

For Health Professionals

Health Alerts

Health Alert Advisory #58 - National Alert Level Raised to Orange - 12/22/2003

On Sunday, December 21, the nation's threat level was raised from elevated risk ("yellow") to high risk ("orange"), the second highest level of the Homeland Security Advisory System. The change was prompted by a belief on the part of the Department of Homeland Security that terrorists may attempt to attack the U.S. The Department of Homeland Security is taking measures across the country to raise preparedness to their highest levels. This includes increased security at U.S. borders and in the transportation, oil and food industries, as well as the mobilization of response and recovery teams across the nation.

At this time, public health officials are urged to be fully prepared to respond to terrorist attacks. Specific Public Health activities prudent at this time include:

- Ensure that surveillance and reporting measures are active and alerted to report any unusual disease or disease patterns, or chemical or radiation events
- Review specific emergency response plans
- Evaluate facilities and personnel to ensure the safety and security of both
- Educate employees on emergency procedures
- Ensure sufficient staffing to respond to potential widespread or multiple events threatening the nation's public health
- Ready communications systems to meet the needs of all audiences, including emergency responders, clinicians and the general public.