

DHS Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Office

First Responder Vaccine Initiative

The DHS Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Office (CWMD) leads the Department's efforts to counter attempts by terrorists and other threat actors to carry out an attack against the United States or its interests using a weapon of mass destruction. CWMD is committed to improving the nation's ability to detect and protect against biological terrorism, including anthrax attacks.

Threat of Anthrax

There is a history of anthrax being used as a weapon in the United States. In 2001, anthrax was deliberately delivered through the U.S. Postal System to multiple targets with additional victims getting sick due to exposure while handling mail. The best way for someone to protect themselves against anthrax disease is to receive the anthrax vaccine, which was FDA-approved in 1970 and has been safely administered to millions of people.



First Responder Protection

After an anthrax attack, emergency response providers may find themselves having to react immediately to the incident before complete information is available, which may increase their risk for exposure. By preemptively receiving the anthrax vaccine, emergency response providers can protect themselves against anthrax and ensure they are able to safely respond to an anthrax incident.



Collaborative Pilot Program

In 2016, Congress directed DHS to launch a pilot to evaluate the feasibility of a voluntary pre-event anthrax vaccination program among first responders. DHS CWMD is partnering with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and with specific jurisdictions to administer the First Responder Vaccine Initiative (FRVI) pilot program. Through this program, emergency response providers will have the option to receive the anthrax vaccine.



Program Elements

- **Robust Communications.** A DHS-sponsored website will serve as the FRVI communications hub for sharing resources and information about anthrax preparedness and vaccination.
- **Interactive Education & Training.** Education and training modules will provide information about biological threat agents and diseases, methods of control and prevention, vaccine safety and efficacy, and the benefits and risks of vaccination.
- **Logistics.** DHS CWMD will work with HHS to facilitate the shipment of anthrax vaccine requests, track vaccine inventories, and document vaccine disposition.
- **Data Collection and Analysis.** DHS CWMD will evaluate the success of the FRVI by conducting a feasibility study and an economic analysis.

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Homeland Security

