Agroterrorism: A Guide for First Responders


This is a guide book for first responders to agroterrorism incidents. The book has nine chapters and two appendices. Chapter 1 is a very short chapter entitled “Terrorism in the barnyard.” It asks and answers the question, “What is the purpose of terrorism”? The chapter further asks the question of “Is agricultural terrorism possible”? As stated in the chapter, “The answer is a simple yes.” A brief overview of the agriculture industry is presented in Chapter 2. This chapter emphasizes it is not just the “barnyard,” but the feedyards, fields, and whole agricultural distribution system that are all vulnerable to this form of terrorism. It is the interconnectivity and mobility of the industry that lends itself to the vulnerability of agroterrorism. Chapter 3 is entitled “WMD and the farm” and addresses the concepts of ideologies, motives, and tactics. This chapter has two tables identifying likely or known biological agents that target livestock (Table 1) or crops (Table 2). Chapter 4 describes the incident management and unified command structure to be used when facing an agroterrorism event. These incident management and unified command structures are very similar to those of hazardous waste and emergency response operations (HAZWOPER) training. Chapter 5 discusses the strategies and tactics to provide planning responses to agroterrorism incidents. Again, these strategies and tactics borrow heavily from HAZWOPER criteria. Chapter 6 addresses concepts to improve the response to incidences. This chapter correctly points out the inherent vulnerability of our whole agricultural system due to lack of intensive surveillance. State homeland security assessment and strategy for agriculture are discussed in Chapter 7, while the national response is discussed in Chapter 8. Chapter 9 is entitled “Using this book for training programs.” That chapter has very specific “objectives and suggested activities” for all of the preceding chapters. Each of the chapter objectives and suggested activities is divided into Terminal Objective, Enabling Objectives, Activity, and Instructions. Appendix A is a “vulnerability assessment exercise summary” and Appendix B is an “individual site/event vulnerability assessment sheet.”

It was good read. As our society becomes more complex and internationally integrated, our vulnerability to agroterrorism increases. This timely book is an excellent primer for training first responders to agroterrorism events or ruling out events that are naturally occurring. It could very well be the case that agricultural industries and producer commodity groups require agroterrorism training for all of their employees. In that case, this book would be an ideal educational resource used in that course. I can see myself in a class on how to respond to agroterrorism incidents using this book as a guide.

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