

Bioterrorism

Although we do not want to believe bioterrorism will occur in Nebraska, the lessons learned from the Oklahoma bombing demonstrate that terrorism can strike anywhere in the United States. We have already seen in the news several examples of exposures or threatened exposures to anthrax spores and these situations are expected to become more frequent. A national effort is being made to prepare for the threat of bioterrorism. The CDC is evaluating the ability of State agencies to respond to various types of exposures with the essential question being what capabilities should each state provide? When terrorist activities occur, they typically overwhelm even the best prepared laboratories and agencies intended to respond to the emergency. The NPHL is investigating new diagnostic capabilities for identifying organisms likely to be used in bioterrorism and is working closely with state authorities and the CDC in this effort. It is likely that every hospital and regional laboratory throughout the state will want to prepare a response plan in the near future. We invite any comments or suggestions you may have regarding this important issue.

Steven H. Hinrichs, M.D.

Director, Nebraska Public Health Laboratory