

2001

Regulatory and Public Service Programs' Strategy for the Prevention Of Bioterrorism in Areas Regulated

Our Mission.

Our mission is to anticipate and ensure as much as possible that regulated areas are protected from bioterrorist activities and that regulated areas of commerce can continue to serve South Carolina citizens.

Concerns.

The four areas of concern for potential bioterrorist attacks are:

- misuse of fertilizers;
- pesticide misuse or pesticides used deliberately as poisons;
- security of aerial applicators' aircraft; and
- introduction of human, livestock, or plant diseases and/or their vectors and subsequent pesticidal control.

Phase One Strategy.

The most likely bioterrorism scenarios involve pesticides, fertilizers, misuse of aircraft, and diseases vectored by insects. Purchases of toxic pesticides is highly regulated, due to the pesticide applicator license required and the alert sent to pesticide dealers of September 25, 2001. Invasive plant species and plant diseases that could be introduced by terrorists into South Carolina and the nation are serious concerns that cannot be ignored. Security of all types of aircraft is tantamount to the prevention of terrorism.

Our Response.

- Communication was made the week of September 17, 2001, with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), providing them with addresses and telephone numbers of all South Carolina aerial applicators.
- Communication was mailed September 19, 2001, to all South Carolina fertilizer registrants asking them to report to the FBI any unusual fertilizer purchases.
- Communication was mailed on September 25, 2001, after consultation with several South Carolina agencies and the Columbia Field Office of the FBI, to all 104 South Carolina aerial applicators requesting that they report suspicious persons to the FBI and secure their aircraft to every extent possible.
- Communication was mailed September 25, 2001, to all 304 South Carolina Pesticide Dealers requesting that they report suspicious persons to the FBI and to request that they secure highly toxic pesticides and fertilizers. Any shortages or thefts are to be reported to the FBI (803.551.4200).
- RPSP held a meeting on September 26, 2001, with Clemson University President James Barker, Vice President John Kelly, and Livestock-Poultry Health Director Dr. Jones Bryan to research bioterrorism prevention.
- Communication was mailed on October 1, 2001, to all South Carolina fertilizer manufacturers and distributors, asking them to report any suspicious sales of fertilizers and to keep all materials locked and secure.
- A meeting was held on December 12, 2001 with General R. S. Steve Siegfried (South Carolina Homeland Defense), Clemson University Vice President John Kelly, RPSP Director Dr. Neil Ogg, and Livestock-Poultry Director Dr. Jones Bryan to discuss the different areas of Public Service Activities and how they fit into the scope of Homeland Defense.

Phase Two Strategy.

The Department of Pesticide Regulation field staff began visiting all active South Carolina aerial applicators on September 28, 2001, stressing the importance of aircraft security and prevention of access by terrorists. These contacts have been completed.

The Department of Fertilizer and Seed Certification Services, a department of Regulatory and Public Service Programs, will assess the availability of fertilizers from popular home store chains. These materials are readily available from local farm suppliers. FSCS will write each farm supply outlet and other retail outlets and inform them of the need for additional security concerning sales or theft of these products. Unusual sales should be reported to the FBI (803.551.4200). Preliminary investigations into retail sites listed above do not indicate unusual fertilizer sales. Communication will be sent to their headquarters, regardless.

Phase Three Strategy.

In the event that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) orders additional grounding of aerial application aircraft, negotiations will be initiated with FAA and/or the FBI to seek permission for completion of needed aerial applications with the supervision of Regulatory and Public Services personnel. The possibility of grounding agricultural and/or other insect vector control aircraft still exists. Regulatory and Public Service Programs will utilize our existing strong relationships with respective State agencies to ensure uninterrupted insect vector control and agricultural operations.

Consideration of legislative changes and additional funding for increased regulatory programs for restricting sales of some fertilizers and licensing of individuals to purchase and sell such products may be necessary. This program would be similar to the current pesticide applicator and dealer/licensing program. Other regulations may be necessary.

Phase Four Strategy.

If there is a successful terrorist use of a pesticide, fertilizer, or aerial applicator aircraft, we will work with law enforcement agencies to investigate and find those responsible.

In the event of successful introduction of a disease agent vectored by insects or treated by pesticides, we will work with appropriate control agencies and the Environmental Protection Agency to ensure the most effective pesticidal tools and favorable application windows of time for effective control.

Budget, Alternative Funding Needs.

The budget cuts for Clemson RPSP and Public Service Activities by the General Assembly weighed against the budget proviso passed by the General Assembly last year still resulted in loss of \$80,000 to the extremely invasive weed Tropical Soda Apple control program. RPSP has covered this loss through increased efforts to obtain leverage through a federal cooperative agreement, but this is not a long-term solution. A budget proviso similar to the one passed in FY 2000-01 to allow us to keep all revenue our programs generate would offset projected budget deficits, but it is not likely to pass.

It has already been mentioned that a licensing program for sellers and purchasers of certain types of fertilizers may be necessary. In short, additional augmentation and no budget cuts for RPSP is imperative. Contact will be made with current federal funding agencies for alternative funding for these programs. However, increased state funding or fees would be necessary to increase our terrorism prevention efforts.

For more information, call Dr. Neil Ogg,
Director of RPSP, at 864.646.2120.
511 Westinghouse Road, Pendleton, SC, 29670
Email: nogg@clemson.edu
<http://drpsp.clemson.edu>

To contact the South Carolina office of
the Federal Bureau of Investigations
(FBI), call 803.551.4200.