

# Some Experts Fear our Preparations Are Woefully Inadequate



Many experts warn the United States is unprepared for a bioterrorism attack. (AP Photo)

By **MARC LALLANILLA**



**Dec. 2, 2004** — During the anthrax scare of 2001, when envelopes containing the deadly bacteria were mailed to locations throughout the country, 22 people were infected with the disease. Five eventually died.

The incident, occurring shortly after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, underscored the vulnerability of the United States to bioterrorism. Those responsible for the anthrax scare have never been found.

## RELATED STORIES

- [New Bacteria Threaten Public Health](#)
- [Health System Struggles Against New Bugs](#)

## MORE HEADLINES

- [Is the United States Ready for a Bioterrorism Attack?](#)
- [Women's Cardiac Troubles Often Misdiagnosed](#)
- [New Female Sex Drug Raises Safety Concerns](#)

But has our preparedness improved since then? According to many experts, the answer is no.

And anthrax is only one of several bacteria and viruses that could be used in a bioterrorist attack.

"Anthrax is easier to come by and people have used it recently," said Kyle Olson, vice president of CRA, a consulting firm specializing in bioterror under contract to the Department of Homeland Security.

Referring to the anthrax scare of 2001, Olson said, "He/she/they are still out there and may be biding their time and making more. If you can make a little, you can make a lot. That's a scenario that has a lot of people bothered."

## **Easily Spread and Deadly**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention classifies six pathogens as Class A bioterrorism agents: smallpox, plague, botulism, tularemia, hemorrhagic fever and anthrax.

Michael Greenberger, director of the University of Maryland Center for Health and Homeland Security in Baltimore, explains that the Class A pathogens share some common traits: they can be easily spread, all of them can be deadly, and even a small dose could cause widespread damage and fear throughout a populated area.

To address these concerns, the CDC in 1999 began to develop the Strategic National Stockpile, a nationwide system of storage facilities with equipment and supplies to address an emergency like a bioterrorist attack.

The SNS would supplement efforts by state and local agencies to respond to a public health emergency. And by most accounts, the stockpile has the equipment to do so.

"The SNS is in pretty good shape," said Olson. "There are multiple stockpiles in numerous sites around the country of drugs, antibiotics, medical equipment, even things like gloves and tongue depressors."

### **Continued**

1. [2.](#) [3.](#) [NEXT»](#)

- [Print This Article](#)[Print This Article](#)
- [E-mail This Article](#)[Email This Article](#)

## **SEARCH**

- [Advanced Search](#)
- [Click here to download your FREE ABC News Search Toolbar](#)

## **MORE HEADLINES**

- [Is the United States Ready for a Bioterrorism Attack?](#)
- [Women's Cardiac Troubles Often Misdiagnosed](#)
- [New Female Sex Drug Raises Safety Concerns](#)

## **Most Sent Headlines**

- [Americans' Role Eyed in U.N. Oil Scandal](#)
- [U.S. Falling Behind in Science](#)
- [Women's Cardiac Troubles Often Misdiagnosed](#)
- [More Most Sent Headlines](#)

# **ABC News Home**

[Contact ABC News](#) . [Help & Info](#) . [Advertising Info](#) . [Terms of Use](#) . [Privacy Policy](#)

Copyright © 2004 ABC News Internet Ventures