



# NIEHS Worker Education and Training Program

April 21-23, 2004  
Washington, DC

**Training Partnerships for Prevention, Protection and Preparedness:  
A Conference to Build Stronger Partnerships On Disaster Response Training**

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## MEETING NOTES FROM BREAKOUT 4: STATE, LOCAL, AND BI-NATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS: PUBLIC HEALTH AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

**Thursday, April 22**

**Breakout 4: State, Local, and Bi-National Partnerships: Public Health and Emergency Response**

### **Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Response Along the Arizona – Sonora Border**

This breakout closely examined the Massachusetts approach to preparing communities for a public health emergency as well as the Arizona effort to partner with several Mexican states to train emergency responders. Issues to be considered include: serving large and small communities, reconciling local government operations with regional needs, challenges confronting trainers in a bi-national preparedness program, as well as identifying and planning for future challenges.

Emphasis was placed on the Border 2012 goal relating to releases of chemical and biological warfare agents and acts of terrorism along the Mexican Border. They are working in liaison with: "Binational Prevention and Emergency Response Plan between Nogales, Sonora and Nogales, Arizona"; "Sonora Proteccion Civil"; "Border 2012 Arizona/Sonora Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Response Task Force"; and "Arizona Governors Office of Homeland Security".

*Moderator: Eric Lamar, Principal Investigator, IAFF*

Presenters:

- ✦ *Hal Berkowitz, Assoc. Director Office of Environmental Technology, College of Technology Arizona State University Program (Cal-Arizona Consortium)*
- ✦ *Karina Ordonez, Southwest Border Specialist, Arizona Governor's Office of Homeland Security*
- ✦ *Willebaldo Alariste Candiani, General Director Emergency Management, Sonora, Mexico*

### **Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Emergency Response at the Arizona/Sonora Mexican Border**

Themes: Partnerships – State and Local – Bi-National, serving a wide variety of communities.

The main areas of concern are:

- ✦ The fixed facilities on the Mexican side of the border (3000) all have hazardous chemicals of different sorts, and
- ✦ Truck and rail traffic with hazardous chemicals which cross the border

The challenges involved in this area are:

- ✦ Incorporating modifications related to anti-terrorism efforts into the curriculum,
- ✦ Identification of risks,
- ✦ Preparation of joint contingency plans,
- ✦ Include plans for counter-terrorism in curriculum

Over 400,000,000 people travel to the US via land borders.

Logistical challenges in a bi-national training:

- ✦ Bi-lingual transmission of curriculum and emergency responder information flow is one key component to coordination of efforts,
- ✦ The disparity of the quality of equipment available on each side of the border,
- ✦ The issue of radio interoperability across the border is a challenge,

- The Mexican side of the border is mostly all-volunteer fire fighters,
- Implementation, training and availability of PPEs on the Mexican side of the border.
- Our training focus is prevention of a catastrophic event on each side of the border, not necessarily to encourage bi-national response teams (although when needed, the teams have responded across the border)

### **New England Consortium All Hazards Training Project**

Agents for change as well as deliver training.

The Project has evolved and has expanded the training to include:

- Involving public health workers in training,
- Offering the 8-hour emergency response training,
- Offering the 24 hour basic health and safety course,
- Expanding the training programs to include Introduction to Levels A, B & C equipment, introduction to chemical and biological weapons and introduction to decontamination equipment, training from the DOT manual, the success of the training program has led to requests for additional training. We also work on identifying who needs training.
- The volunteer fire departments serving much of the region,
- EMS workers who have medical training, need emergency response training,
- Hospital staff need training for Level C hot zones and proper use of PPEs and equipment,
- Health department staff,
- Police department

Our effort has been focused on hands-on training, familiarizing trainees with equipment, and team building with local, state and private responders. We have trained them on OSHA regulations for emergencies, working while wearing protective suits with respirators and radio communication equipment, identification of emergency situations, and identification of biological hazards, including mass vaccination clinics.

### **Emergency Management**

All emergencies are local.

- Actions taken by the first arriving agency are key to success,
- Public/private training (Kodak, Xerox) where large employees in the private sector tailor their curriculum to mirror that offered to the public sector,
- Working with trade unions, trainers, training sites to make training more accessible,
- Public sector workers need to know what to do at their sites (i.e., training for fire wardens at office buildings),
- Improve emergency command and control for inter-agency communication (NIMS)
- Curriculum across all agencies adopted, public and private sector included,
- Partnering with other agencies to increase awareness of WMD, and give background incident command training,
- Share the curriculum,
- Involve other agencies.