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Uniformed Services University

Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress

CSTS | Department of Psychiatry | Uniformed Services University | 4301 Jones Bridge Road, Bethesda, MD 20814-4799 | www.CSTSonline.org

Business Leadership in Bioterrorism Preparedness

Why Business Leaders Should Prepare

The workplace is a primary target of terrorism in the United States. The events of 9/11, the anthrax attacks of 2001, the Oklahoma City bombing, and the 1993 World Trade Center underscore the fact that terrorism has occurred where and when people work. The goal of terrorism is to erode our sense of national security, disrupt the continuity of society and destroy social capital — morale, cohesion, and shared values. In taking a proactive role to protect their organization's security, business continuity and employee health, business leaders should be aware of the following: 1) the workplace is a newly recognized environment for preparedness, 2) the workplace has existing resources to facilitate preparedness, 3) the workplace may encounter resistance to these preparations, and 4) the workplace can reframe preparedness to promote resiliency, business continuity, and social cohesion.

> Roughly 80% of America's critical infrastructure is managed by the private sector. A partnership between public and private sectors in responding to the threat of terrorism/bioterrorism strengthens our nation's homeland security infrastructure.

Workplace Recognition

■ The Institute of Medicine report: Preparing for the Psychological Consequences of Terrorism: A Public Health Strategy, recognizes the workplace as an important environment for addressing the psychological consequences of terrorism (IOM, 2003). The IOM report:

» Recommends a public health approach to workplace preparedness encompassing pre-event, event, and post-event planning and responses.

» Addresses preparedness as a consequence of management that recognizes response behaviors to disasters, terrorism, bioterrorism, and affect. Preparedness also involves policies, markets, and partners in addition to employees, leadership, and their families.

Workplace Resources

■ The corporate infrastructure has available resources for preparedness/response including: corporate security, health promotion and employee assistance resources, human resources, business continuity and asset management, and engineering and facilities.

■ Integrating these resources and functions maximizes disaster response.

Workplace Resistance

You may face resistance in executing preparedness plans. Consider the following examples:

■ Protests that preparedness will raise more anxiety.

■ Employee resistance to or physical difficulty practicing drills.

■ Resistance from corporate continuity silos such as security, employee assistance, medical, and human resources operating autonomously.

■ Protests about time and financial costs of preparation and ultimate inability to prepare for unpredictable events.

Workplace Resiliency: Reframing Preparedness

■ Resiliency is a topic of great interest in the workplace, and it is the expected outcome of disaster.

■ Resiliency crosses domains including productivity, employee health, and business continuity.

■ The Corporate Resiliency Model reframes negative implications of preparedness to engage participation and lessen anxiety.

Business Preparedness Leadership: Public Private Sector Partnering

Roughly 80% of America's critical infrastructure is managed by the private sector. A partnership between public and private sectors in responding to the threat of terrorism/bioterrorism strengthens our nation's homeland security infrastructure. The federal disaster response system is geared toward intervention/treatment of immediate needs. Business leadership in preparedness education, event crisis management, post-event evaluation, and treatment complement federal resources and contribute to social cohesion and morale.

RESOURCES

- Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress: https://www.cstsonline.org/
- *Terrorism and Disaster*, Ursano, R J, Fullerton CS, Norwood, AE Cambridge University Press, 2003
- Preparing for the Psychological Consequences of Terrorism: A Public Health Strategy, The National Academies Press, 2003