

For Health Professionals

Health Alerts

Health Advisory #22 - Raised Federal Alert Level - 09/11/2002

The following message was sent to all hospitals yesterday afternoon.

Please distribute this alert to all medical, pediatric, emergency room, nursing, laboratory, and pharmacy staff in your hospital

FEDERAL TERROR ALERT LEVEL RAISED TO "ORANGE"

**New York State Department of Health requests that healthcare providers
increase vigilance for possible bioterrorist events**

September 10, 2002, 5:30 PM.

To date, the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) has not received any information from our law enforcement and security partners regarding a specific terrorist threat to New York. However, the federal government has increased its terror alert warning system to its second highest level, "Code Orange." Thus, the NYSDOH is reminding health care professionals to remain vigilant for unusual disease occurrences and to report any suspect cases or clusters immediately to their local health department.

Physicians and other healthcare providers should be alert to illness patterns and diagnostic clues that might represent the intentional release of a biological agent. The covert release of a biological agent will not have an immediate impact because of the delay between exposure and onset of illness. Consequently, the first indication of a biologic attack may only be identified when ill patients present to physicians or hospitals for care. Examples of clinical patterns that may represent a disease caused by a bioterrorist agent includes a widened mediastinum with fever and sepsis (inhalational anthrax); high fever followed by a vesicular or pustular rash with lesions more abundant on the face and extremities than the trunk and that are of the same age in a given area of the body (smallpox); and gram-negative pneumonia with hemoptysis (pneumonic plague).

For more information on bioterrorist agents, log on to the NYSDOH Health Provider Network at <https://commerce.health.state.ny.us/hpn>. If you do not have an HPN account, email bxr01@health.state.ny.us for assistance.

We appreciate your efforts to ensure that any potential significant exposures or disease events are detected and reported as quickly as possible.