

**DETERMINING/ASSESSING AGENCY PREPAREDNESS  
IN REGARD TO HOMELAND SECURITY CAPABILITIES:  
A PROJECT CONDUCTED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MISSISSIPPI AND JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY**

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### **Introduction:**

The Department of Legal Studies at the University of Mississippi was awarded a grant through partnership with Jackson State University in 2007 to conduct an examination relative to measuring Preparedness as described by the US Department of Homeland Security. The grant funds originate from the Science and Technology Directorate at the US Department of Homeland Security, and are administered through the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

### **Abstract of the Study:**

The attacks of 2001 changed the United States. The shock of the attacks set into motion dramatic changes in regard to national security. As would be expected from the attacks, the nation and our national policy leaders quickly identified the source of the attacks to be international terrorism declared the danger of international terrorism to be the greatest threat facing the nation. In the years following 2001, the danger posed by international terrorism has been reassessed, the efforts we have taken to protect our nation extensively examined resulting in the concept we now call homeland security emerging, now reaching every community in the nation and viewing a broad range of threats, now referred to as “all-hazards” as dangers for which we much be prepared to respond.

In 2003, President Bush’s Homeland Security Presidential Directive 8 (HSPD-8) required the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary to develop a national domestic all-hazards preparedness goal. The intent was to establish measurable readiness priorities and balance threats and consequences with resources required to prevent, respond to and recover from those threats. The goal would include readiness measures, standards for preparedness assessments and strategies and a system to assess the nation’s overall preparedness to respond to major events, especially terrorist acts (The White House, *Homeland security presidential directive/HSPD-8* (Washington, DC: The White House, December 17, 2003 and Caudle, Sharon, *Homeland Security Capabilities-Based Planning: Lessons from the Defense Community, Homeland Security Affairs, Volume I, Issue 2, 2005*).

Beginning in 2004, following HSPD-8, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) began to define and implement a national domestic all-hazards preparedness goal, intended to improve the nation's preparedness for national catastrophes, including terrorist attacks. DHS's approach was capabilities-based planning (CBP), adopted from the Department of Defense (DoD) (Caudle, Sharon, Homeland Security Capabilities-Based Planning: Lessons from the Defense Community, Homeland Security Affairs, Volume I, Issue 2, 2005).

Over the next several years extensive resources flowed into the responder and recovery communities. By FY2008, more than \$12 billion was provided to states, localities and regions to buy down risk and enhance preparedness and capabilities to prevent a terrorist attack or to respond to such an attack or natural disaster should one occur. While audits have been conducted to determine how allocated funds have been spent, a national assessment of how much risk has been reduced as a result of such expenditures has not been undertaken.

Thus, in light of the funding and the efforts to improve response capabilities, some fundamental questions exist: How much has risk been bought down? What investments have yielded the highest rate of return? What is the risk profile of each grant recipient moving forward? How can existing organizational capabilities be measured against extant risk? What capabilities gaps exist and how can resources best be targeted to address those gaps (CRS Report for Congress, The Department of Homeland Security's Risk Assessment Methodology: Evolution, Issues and Options for Congress, February 2, 2007)?

Within the national framework, discussions relative to the assessment of preparedness within the all-hazards incident environment is thus on-going and as the debate continues, efforts increase across the nation to develop and implement assessment strategies.

The focus of this study is upon the measurement of preparedness that was inspired by questions pertaining to preparedness posed by the Mississippi Department of Homeland Security. Thus, this study attempts to critically examine the concept of measuring preparedness as perceived by local emergency responders in rural and urban jurisdictions in the southeast and western regions of the United States.

### **Study Foundations:**

The last decade has demonstrated that our nation faces complex and dynamic threats to include acts of terrorism and natural disasters. Within the scope of these threats, the potential impact ranges from local damage, limited in scope and disruption of essential services to an event of national or potential global disaster that has far-reaching impact.

The ability to effectively respond to these dangers with resources, to include personnel, equipment, supplies, logistics and command and control, from the

Tribal, local, state and national levels is constantly evolving. Despite the best planning, there is always the potential of a global event significant enough to overwhelm all ability to respond, the probability of such an event occurring is small. Given the minimal probability of a global disaster, it does not rise to an appropriate level to set as a goal for strategic planning to drive daily operations in the response community.

Major resource commitments continue to flow into the homeland security arena with the intent to improve disaster response capabilities primarily on the local and state levels with federal resources available on-call and ready to respond. In light of the monies, time and resources following into the response community, the question continues to be asked, *how prepared are we* to actually respond to a disaster impacting the Tribal, local, state or national level jurisdictions?

### **Assessment:**

Since the advent of the Department of Homeland Security, the nation's response community has cycled through a myriad of programs to assess threat, risk, vulnerabilities, needs and capabilities. Throughout this period, the understanding of Homeland Security has evolved from primarily preparing a response capability to another terrorist attack to an "all-hazards" focus, which by its nature is significantly much broader in its scope.

Following the FY2004 homeland security grant allocation process, the 9/11 Commission in its final report questioned whether useful criteria to measure risk and vulnerability could be developed that assess all the many variables? This is a foundational question.

As the definition of threat continues to evolve, resources have flowed into the response community. Command and control relationships have been formalized and agencies have struggled to find additional ways to assess response capabilities and preparedness, especially as response capabilities also continue to evolve.

Without question, assessments of capabilities are essential to determine preparedness and data from effective assessment can provide necessary tools for the first response community as they continue to refine and improve their abilities to respond. However, at this point, institutional assessment has fallen short of being able to measure the level of organizational capabilities and preparedness.

### **Capabilities and Preparedness:**

Questions arise relative to measuring both capabilities and preparedness: First, are capabilities and preparedness synonymous with measuring response ability; second, does a need really exist to formally measure preparedness if jurisdictions can measure capabilities?

There is a significant lack of data pertaining to assessment of homeland security capabilities. Research, such as the graduate work at the Naval Post Graduate School by John A. Donnelly, Sr. suggests (<http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ADA473924>) that efforts pertaining to assessment such as the employment of subject-matter experts in the analysis may not have the requisite knowledge to perform the assessment. This suggested finding implies just one of the problems with capability based planning efforts.

This study examines those ideas and challenges the idea that measuring capabilities is the equivalent to measuring preparedness. The study further challenges the idea that all jurisdictions can employ the Capabilities-based Planning Model using the TCLs, based upon their ability to conduct this depth of planning, or on their desire to employ this more prescribed planning model.

### **General Parameters of the Examination:**

Data collection for this study was accomplished through facilitated focus groups using both a questionnaire and conducting focus group discussions. Our focus group target audience was command level public safety, first responders and planning personnel representing response disciplines within a jurisdiction. The examination and data collection included both rural and urban areas. The questionnaire instrument was designed to both gather data for analysis and support and stimulate discussions of the focus groups. The questionnaire instrument primarily concentrated on target capabilities and their application to the respondents.

The questionnaire was administered followed by facilitated discussion with targeted questions. This study was limited in scale due to the amount of award available to support the collection and assessment of data. Because of this, the study was necessarily exploratory. However, the study provides insight into further research enlarging the “pool” of respondents and data.

### **Framing the Question:**

One of the most significant challenges of measuring preparedness is defining the types of events to which we can or should be reasonably prepared to respond. Planning should be based upon reasonable probabilities. It is not reasonable to develop a capability in north Mississippi to respond to a disaster at an oil refinery, because there are no refineries in the area. On the other hand, the impact of a natural disaster, such as tornado damage is real and occurs on a frequent basis. So, we must consider the most likely situations for which we must develop a response and using that situation, determine whether we are prepared to respond. Therefore, the question of preparedness must be framed in the context of the pairing of reasonable risks and appropriately needed capabilities.

The following suggest the types of questions that a jurisdiction might develop to encourage assessment based on vulnerabilities, infrastructure, capabilities and needs within the unique environment of the jurisdiction. These types of questions may assist jurisdictions in pairing reasonable risks and needed capabilities.

- What are the realistic disaster scenarios that may impact our communities?
- Are the capabilities possessed by our responder communities realistic in relationship to those scenarios?
- Are the capabilities we expect our responders to possess reasonable and if attained, assure us that our responders are adequately prepared to respond, to include the issues related to command and control?
- Do we have the capability to respond as an independent jurisdiction and as a component of a much larger response or do our capabilities fall short?

### **Capabilities-based Planning Model:**

Currently, the United States Department of Homeland Security promotes a Capabilities-based Planning Model. That model assimilates thirty-seven target capabilities to be developed and/or enhanced by jurisdictions through the homeland security grants and programs. The target capabilities are identified as the Target Capabilities List (TCL).

The current planning model further defines four mission areas to be supported by the response community; prevention, protection, response and recovery. The four mission areas are supported by the identified response entities within the jurisdiction. The response disciplines, relative to the planning model, identify the target capabilities needed to perform the tasks of the respective discipline. As an aid in the planning process, the US Department of Homeland Security created fifteen (15) national planning scenarios that can be used to assist in identifying the tasks by discipline, and the capabilities required to perform those tasks. The planning scenarios provide both natural and man-made incident types.

The challenge to this model, as indicated in the study, is whether it adequately allows all jurisdictions to pair reasonable risks and needed capabilities.

### **Why Assess Preparedness:**

Over the last seven years, the concept of the type and probability of the threat we face has changed dramatically, as have the capabilities of the responders. The fear of a terrorist attack has been greatly overshadowed by the more probable impact of natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and the image of homeless citizens seeking evacuation from the flooded streets of New Orleans and the

devastated towns along the Gulf Coast. Today, with the significant flow of resources to responders at every level and jurisdiction of our nation, it is believed we have a much more proficient response capability than prior to 9/11.

In looking at the concept of incident response, one must understand all incidents occur at the local level, though the magnitude of the event may well cross jurisdictional lines. So, the prevailing question *'how prepared are we'* continues to present itself. In light of billions of dollars in resource support and seven years of planning, training, coordination and resource acquisition, two additional questions emerge: *How prepared are we* as local responders to respond to those challenges we face? How well can we work with other jurisdictions in the event of an incident that overwhelms local resources?

These questions engage fundamental issues and concerns relative to measuring preparedness that expand beyond simply identifying capabilities. This study questions the ability to standardize and create a "one size fits all" model, disenfranchising the jurisdictional leadership especially in the regional concept when rural areas attempt to align with urban jurisdictions. Further, does the more prescribed model tend to frustrate the jurisdiction rather than enhance the planning efforts?

### **The Responders:**

The attacks of 9/11 served as a wake up call to the nation. In those early days after the attacks, all levels of government, businesses and industries examined their security and vulnerabilities. In some cases, in reflection, we see examples of over reaction, disproportionate to the real threat. In the excitement of the attack, a dynamic process was set into motion that has resulted in the investment of billions of dollars into the realistic identification of threats facing our nation and the enhancement of responder capabilities.

Thus, the concept of the threat has been refined and re-defined. Today, instead of just focusing on terrorism, all-hazards are now considered by the response community in response planning. This redefinition of the threat has changed the role and focus of the first responders, of note, resulting in more cooperation across traditional agency and jurisdiction boundaries.

Throughout the evolution of our homeland security paradigm, one feature most essential to our success has endured: the notion that homeland security is a shared responsibility built upon a foundation of partnerships which include federal, state, local, and Tribal governments, the private and non-profit sectors, local communities and individual citizens all sharing common goals and responsibilities, as well as accountability, for protecting and defending the Homeland.

(<http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/homeland/nshs/2007/sectionII.html>).

Thus, with the evolution of the concept of Homeland Security, the range of responders serving the nation continues to evolve. Responders are now extremely varied in capability from governmental resources to include the local fire, enforcement and medical resources to national level FEMA, Homeland Security and military assets, to non-governmental resources such as the American Red Cross and regional utilities companies. Each responder brings a resource capability to the event that if called upon must be coordinated, commanded and controlled. Additionally, events such as Hurricane Katrina and the attacks of 9/11 witnessed an international response to include personnel and materials deployed to the United States to assist from other nations to include our neighbors of Mexico and Canada. Thus, to be capable and prepared, one cannot lose sight that any measure of preparedness must include not only the physical aspects of preparedness, equipment and resources, but also the human elements to include command and control and proficiency in response.

As the spectrum of response disciplines continues to expand, the integration of the private sector becomes more evident and critical in the jurisdictions ability to plan and respond. This integration alone emphasizes the idea that a jurisdictions ability to identify its unique vulnerabilities and subsequently its capabilities is paramount to effective preparedness. Any attempt to create the artificial planning environment through universal models, or in standardizing models, may impede rather than enhance preparedness for local jurisdictions. This study explores some of these issues in primarily asking the question, how do local jurisdictions measure or determine preparedness?

### **The Study and its Intent:**

In partnership with Jackson State University in Jackson, Mississippi, the University of Mississippi received funding to conduct research to examine the question of *how prepared are we* as emergency responders to effectively respond to all-hazards incidents.

The population chosen for this study was local and state level first responders from Mississippi, western Tennessee and Colorado. As all incidents occur in local jurisdictions and because the current national homeland security program is dependent upon the participation of local jurisdictions, it is critical to study the local jurisdictions and their relationship with states in exploring what works and what does not work.

Effective assessment models must be applicable in local jurisdictions or the roll-up to state and federal levels will likely invalidate data and be disruptive to otherwise vital programs. In their daily operations, responders face, analyze and prepare to respond to a wide range of threat contingencies to include the impact of major natural disasters such as hurricanes and tornados as well as the significant danger posed by another major earthquake similar to the New Madrid earthquake of 1811 – 1812, human generated events or weapons of mass destruction such as an Improvised Explosive Devices or suicide bombers.

### **The Intent of this Study:**

- (1) Gain from the first responders a better understanding of their perception of how preparedness is understood and best measured;
- (2) Examine whether it is necessary or possible to develop a universal assessment model, a model that fits all and to accurately measure preparedness. Within the professional community, a debate is ongoing relative to whether there is an actual need to create universal assessment models, such as checklists, from which data may be collected that once interpreted, allows a jurisdiction to identify their unique needs and assist them with data that can be used to determine their level of preparedness;
- (3) Examine whether assessment parameters can be defined in such a manner that each jurisdiction, based on its unique dynamics, can determine its own level of preparedness that will be relative to other jurisdictions of the United States.

In other words, can a jurisdiction assess critical infrastructure and its capabilities to respond to those key assets in such a manner that the local jurisdiction can answer the question of *how prepared are we?* Further, could a matrix be devised to meaningfully assess preparedness across jurisdictions?

### **Participants in the Study:**

As a focus of this study, five focus groups were assembled to gain data through surveys and discussion that could then be analyzed in response to the initial question of preparedness. Within the setting of each focus group, data was obtained through the use of a question-based survey and through ideas and concepts shared in discussion.

Each group was composed ideally of first response agency managers and administrators, drawn from the diverse first responder community to include justice, medical, fire service, local government and support service agencies. Participants were mid- to upper level personnel in their organizations. Each participant had been involved in response planning in relationship to all-hazards planning since prior to 9/11 and thus brought significant knowledge and experience to the study.

The focus of the current homeland security program is to discover threats, risks, and vulnerabilities within local jurisdictions. Local units of government pay, from locally appropriated funds, for the preparedness initiatives as outlined by the United States Department of Homeland Security. The local units of government are then reimbursed those expenditures through the various homeland security funding programs. Therefore, the stakeholders in homeland security are the local

jurisdictions across the United States. National preparedness is dependent upon these local jurisdictions. This study was designed to collect “ground truth” from respondents who routinely performed preparedness duties. The intent was to go beyond the typical subject matter expert and leadership and collect data from a broad spectrum of respondents.

### **Measuring Preparedness:**

The President of the United States has issued twenty-four Homeland Security Presidential Directives (HSPD). HSPD-8 was issued on December 17, 2003, titled *National Preparedness*, it calls for capability assessment of homeland security response.

HSPD-8 is designed to “establish policies to strengthen the preparedness of the United States to prevent and respond to threatened or actual domestic terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies by requiring a national domestic all-hazards preparedness goal, establishing mechanisms for improved delivery of Federal preparedness assistance to State and local governments, and outlining actions to strengthen preparedness capabilities of Tribal, Federal, State and local entities.”

The National Preparedness Goal outlines a Capabilities-Based Planning Approach. Within this planning model, several components are examined by gap analysis and the ability to perform identified tasks. There is an inherent challenge in this model as the term “hazard” is applied to both natural and man-made disasters.

This model suggests the use of a National Planning Scenario spectrum that lists 15 scenarios (hazards/threats) that can be applied in examining capabilities to respond. This interchanging of the term “hazards” with the more conventional term “threat” causes some challenge in identifying tasks and corresponding disciplines that will perform those tasks.

The hypothesis of the model is that Capabilities-Based Planning allows jurisdictions to examine a broad venue of “hazards” (scenarios) and identify required capabilities. **The challenge is whether this hypothesis has relevance to the ability to ultimately measure preparedness.** It may be adept at measuring capabilities, but the study project described herein focuses on the actual ability to measure preparedness.

The Capabilities-Based Planning model as currently used by the US Department of Homeland Security suggests 37 Capabilities, described as Target Capabilities (TCL). There are four mission areas; prevention, protection, response and recovery. A myriad of jurisdictional disciplines integrate to perform the mission areas and are assigned specific and/or common tasks to perform selected from the TCL. It is a multi-disciplined, multi-jurisdictional concept.

Some other challenges exist in the use of this model:

- Can rural areas use the same model as effectively as urban areas?
- Are smaller jurisdictions able to prepare, or is there a need to for smaller areas to attempt to prepare at the same level as urban areas?
- Are actual risks and vulnerabilities accounted for in this model?

The following represent the essential questions upon which our study focuses:

- Is there a need for a universal or “one size fits all” model?
- Can national preparedness be measured without a universal model?
- If the vulnerability is centered in the urban areas, what is the role of the smaller, less vulnerable jurisdictions?

These questions, along with further examinations of how we will as a nation ultimately measure preparedness, may determine the future, and certainly the effectiveness of the twenty-four HSPD’s currently providing guidance to jurisdictions in building preparedness capabilities.

### **The Survey Instrument (Attachment 3):**

For the purpose of this study, a plan was developed to collect, process and analyze data from the first responder community. A questionnaire was developed in cooperation with Dr. Robert Bach and Mr. Robert Nations that could be used to effectively collect data and stimulate and guide group discussion.

The questionnaire was administered in a group setting. Responses were voluntarily provided. Respondents were informed the purpose of the study was to gather information on their experiences and perspectives on 1) how prepared they believed themselves to be as first responder organizations, in regard to general performance of their duties, and 2) how prepared they believe their agencies are in performing their duties in the four homeland security mission areas of prevention, protection, response and recovery relative to man-made and natural disasters within the all-hazards response environment.

Respondents were further instructed that the questionnaire and subsequent group discussions would focus on “capabilities.” Capabilities can be defined as “a set of skills that comprise critical tasks that, under certain conditions, will achieve a desirable and measurable outcome.” Critical tasks are those, which if we fail to perform, will result in an increase in the loss of lives or serious injuries, or will jeopardize the ability to accomplish mission level outcomes.

The survey was particularly focused on learning the respondents' views on how they know which tasks are needed, and at what levels, to achieve particular objectives. Questions focused on what information is used to gauge the critical tasks one should perform, what levels of proficiency are necessary for satisfactory results, and what outcomes can reasonably be expected.

The survey consisted of 19 questions which called for both open and closed-ended responses, many question calling for a numerically ranked response using a Likert Scale. The survey took approximately 30 minutes to complete. Following the survey, the focus group was guided in a discussion and the feedback was transcribed. Data from the survey was collected and a summary of the results are presented below.

### **Surveys:**

Identical surveys were administered to five groups that will be identified for the purpose of this study as Regions. Regions One, Three, Four and Five are in the southeastern United States. Respondents for these surveys primarily consisted of police, fire and emergency management officials in small and medium sized agencies, as well as a number of homeland security coordinators. Region two is located in the western United States. Respondents to this set of surveys were primarily homeland security personnel, fire and emergency managers.

Regions Two and Four are Urban Areas. Regions One, Three and Five are smaller cities in more rural settings. Region two has been steeply involved in a Capabilities-based Planning model and the respondents possess a progressive knowledge of the target capabilities as articulated by the US Department of Homeland Security. In this western setting, the target capabilities and the Capabilities-based Planning are taught and implemented statewide for use in homeland security and preparedness planning. This is in contrast to the other Regions in this study.

Given the few respondents for each set of surveys, no attempt has been made at statistical analysis beyond the descriptive level.

Region One (R1)	N = 13
Region Two (R2)	N = 15
Region Three (R3)	N = 8
Regions Four (R4)	N = 11
Region Five (R5)	N = 5

Therefore, interpretation is qualitative and primarily designed to inform future programs of research. Graphical representation of data is provided merely as a guide for qualitative interpretation. Further, select survey questions of immediate interest were included in this analysis. Future publications will include a more in-depth analysis of survey results.

**Agency Capabilities:**

<b>Planning:</b>	<b>Planning</b>
<b>Comms:</b>	<b>Interoperable Communications</b>
<b>EOC:</b>	<b>Emergency Operations Center</b>
<b>CBRNE:</b>	<b>Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosives detection</b>
<b>WMD:</b>	<b>Weapons of Mass Destruction/Hazardous Materials Response</b>
<b>CI:</b>	<b>Critical Infrastructure Protection</b>
<b>Med Surge:</b>	<b>Medical Surge</b>
<b>Intel:</b>	<b>Intelligence Analysis</b>
<b>CommEn:</b>	<b>Community Engagement</b>
<b>Onsite Mgt.:</b>	<b>Onsite Management</b>
<b>Info Shar:</b>	<b>Information Sharing</b>

***Table 1: Select Capabilities Key to Figures 1 - 3***

The capabilities represented in (***Table 1***) were selected from the thirty-seven (37) capabilities on the National Target Capabilities List (TCL). Respondents were provided with this list of select capabilities (***Table 1***) related to homeland security preparedness and asked to rank them in order of importance to their respective agency. This specific request is cited in question eight (8) of the survey as, “For your specific agency, which of these capabilities are most important to you, regardless of how important they are to the entire area?”

***Table 2*** provides the mean rankings for all regions (1 = most important, 2 = second most important, etc. on a scale of 1 to 11).

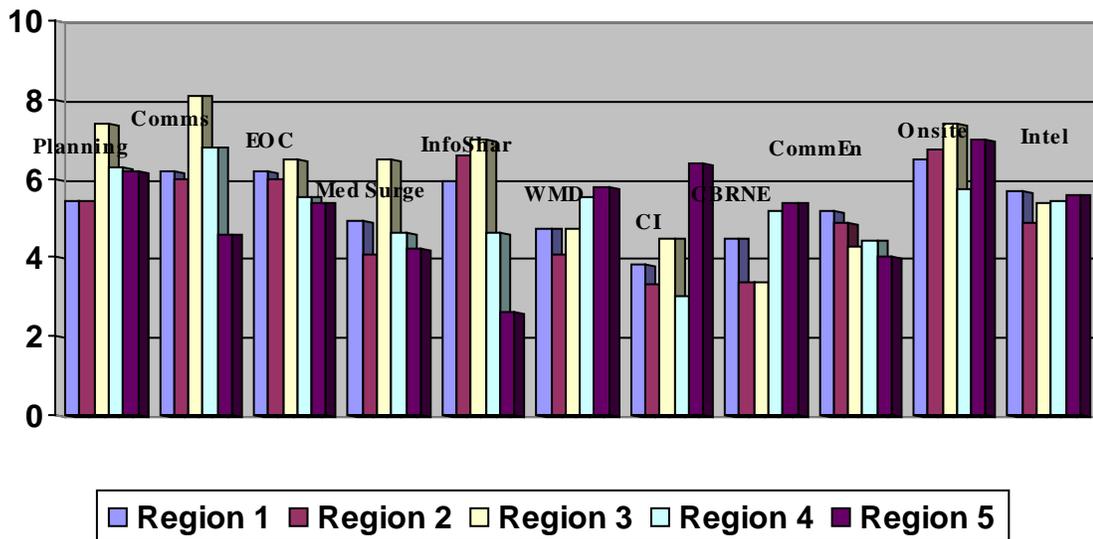
<b>Capabilities</b>	<b>R1</b>	<b>R2</b>	<b>R3</b>	<b>R4</b>	<b>R5</b>
Planning	1.92	1.93	2.63	1.55	4.40
Interoperable Comms	3.25	3.80	3.38	4.09	4.60
EOC	4.00	5.27	5.38	5.36	7.00
Med Surge	7.36	8.67	6.38	7.55	10.40
Info Sharing	7.27	7.40	7.50	7.36	7.20
WMD/Hazmat	6.17	7.33	5.25	6.82	4.00
Critical Infrastructure	5.91	7.93	8.25	7.73	7.20
CBRNE	8.09	7.47	8.25	5.36	5.00
Community Engagement	7.45	6.47	8.13	8.91	6.80
Onsite Incident Mgmt	7.27	4.67	5.63	6.45	4.80
Intel Analysis	5.45	5.07	5.25	4.64	4.60

***Table 2: Ranking of Capabilities by Level of Importance***

In **Table 2**, respondents from all five regions listed planning and interoperable communications as the most important capabilities that an agency can possess. Recent lessons learned in such disasters as the 9/11 attacks and Hurricanes Katrina and Rita clearly demonstrate the need for comprehensive planning; the same disasters also underscore the debacle that can result from inadequate communications.

The figures in **Table 2** also show that it is important to consider that variation among the responses and the different focuses of the respondent’s respective agencies or the respondents’ particular positions within their organizations. **Table 2** indicates that Planning is rated as the “most important” capability by the respondents. This is a common ranking by both the Urban Areas and the more smaller/rural areas. It is noteworthy, particularly to the homeland security practitioner, to find that Critical Infrastructure and CBRNE detection ranked lowest among the eleven capabilities considered.

**Figure 1** represents, on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high) respondents’ perceptions of the capabilities currently possessed by their agencies. These responses are aligned with question nine (9) of the survey which asks, “For your agency only, what level of the following capabilities do you currently have in each?”



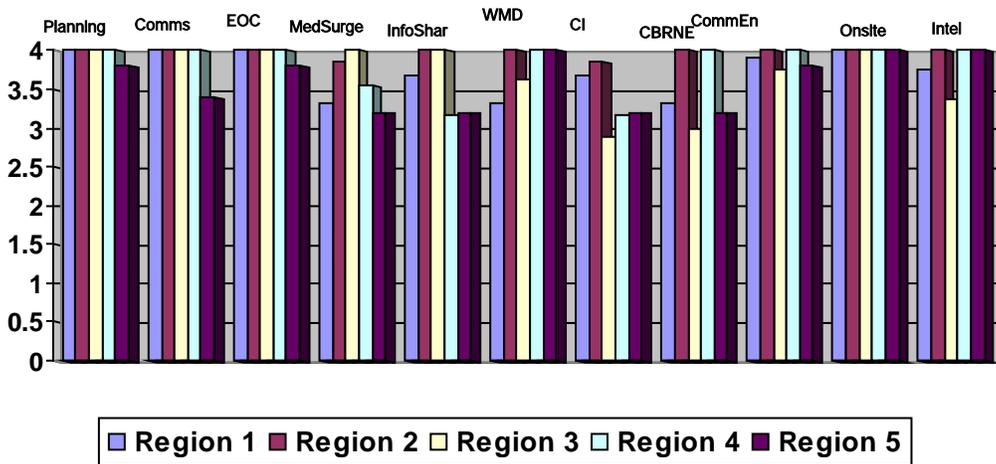
**Figure 1: Respondents’ Perceptions of Capabilities Possessed**

Despite the fact that they judged planning to be the most important capability, most respondents found it to exist only in the moderate range in their agencies. Of great interest, there was a wide range of response indicating some respondents thought their agencies were well positioned in these areas while others judged their own agencies to be severely lacking. This may reflect a wide variance in preparedness concentration among agencies.

In **Figure 1**, the two areas that seemed to suffer the most across the regions were the capabilities related to Critical Infrastructure protection and CBRNE detection. The onsite incident management capability ranked among the highest capability, although it only advanced to the high moderate range. This suggests that, in all areas, more needs to be accomplished for preparedness.

**Individual Capabilities:**

Respondents were asked to assess their knowledge of 11 capabilities (1 = don't know anything about this capability to 6 = very confident in knowledge of capability). **Figure 2** provides a graphical representation of respondents' mean response to survey question ten (10) which asks "How confident are you about your knowledge of this capability?" Respondents expressed their level of confidence next to each capability as a) Very Confident; b) Confident; c) Fairly Confident but Some Questions; d) Not Confident; e) Definitely Unsure; f) Don't Know Anything About This Capability.



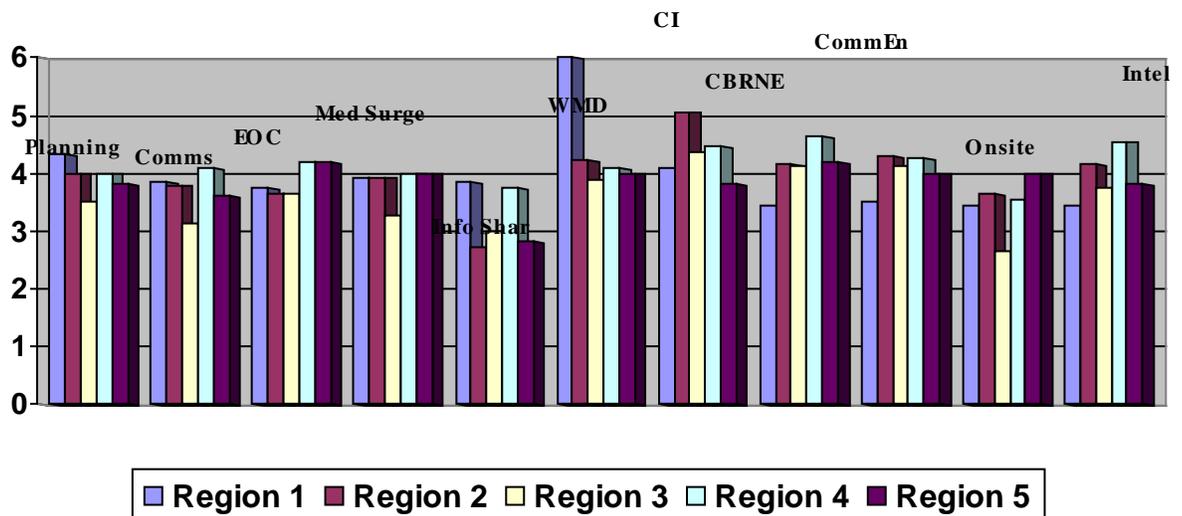
**Figure 2: Respondents' Perceptions of Knowledge of Capabilities**

The regions tracked, in terms of their individual knowledge, across the capabilities. There is, however, a concern as the mean ranking for each region for each capability indicates a significant lack of confidence. For those indicating some level of confidence they subsequently indicated relative questions. Therefore, the responses in this particular section may have reflected more professional pride by agency personnel than detailed knowledge of capabilities. In general, through discussions, respondents did not appear familiar with the language of capabilities or how it fit with their agency's objectives. The exception to this is Region Two. Region Two respondents are uniquely aware of the

capabilities language and are institutionalizing capabilities building within their preparedness program.

**Capabilities Gap:**

Respondents were asked to provide their perceptions of the gap that exist between current capabilities and the capabilities needed to adequately respond to a major disaster. **Figure 3** provides their mean response on a scale of 1 (low – no gap) to 6 (high – very large gap). Survey question sixteen (16) is aligned with this tabulation and states, “From your personal viewpoint, please compare the current levels of capabilities to what you believe would be needed during a major disaster for EACH of the following capabilities. Would the difference between current and needed capabilities be: a) Very Large: current capabilities are extremely insufficient; b) Large: current capabilities are insufficient; c) Mixed: some current capabilities are sufficient, others are not; d) Small; current capabilities are nearly sufficient; e) Minimal: current capabilities are generally sufficient; f) Same: current capabilities are sufficient to meet the needs.



**Figure 3: Respondents’ Perceptions of Capabilities Gap**

All respondents reported that gaps exist in all areas of capability. According to Region Two respondents, the gaps are most significant as related to the WMD/Hazmat capability. Region Four identified Planning as the most significant gap, while Regions One, Three and Five identified Intelligence Analysis, Critical Infrastructure Protection and CBRNE Detection respectfully as significant gaps. No area was found to be sufficiently prepared (i.e., without gaps).

Interestingly, although many in this group reported that their agency was prepared for an emergency, they also thought there was a large gap between what

they would need during a crisis and the much lower levels of what they currently had.

Finally, with question nineteen (19) respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 1 (low – less prepared) to 10 (high – more prepared) how prepared their agencies are for a man-made or natural disaster.

**Table 3** contains the mean response the overall preparedness question by Region surveyed.

<b>Region 1</b>	<b>Region 2</b>	<b>Region 3</b>	<b>Region 4</b>	<b>Region 5</b>
<b>6.08</b>	<b>6.08</b>	<b>8.13</b>	<b>5.91</b>	<b>6.00</b>

**Table 3: Agency Preparedness by Region**

Regions were remarkably consistent in their rankings. While the data here do not permit more than a qualitative analysis, the results are revealing. Despite our recent history of significant man-made and natural disasters in which recovery efforts were judged to be largely inadequate, according to the participating emergency preparedness and response community members, we appear to have made only limited progress toward preparedness.

Overall, the focus groups supported the questions and reasons that guided this study. As noted earlier, although agency personnel report their agency is prepared, it is an abstract statement reflecting more professional pride than a detailed knowledge of capabilities and objectives. Many respondents relied on having responded to a former incident as the basis for confidence in their knowledge of what would be needed in the next event. However, when asked directly, they did not know what the plan was for the new post-9/11 events or a larger catastrophic event. Further, respondents did not have confidence that local managers knew enough about what is needed or about existing capabilities and they had even less confidence in state and federal leadership. Most significant, respondents across the regions surveyed valued more and better planning for their agency and region, recognizing the importance and benefits that would come from improved efforts.

**Findings:**

“How Prepared are We?” is a persistent and prevailing question posed by the US Congress in its relationship with the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS). In the history of the function of homeland security, the response community has employed a myriad of assessment methods in an attempt to answer this question. Currently, no method for measuring **Preparedness** exists that is universally accepted, but an attempt must be made to ensure accountability.

The following summarizes preliminary findings:

- It became clear early in the study that first responders viewed their role and missions primarily within their jurisdiction.
- Responder interpreted capabilities as based on scale, how large is your area of responsibility in relationship to your capabilities.
- Responders are fully willing to support their neighboring jurisdictions, but are concerned about the issue of command and control during a crisis. They believe command, control and coordination may become very difficult because of jurisdictional turf and ownership battles that may arise if not addressed in the prevent planning period. They see this as a critical area impacting preparedness.
- Local jurisdictions generally perceive their goals for preparedness as being met.
- It appears from preliminary analysis of the data collected in this study, that many participants within these focus groups for this study did not have a clear understanding of the current Target Capabilities List (TCL) as used by the US Department of Homeland Security, and it (the TCL) is not used as a planning product or routinely used by some members of the focus groups as a major element in contingency planning.
- The survey indicates that at the “street level” responder base, the amount and quality of response equipment available are seen as a major measure of preparedness. Looking at this “counting of equipment,” responders appear to believe that increased levels of equipment have a direct relationship on the ability to respond.
- On the “higher command levels” where technology is more of a priority, the agencies will be compelled to examine their goals, objectives and strategies with the comprehensive organization in determining preparedness, rather than “counting” equipment. This suggests a disconnect between the lower ranks and management level of the organization.
- Identification of Capabilities. The respondents had no clear understanding of how to measure capabilities. They answered the questions about capabilities with a detailed description of a first responder’s skill or a brief reference to money and personnel. Overall, they did not appear familiar with the language of capabilities or how it fit with their agency’s objectives with the exception being Region Two.

- **Top Priorities.** The need for planning was clearly a top issue for all of the respondents. All believed planning was important but not very well performed. They said the “gap” between what was needed and what they had now was very large.
- **Confidence.** In asking about confidence in the knowledge of skills needed to perform their tasks, the group was mixed. However, respondents generally expressed their lack of confidence in local/agency managers and even a greater lack of confidence in state and federal leadership. The discussions indicate a high level of frustration with elected officials not responding to training and educational opportunities relative to preparedness efforts.
- **Information Sources.** This group clearly relied on their own personal experiences in previous emergencies and general knowledge of first responders as the primary source of information about capabilities rather than the need for formal assessments and thought they were essential for their agency to be successful.
- **Gap.** Although many in these groups reported that their agencies are prepared for an emergency, they also thought the gap between what they would need during a crisis was much greater than what they currently possess.

**Observations:**

- It is evident that for any study engaging this subject matter that focus groups must be organized based on some baseline knowledge of homeland security and the preparedness program as prescribed by the US Department of Homeland Security, or the facilitators will find it necessary to spend some time prior to surveying, to educate focus respondents in the various planning tools currently used by the Department of Homeland Security. This will likely skew results and lead to biased findings.
- The current all-hazards planning approach to capabilities-based planning may only have applicability to those personnel assigned to homeland security programs. This could be interpreted as a gap in the planning model for jurisdictions across the United States.
- It seems the all-hazards planning approach to capabilities-based planning falls short of providing a means of measuring preparedness. Challenges arise in this model relative to the acceptance of the TCLs as a suggestive if not prescriptive method of measurement.

### **Strategy to Measure Preparedness:**

Based upon the collected data in this study, the research/review of the literature and an examination of the response to recent relative events such as Hurricanes Katrina and Gustav, the following is recommended:

- The most appropriate model to assess Preparedness related to Homeland Security is an assessment model that allows local jurisdictions to evaluate their capabilities, calibrate their findings, and utilize a planning model that is effective for the respective jurisdiction. The model should be based upon anticipated mission and expected capabilities rather than the experience of the most recent (last) but past incident. Assessment is divided into several categories guided by risk management principles to include, but not limited to personnel, equipment and its operational status, command and control and documented training and exercise level of personnel and other assessed needs.
- Assessment of preparedness must be based upon a level-based strategy. The level based strategy must consider building upon criteria used to determine prepared/unprepared status of a jurisdiction or response agency based upon a most likely/reasonable response scenario.
- Specific assessment guidance must be developed in cooperation with the responders.
- While jurisdictions can and should perform their own assessments of preparedness, some standardization should exist to allow for comparisons across jurisdictions. This will enable multiple approaches/methodologies for assessment, but will also allow for meaningful assessment.

### **Impact for Future Research:**

We conclude that a prescribed TCL may not be the best approach or methodology for ALL jurisdictions. Therefore, some question for further study should include:

- Can a jurisdiction be given broader parameters to independently determine its capability level and then be capable of describing for the government what it takes for them to be prepared for both natural and man-made disasters?
- Is it necessary to have a universal model to determine capability which can be applied to all jurisdictions relative to preparedness efforts?
- If the TCLs are not applicable to certain jurisdictions, does that limit the jurisdictions in being prepared?

- Should all jurisdictions be prepared for the same things, or does each jurisdiction need the ability to assess itself and plan for incidents most likely to occur within that jurisdiction?

There is further interest in examining other components of homeland security. However, it is difficult to consider measuring components of homeland security until a method for measuring preparedness is established. The goal of homeland security is preparedness.

The current model for reaching that goal, from the US Department of Homeland Security perspective is accomplished through employing four mission areas. Those mission areas are (1) prevention, (2) protection, (3) response and (4) recovery. Each response discipline is tasked to perform one or more of those mission areas and the four mission areas and corresponding discipline(s) identify specific capabilities from the Target Capabilities List (TCL) to support the mission area.

### **General Summary:**

Again, without question, assessments of capabilities are essential to determine preparedness and data from effective assessment can provide necessary tools for the response community. However, this study attempted to open discussion regarding what is the most appropriate method(s) to go about measuring preparedness that subsequently drives a planning sequence from the assessment based on a local assessment of both capabilities and need. The study initiated discussions as to whether the methodologies could be relative as opposed to prescribed.

Through facilitated focus groups and utilization of a questionnaire and subsequent discussion, this study engaged the response community encompassing both rural and urban areas. The questionnaire concentrated primarily on target capabilities and relative application. Fifty-three (53) participants submitted the completed questionnaire while nearly sixty (60) participated in the process including the discussions.

General observation exhibited a knowledge gap among the respondent groups. It became obvious to the facilitators that the variance depended on the actual experience a respondent had with the homeland security program. Some of the respondents, although involved in their agency's homeland security and planning programs, did not have a working knowledge of the Target Capabilities and the Capabilities-based Planning Model. Conversely, one of the Urban Area focus groups was extremely well versed in the Capabilities-based Planning Model.

It is interesting to note that those groups with the least working knowledge compared to those groups with the most working knowledge of the TCL's agreed that Planning was a significant priority. And, most of the agencies state that their

agency is prepared, but it seems to be a statement of pride more than a detailed knowledge of the capabilities, goals, and objectives.

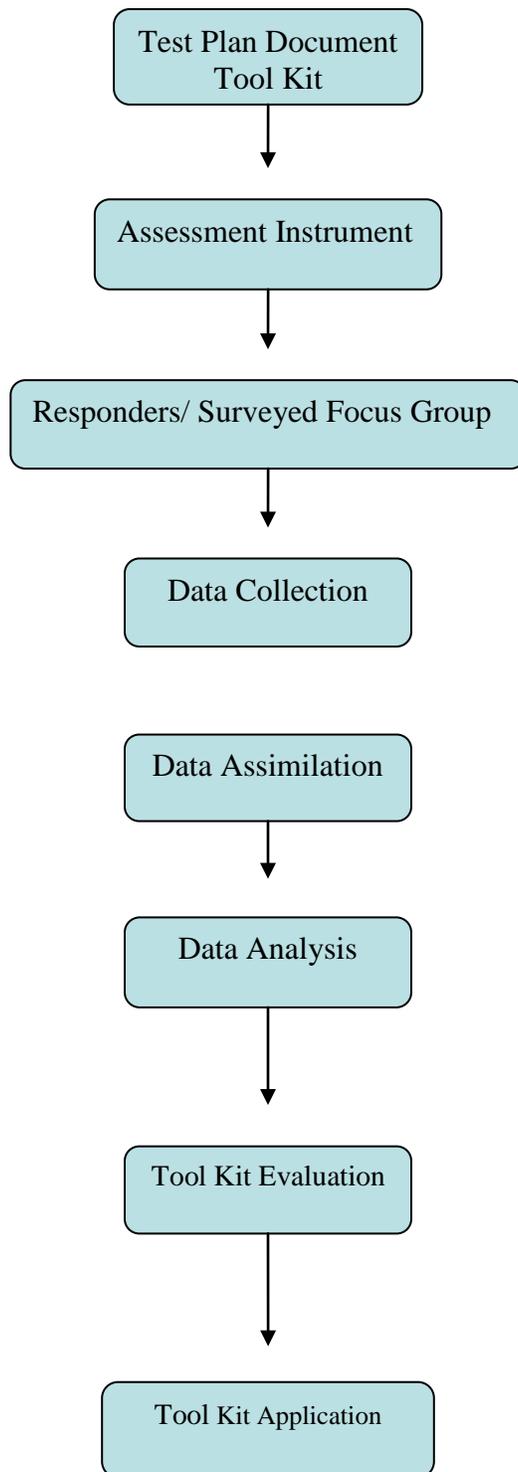
Another preliminary finding suggests that few respondents expressed confidence in their managers or leaders at the local level and they expressed less confidence in leadership at the state and federal levels. Many of the respondents did not have confidence that their managers knew enough about what is needed or about existing capabilities. Further, many participants expressed an inability to identify 'vision' among their managers and leaders. Most of the respondents relied on past experience for determining what would be needed in a future event rather than applying a planning model. Further discussion revealed that the prescribed measuring technique requiring local experts to rank level of capability is mistrusted by those working (ranking) the capability. Many participants considered the same measuring technique inaccurate from a core validity perspective.

In summary, this study suggests the following:

- 1) Focus group output, as well as local preparedness assessment output needs to be based on 'do we agree' rather than the traditional objective, cookie-cutter instruments.
- 2) Identifying alternative strategies to achieve level of preparedness enabling calibration of risks for locally defined disasters or potential for defined disasters is essential in assessing the local level of preparedness.
- 3) Developing a planning sequence that will be sustained over time is critical. This planning sequence may not be capabilities based planning and it will not be capabilities based planning alone.
- 4) Calibrating of capability and outcome becomes the formula for answering the question, "*How prepared are we?*"

Further analysis is on-going and the project team anticipates a final report within the next two to four weeks. A detailed report of the examination will be published in a monograph scheduled for completion in January 2009.

## ATTACHMENT 1: Test Plan Document/Tool Kit



## **ATTACHMENT 2: Measurables/Schedule of Deliverables**

### **Measuring Preparedness Within The Civil Response Community**

Report Framework based on Deliverables:

1. Collection Tool Requirements
2. Identify & Validate Key Components to be Measured
3. Develop Test Plan Document
4. Development of the Toolkit Application
5. Development of the Collection Tool Kit
6. Create Focus Group & Create Schedule for Review & Analysis
7. Review & Analyze the Instrument and the Feedback
8. Create the Final Test Collection Tool Kit
9. Select, Brief & Schedule Timeframes for Rollout of Test Instrument
10. Conduct Rollout of Test Collection Tool Kit
11. Evaluate the Test Collection Tool Kit for Universal Application

Report Outline for Writing:

- I. Develop Test Document
- II. Develop Measurement Instrument/Assessment Instrument
- III. Data Collection
- IV. Data Assimilation
- V. Data Analysis
- VI. Evaluation of Collection Tool Kit for Application

## **ATTACHMENT 3: Survey Questionnaire**

### **UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI**

#### **Introduction**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this University of Mississippi Study of homeland security preparedness.

The purpose of this study is to gather information on your experiences and perspectives on how prepared you and your agency are to prevent, protect, respond and recover to man-made and natural disasters.

Participation in this activity is voluntary. All information will be treated confidentially. Do not write your name anywhere on the questionnaire. The answers will be used for analytical purposes only and will not be used to identify any single person's views. Should you have any questions, please ask the University of Mississippi researcher(s) conducting the focus group discussions.

This Study consists of two parts. First, we ask you a series of questions through a written questionnaire that the University Researcher will pass out. Second, we will conduct an open, focus group discussion to learn in more detail about your views and experiences.

#### **Definitions**

This questionnaire and the subsequent group discussions focus on "capabilities." Capabilities can be defined as a set of skills that comprise "critical tasks" that, under certain conditions, will achieve a desirable and measurable outcome. Critical tasks are those, which if we fail to perform, will result in an increase in the loss of lives or serious injuries, or will jeopardize the ability to accomplish mission-level outcomes.

Our discussions will ask you to focus on all three dimensions of capabilities: (1) the critical tasks or skills; (2) the conditions under which they are needed; and (3) the mission-level outcomes or objectives.

We are especially interested in learning your views on how you know which tasks are needed and at what levels to achieve particular objectives. What information, ranging from experience to formal measurements, do you use to gauge what critical tasks you can perform, at what levels of proficiency, and which outcomes you achieve by using them.

#### **Directions**

The following questions ask you to circle the appropriate number associated with your answer to the question and, where appropriate, to write out any additional comments. You will be asked to answer the questions from your own personal viewpoint or that of your agency. Each section will indicate which viewpoint to use.

When you complete the questionnaire, please hand it to the University researcher. The questionnaire should take 15 to 20 minutes to complete. The University researcher will announce when the focus group discussion will begin.

# QUESTIONNAIRE

## GENERAL INFORMATION

1. What agency do you work for? \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. What are your primary job tasks in that agency? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. During a disaster (man-made or natural), what are the 5 most important results or objectives that you and your agency must achieve?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_

4. For each of those 5 results, what capabilities do you need to achieve each? Please match capabilities with the results.

Most Important Objectives (from Q3 above)	Capabilities Needed
a.	
b.	
c.	
d.	
e.	

5. Speaking only for yourself and not the agency or the area, if you had the money to improve only one of the capabilities mentioned in Question 4 above, which would you consider most important to improve? Please explain why?

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**TARGET CAPABILITIES**

6: Below are eleven target capabilities as defined by the Federal Government. Thinking of your geographical area only, please rank these capabilities using a score of 1 to 11 in terms of their priority in allowing your area to be prepared for a major disaster (man-made or natural)?

Target Capability	Priority Rank (1 is most important; 11 is least important) (write the number)
Planning	_____
Interoperable Communications	_____
Emergency Center Operations	_____
CBRNE detection	_____
WMD/Hazardous Materials Response	_____
Critical infrastructure protection	_____
Medical surge	_____
Intelligence analysis and production (e.g., fusion centers)	_____
Community engagement	_____
Onsite incident management	_____
Information sharing and dissemination	_____

7: For EACH capability listed below, what is the level of capability that you believe currently exists within your area. Please circle the number. 1 is low; 10 is high.

7a. Planning

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
(low) (high)

7b. Interoperable Communications

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
(low) (high)

7c. Emergency Operations Center

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
(low) (high)

7d. CBRNE Detection

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
(low) (high)

7e. WMD/Hazardous Materials Response

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
(low) (high)

7f. Critical Infrastructure Protection

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
(low) (high)

7g. Medical Surge

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
(low) (high)

7h. Intelligence Analysis and Production

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
(low) (high)

7i. Community Engagement

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
(low) (high)

7j. Onsite Incident Management

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
(low) (high)

7k. Information sharing and dissemination

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
(low) (high)

8: For your specific agency, which of these capabilities are most important to you, regardless of how important they are to the entire area?

Target Capability

Priority Rank  
(1 is most important; 11 is least important)  
(write the number)

Planning

\_\_\_\_\_

Interoperable Communications

\_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Center Operations

\_\_\_\_\_

CBRNE detection

\_\_\_\_\_

WMD/Hazardous Materials Response

\_\_\_\_\_

Critical infrastructure protection

\_\_\_\_\_

Medical surge

\_\_\_\_\_

Intelligence analysis and production (e.g., fusion centers)

\_\_\_\_\_

Community engagement

\_\_\_\_\_

Onsite incident management

\_\_\_\_\_

Information sharing and dissemination

\_\_\_\_\_

9: For your agency only, what level of the following capabilities do you currently have in each? Please circle the number. 1 is low; 10 is high.

9a. Planning

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
(low) (high)

9b. Interoperable Communications

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
(low) (high)

9c. Emergency Operations Center

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
(low) (high)

9d. CBRNE Detection

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
(low) (high)

9e. WMD/Hazardous Materials Response

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
(low) (high)

9f. Critical Infrastructure Protection

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
(low) (high)

9g. Medical Surge

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
(low) (high)

9h. Intelligence Analysis and Production

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
(low) (high)

9i. Community Engagement

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
(low) (high)

9j. Onsite Incident Management

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
(low) (high)

9k. Information sharing and dissemination

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
(low) (high)

10: How confident are you about your knowledge of this capability? Please circle the appropriate letter below. Use the scale below to write the letter that matches the level of confidence next to each capability.

- a. Very Confident
- b. Confident
- c. Fairly confident but some questions
- d. Not Confident
- e. Definitely Unsure
- f. Don't Know anything about this capability

Target Capability	Level of Confidence in Knowledge (write letter below)
Planning	_____
Interoperable Communications	_____
Emergency Center Operations	_____
CBRNE detection	_____
WMD/Hazardous Materials Response	_____
Critical infrastructure protection	_____
Medical surge	_____
Intelligence analysis and production	_____
Community engagement	_____
Onsite incident management	_____
Information sharing and dissemination	_____

11. What sources of information do you use to gauge for yourself how the levels of capabilities?

Please number in order of usefulness to you:

- \_\_ Experience of responses to previous disasters
- \_\_ Exercise results
- \_\_ Formal studies or assessments
- \_\_ General knowledge of first responders
- \_\_ Calculations and judgments made during planning activities
- \_\_ Reports and briefings from agency leaders
- \_\_ News reports
- \_\_ Training experiences
- \_\_ Other (please list)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- 12: How confident are you that your agency leaders understand what level of capability you need to have to do your job effectively? Circle the letter that matches the level of confidence:
- a. Very Confident
  - b. Confident
  - c. Fairly confident but some questions
  - d. Not Confident
  - e. Definitely Unsure
- 13: How confident are you that your State homeland security and emergency management leaders understand what level of capability you need to have to do your job effectively? Circle the letter that matches the level of confidence:
- a. Very Confident
  - b. Confident
  - c. Fairly confident but some questions
  - d. Not Confident
  - e. Definitely Unsure
- 14: How confident are you that Federal homeland security and emergency management leaders understand what level of capability you need to have to do your job effectively? Circle the letter that matches the level of confidence:
- a. Very Confident
  - b. Confident
  - c. Fairly confident but some questions
  - d. Not Confident
  - e. Definitely Unsure
- 15: From your personal viewpoint, please compare the current levels of capabilities to what you believe would be needed during a major disaster. Would the difference between current and needed capabilities be: (Circle the appropriate letter).
- a. Very large: current capabilities are extremely insufficient.
  - b. Large: current capabilities are insufficient.
  - c. Mixed: some current capabilities are sufficient, others are not.
  - d. Small: current capabilities are nearly sufficient.
  - e. Minimal: current capabilities are generally sufficient.
  - f. The same: current capabilities are sufficient to meet the needs.

16: From your personal viewpoint, please compare the current levels of capabilities to what you believe would be needed during a major disaster for EACH of the following capabilities. Would the difference between current and needed capabilities be:

Use the scale below to write the letter that matches the comparison of current and needed levels of capability:

- a. Very large: current capabilities are extremely insufficient.
- b. Large: current capabilities are insufficient.
- c. Mixed: some current capabilities are sufficient, others are not.
- d. Small: current capabilities are nearly sufficient.
- e. Minimal: current capabilities are generally sufficient.
- f. The same: current capabilities are sufficient to meet the needs.

Target Capability

Comparison of Levels of Capability  
between Current and Needed  
(write letter below)

Planning	_____
Interoperable Communications	_____
Emergency Center Operations	_____
CBRNE detection	_____
WMD/Hazardous Materials Response	_____
Critical infrastructure protection	_____
Medical surge	_____
Intelligence analysis and production	_____
Community engagement	_____
Onsite incident management	_____
Information sharing and dissemination	_____

17. What information is or would be most useful to you to gauge how much capability you currently have?

Please list: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



## **ATTACHMENT 4: Focus Group Questionnaire**

### **FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

#### Introduction

In the questionnaire, each of you identified and prioritized a critical capability for your agency and area. Let's talk about those capabilities.

(Note to Moderator: The purpose of a focus group is to have the discussants exchange views to explore areas of both agreement and disagreement. Follow the threads of their own conversation. The questions below comprise a general roadmap for the discussion and themes which we would like them to pursue. However, they will likely raise issues not anticipated here that are useful for us to understand in detail the way they think about capabilities and preparedness.)

1. What are some of the most critical capabilities in this area?
2. What is the current gap between the level of your current capabilities and what would be needed in the event of a major disaster?

(Note to Moderator: Purpose here is to generate both agreement and disagreement. Try to find middle ground, but also the range and source of disagreements.)

3. We seem to have a clear view of our priorities, but how do you know what the levels of your capabilities are? Is there a way you keep track of these levels? What do you find useful?

(Note to Moderator: It may be useful to have the list of Target Capabilities from the questionnaire here to refer to and to ask about each. The purpose here is not to repeat the rank ordering of the priorities, but to see if the group as a whole agrees or disagrees. Most importantly, you are searching for why there is agreement or not. So, probe with questions about how they "know" their level of capability. What do they use, what works, how sure are they?)

4. Let's now start backwards and look first at your goals or objectives. For your agency, what are these goals?

Probe: Okay, now how do you know if you've been able to achieve those goals?

(Note to Moderator: this should take a considerable amount of time. It may start slow and require specific sub-questions. Probe for examples that can then be discussed among the group).

5. Now, let's use a few of these goals or objectives that the group has identified. How do we know what capabilities or critical tasks are essential reaching a particular goal? Ask for examples of certain goals and objectives. For example, in a hurricane, the goal might be to restore electrical power as fast as possible. How do they know if that goal has been reached? How do they know what capabilities they need, and what level of capability will allow them to reach their goal? Are there other capabilities they don't have that would be useful? How do they know?

6. What information or assessments do you use that gives you the best indication of how well you are doing? What are some of the variations within the group? What is their general sense of what works? Why?

(Note to moderator: we're looking here for in-depth examples and explanations of what they look for, informally and formally. For instance, some may say that's it's based on exercises. But how often, when, how do they exercise the various capabilities – like planning? We are also seeking to determine how widespread the recognition of the value of these sources of information is. Does the entire group agree or is there disagreement? Why?)

7. If you were to receive 25% more resources to invest in your preparedness mission, how would you go about deciding how to use it. Do you have any examples? Do you assume that 25% more resources will give you 25% more performance against the stated objectives? How do you know?

(Note to moderator: the point of this discussion is to see how the group puts capabilities together with results. Lead the discussion in that direction. So, for example, if someone says, 25% more resources would be used to increase our capabilities (assets and skills) by 25%, how do they predict that this will give them 25% increase in results. Does a 25% increase in CBRNE detection, for instance, lead to a 25% reduction in potential lives lost? You might ask them those kind of questions. This may be, at first, a difficult conversation to get started, but you should be able to get them talking about it by focusing on an example or two.)

8. Let's try a quick experiment. Say a disaster struck tomorrow and destroyed 50% of your capability in a specific area. How long would it

take this area to restore that capability to 75% and to 100% of its current level?

(Note to moderator: by this point in the discussion you should have a good sense of which capabilities the group has the most familiarity. Use those capabilities to draw out the discussion and examples. This is obviously a discussion question about “resiliency,” which is essentially the ability to absorb abnormal events without behaving abnormally. Speed of recovery is one of the primary issues here. Also, you can probe with questions about what additional capabilities they might need to recover as opposed to prevent in the first place.)

9. We’ve been talking throughout the day about capabilities and effects (or results). How a capability produces a specific result is the core issue in deciding how prepared we are. Thinking back through the discussion, how well do you know which capabilities produce which desired results? How well can you document that connection? What would you need to know to help establish and monitor those connections? Do you have any examples of where you know clearly how to establish these connections? What are some?
10. What do you believe we mean, or should mean, by “preparedness”? How prepared are you in this area? What do you mean by that? How do you know? What would you need to be able to answer that question, for yourselves, your neighbors, and State and Federal leaders?

(Note to moderator: this is obviously the summing up question – and the key to the focus group. Having spent several hours discussing components of this question, give them sufficient time to work through their own summary and synthesis. Probe with questions that try to build upon individuals’ initial answers – try to get them as a group to consider the various questions and come up with a group answer.)