



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & WELFARE

C. L. "BUTCH" OTTER – Governor
RICHARD M. ARMSTRONG – Director

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
450 West State Street, 10th Floor
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0036
208-334-5500
208-334-6558

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 11, 2007

Mary Ann Reuter
(208) 334-5559

IDAHO BUREAU OF LABS TO PARTICIPATE IN CHEMICAL TERRORISM SIMULATION

The Idaho State Laboratory will join state labs from across the nation and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in a full-scale, nine-day drill to test the readiness of northwest labs to respond to a terrorist event. Idaho's laboratory and the Oregon Department of Human Services will lead the public health preparedness exercise next week to evaluate current response concepts, plans and capabilities should an actual chemical terrorism event occur.

The full-scale exercise begins on Thursday, June 14 at 4:30 p.m. when the Idaho Bureau of Labs receives a mock telephone request for laboratory assistance from the Oregon State Public Health Laboratory. According to the exercise scenario, several radiological dispersal devices (bombs) were detonated in Eastern Oregon. During such an event, rapid laboratory evaluations are essential to implement public health responses and medical treatment that could reduce illnesses and save lives.

State Public Health Laboratories in Washington, Montana, Alaska, California, Arizona, Florida, Hawaii and Mississippi will join in the drill to test the readiness of the Region 10 Chemical Laboratory Response Network. Region 10 consists of Alaska, Washington, Oregon and Idaho.

On the morning of June 15, the Oregon Chemical Terrorism Laboratory Coordinator will pick up blood and urine specimens (some spiked with toxic chemical elements) from a local hospital and transport them via a special response trailer to the Idaho State Laboratory, where officials have agreed to assist

with temporarily storing, packaging and transferring specimens and analyzing a portion of the samples. Within hours, CDC personnel will arrive by chartered jet in Boise and take custody of some specimens for Rapid Toxic Screening in Atlanta GA. This transfer is expected to occur at the Idaho Bureau of Labs between 10 a.m. and noon.

The results of the CDC testing will be reported to the Oregon Lab on the morning of Sunday, June 17. The Rapid Toxic Screen will indicate that the mock patients had been exposed to heavy metals, so CDC will arrange for the remaining specimens to be analyzed by other state labs with proficiency in measuring heavy metal in urine. At 2:00 p.m. more surge specimens will be packaged and labeled according to CDC instructions. Many of the states participating in the exercise will actually send personnel to Boise to practice the handling process alongside Idaho Labs chemists.

These specimens will be shipped via FedEx to the participating state laboratories on June 18, with their test results reported back to the Oregon lab by June 22. During an actual chemical terrorism event, this laboratory data would be used to confirm preliminary diagnosis, determine patient exposure levels, identify the “worried well” and prosecute the terrorists. In this public health preparedness simulation, the objective is to test Chemical Laboratory Response Network plans, procedures and systems.

While the exercise will be played up to eight hours per day in some locations, activities which occur at the Idaho Bureau of Laboratories may hold the most interest for Idaho news organizations. This could include:

- The arrival of specimens from Oregon and transport by CDC personnel to Atlanta on Friday, June 15 from 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m.
- The packaging of surge specimens by Idaho and other state officials at the Idaho State Lab on Sunday, June 17 between 2:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m.

Idaho State Laboratory Director Richard Hudson, Ph.D., will be available for interviews during those times, as well as before and after the exercise activities. The Idaho Bureau of Laboratories is located at 2220 Old Penitentiary Road in Boise. Media guests will be asked to sign in and show press identification. Please contact Mary Ann Reuter, Public Information Specialist, at 208-334-5559 by Wednesday, June 13 to include your news organization on the media list for June 15 or June 17.

###