

# **West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Information for the Public – Bioterrorism Preparedness**

## **What is bioterrorism?**

“Bioterrorism” is the use of disease-causing bacteria, viruses, or toxins in terrorist acts. Smallpox and anthrax are two of the most often mentioned germs bioterrorists could use. Other examples include botulinium toxin, tularemia, and plague.

## **How likely is a bioterrorist attack in West Virginia?**

Noone knows. Historically, the individual risk from disease due to bioterrorism has been very, very small; however, noone can predict the future behavior of a criminal.

## **How can I protect myself and my family?**

Disaster response experts recommend having a ‘family plan’ in case of disaster. Guidelines on development of a plan are available from Homeland Security (<http://www.ready.gov/>), the American Academy of Pediatrics (<http://www.aap.org/family/frk/frkit.htm>) or the American Red Cross ([http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/0,1082,0\\_601\\_00.html](http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/0,1082,0_601_00.html)).

As you prepare for a disaster, focus on the more common disaster scenarios such as fires and floods. If you plan effectively for these common scenarios, you will have a plan that you can adapt to a variety of situations.

## **Are there any specific actions I should take to protect myself against bioterrorism?**

No. The individual risk of disease due to bioterrorism has historically been very low, and noone can predict what agent might be used or whether an event is likely to occur. During an event, health officials and disaster response agencies will get information to you about any action you should take. Your best defense is having a good general family disaster plan - a plan you can adapt to a variety of circumstances. Talk to your family about your plan and practice regularly.

## **Where can I get more information about bioterrorism?**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/> or the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources: <http://www.wvdhhr.org/IDEP/a-z/a-z-bioterrorism.asp>