

AFTER ACTION REPORT

**OPERATION KITTY HAWK
APRIL 6, 2006**

FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE

**FINAL REPORT
MAY 1, 2006**

Background

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is actively addressing the need to maintain the safety and defense of the country's food supply. During a crisis, it is critical that the Department be able to efficiently and effectively coordinate with its counterparts at the state and local level, as well as within other Federal agencies and the private sector. On April 6, 2006, USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) conducted Operation Kitty Hawk in Raleigh, North Carolina and at FSIS headquarters in Washington, DC. The Operation Kitty Hawk Exercise focused on the roles of Federal, state, and local government agencies and the food industry to work together to detect, respond to, and recover from a non-routine emergency incident. Emphasis was placed on a team approach to incident response, coordination, integration of capabilities, problem identification, and resolution through preparation, response, recovery, and multi-agency coordination. The exercise offered FSIS the opportunity to test and validate operating guidelines and directives for responding to a non-routine incident involving the intentional adulteration of food products within an FSIS inspected facility. The ultimate goals were:

- Minimizing suffering, loss of life, and personal injury
- Minimizing damage to property
- Minimizing disaster- or emergency-related service disruption, which would have an adverse impact on the government, the communities, and the businesses and their employees, reputation, and product brand names

This report identifies areas of strength and weakness that were observed during the exercise and offers recommendations for improvement.

Objectives

Operation Kitty Hawk focused on enhancing the coordination and communication between FSIS, other regional Federal agencies, state and local government agencies, and industry stakeholders. The objectives for Operation Kitty Hawk were to clarify roles and responsibilities and improve coordination and communication among:

- FSIS Program Offices and associated field staffs
- State and local public health and emergency response agencies
- Primary Federal emergency response organizations
- Private sector stakeholders in the food industry

Strengths of the Exercise – What Worked Well?

The exercise involved strong participation by the following stakeholder groups:

- FSIS field and Headquarters personnel from OFO, OPEER, OPHS, OIA, OPPED, and OFDER
- Staff from AMS, FDA, FBI, DHS, and the USDA Office of Inspector General
- North Carolina government agencies, including the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, North Carolina Public Health, and North Carolina Department of Environmental and Natural Resources
- South Carolina agencies, including the South Carolina Department of Agriculture, South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, and Clemson University
- Wake County, NC government agencies and Duke-Raleigh Hospital
- Food industry, including Gold Kist Inc., Knauss Snack Food Company, Premium Standard Farms, Sears Holding Corporation, Food Lion, and Lowes Foods

Participants were actively engaged in the exercise. There was open dialogue and good networking among stakeholder groups.

Local public health agencies worked closely with state agencies.

Areas for Improvement – What Did Not Work Well in the Exercise?

Communication between the FSIS Raleigh District Office and FSIS Headquarters about the FSIS ICS structure and some response actions (e.g., recall, IAP) was problematic.

There was some concern expressed by FSIS staff that the exercise scenario and injects did not require enough participation to sufficiently test the OPHS or OIA emergency management SOPs.

Some participants expressed the concern that the timeline of the exercise unfolded too quickly to allow them to test their emergency response procedures.

The exercise Situation Manual generally was not used by the participants.

Incident Command System (ICS) Issues

What triggered each stakeholder group to organize into or participate in a multi-agency incident command structure?

- Local/County – adverse health effects and the need for multiple agency involvement in response
- State – automatically activated at state level in North Carolina if more than one county is involved in incident response; South Carolina activation based on information based received from North Carolina
- FSIS – FSIS ICS structure activated in response to EOC requests by local and state government
- Other federal – reports of product tampering
- Industry – Processing industry representatives were invited to participate in the FSIS ICS structure as subject matter experts. Retail industry representatives coordinated with the North Carolina EOC due to participation in the North Carolina Task Force.

What was the effectiveness of the ICS structure for this exercise?

- Worked fairly well – coordination on track
- Ended up in Unified Command structure
- Industry participants representing the retail segment of the supply chain had several questions about how they would participate in a Unified Command.

Who was in charge?

- There was some confusion by industry about who was in charge at different phases in the exercise.
- Initial Incident Command was at the local level.
- The state assumed command once the EOC was activated.
- The FBI would take charge of the criminal investigation but not public health protection.

Were decisions coordinated among stakeholder groups?

- There was coordination among stakeholder groups. As the number of stakeholder groups increases, the ability to provide representatives to all groups may be limited by the availability of personnel.
- South Carolina government agencies coordinated with their counterparts in North Carolina. Cross-state TTXs are beneficial because they allow use of ESF structure.
- Weakest link was state-federal coordination

Other Observations

- Industry is a key stakeholder group in incident response because they own the infrastructure that is subject to attack
- Economic issues are important considerations in recovery – industry representatives had questions about financial compensation from government agencies
- Tabletop exercises are valuable tools because they allow response systems to be tested
- The ability to quickly release product distribution information in an emergency is an important issue
- Development of press releases needs to consider what the public should be told about the collection and disposition of adulterated products already purchased by consumers

Recommendations

FSIS should evaluate its ICS structure and determine the roles that various stakeholder groups (e.g., local and state government agencies, industry, consumer groups, and political officials) play in interacting with FSIS in response to non-routine incidents.

FSIS OPAEO should explore the possibility of deploying a PIO to the field to better assist the FSIS Incident Commander in communication with other stakeholder groups and Headquarters.

FSIS OPAEO's role in reporting of non-routine incidents should be reviewed and revised, as needed.

Better coordination and communication among all stakeholder groups, particularly federal and state response agencies, is needed. Regular meetings to update partners on issues, such as the North Carolina Task Force, should be considered.

State action plans should be reviewed and revised, as needed, based on the results of the exercise.

Government at all levels needs to work with industry on response actions.

There is a need for continued coordination in the development of press releases and communication with consumers – participants should clarify responsibilities of stakeholder groups.

Disposal and decontamination planning and communication among the various stakeholder groups should be an area of future focus.

DHS FEMA should consider conducting similar exercises involving the food sector.

Develop and distribute a list of federal, state, and local agency points of contacts for organizations likely to be involved in emergency response actions for food adulteration incidents.

Distribute exercise participant lists to facilitate continued interaction among participants following the exercise.

Further consideration should be given to industry reimbursement by government agencies for response actions costs. This financial compensation would help industry more quickly recover from an attack on the infrastructure of the food sector.