and to support improvements of local response agencies. The Nunn-Lugar-Domenici Amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 1997 authorized funding for “Metropolitan Medical Strike Teams” (MMST) that subsequently evolved into the MMRS Program. Ongoing Congressional appropriations have funded contracts with 124 MMRS jurisdictions nationally. Through the MMRS, the federal government has provided substantial additional resources to these municipalities in order to support a response to a mass casualty incident, especially an event resulting from the use of a weapon of mass destruction (WMD).
The Role of MMRS in Emergency Planning

Recognizing the wisdom in the axiom “All emergencies begin and end locally”, the Capitol Region MMRS program enhances local planning efforts to produce a comprehensive response system that includes preparation for a bioterrorism incident. MMRS expands and enhances local planning efforts in four important ways:

- The MMRS contract deliverables ensure that traditional emergency planning by the local fire, police and EMS leadership is expanded to include representation from both the local and state public health agencies and the region’s hospitals, thereby ensuring a public health component in emergency planning
- The MMRS program encourages, and financially supports, the expansion of emergency planning at the regional level, thereby maximizing the use of resources normally not available to local communities
- The Capitol Region MMRS pharmaceutical stockpile, an integral part of all MMRS programs, provides a level of protection specifically for the first responder community in the event of an inadvertent or an intentional release of a chemical or biological agent
- The MMRS program ensures that all local and regional planning is compatible with and supports state and federal emergency planning, including the National Response Plan and the National Incident Management System

Key MMRS Program Components

- Activation and notification procedures
- All-hazards operations plan including a bioterrorism component
- Specially trained responders and equipment
- Management of risk communications and public information
- Pharmaceutical protection plan for first responders and families
- Enhanced emergency transport and hospital capabilities
- Mass fatality management
- Mental health services in support of first responders

The MMRS Contract Deliverables

The MMRS contract deliverables ensure that key questions regarding community response to a mass casualty incident have been asked and answered. For example, MMRS requires that member communities address the following preparedness issues:

- Component MMRS Plan for the rapid Forward Movement of Patients prior to activation of the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS)
- Component MMRS Plan for responding to a chemical, radiological, nuclear, or explosive WMD event
- Component plan for a comprehensive response to the use of a biological weapon
- Component plan for the protection of the local hospital and healthcare system (includes procedures for notification, facility protection, mass decontamination, triage and treatment, and development of a plan for surge capacity)
- Chemical antidote stockpile sufficient to provide care for up to 1,000 first responders
- Biological antidote stockpile sufficient for up to 10,000 victims
- MMRS training plan (includes initial and refresher training requirements)
- MMRS equipment purchase plan to enhance available regional resources
Unique Features of MMRS

The MMRS program is a federal resource made available at the community level in order to ensure a comprehensive and workable response mechanism in the event of major disasters. In the Capitol Region MMRS jurisdiction, volunteers from all emergency response professions have come together to plan their joint response to the disasters none of us ever hope to experience. By supplying training and education to the responder community including local health and hospital personnel, MMRS raises the level of awareness at the local level while enhancing the response capabilities of the region.

MMRS is not designed to supplant traditional and long-standing local response plans that have worked so well. Rather, MMRS expands the conversation locally by bringing together both new and traditional planning partners to ensure that local and regional plans reflect the latest science, and so that latest technologies are made available.

Beyond the MMRS role as a facilitator of comprehensive planning that includes a public health component, MMRS uniquely provides protective services specifically targeted at the first responders. The Capitol Region MMRS pharmaceutical program provides nerve agent antidotes in the event of the release of a chemical toxin, and antidotes in the event of the introduction of a biological agent into our communities, including an episode of pandemic flu.

Surely the most important contribution that the Capitol Region MMRS program makes to the local emergency planning process is to bring together planners from all areas of emergency response so that, in the event of a disaster, skills and leadership are shared with confidence. The effectiveness of the MMRS program ultimately can be measured not by the amount of equipment purchased, but rather by the improved level of coordination and cooperation among the first response agencies of the Capitol Region.