



Committee on
HOMELAND SECURITY
Chairman Michael McCaul

Opening Statement

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**Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Susan W. Brooks (R-IN)
Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications
U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security**

Field Hearing: “Assessing Central Indiana's Preparedness for a Mass Casualty Event”

Remarks as Prepared

As Chairman of the Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response and Communications, it is a great honor for me to be here in Carmel City Hall to discuss Central Indiana’s preparedness for a mass casualty event. As a former Deputy Mayor of Indianapolis and U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Indiana, I have had the privilege of working with some of the finest first responders, law enforcement personnel and emergency managers in the State. I also had the opportunity to travel to FEMA’s training academy and receive valuable training on crisis communications. This training further demonstrated that those involved in preparing for, responding to and recovering from a disaster are selfless professionals.

We are fortunate to have such dedicated individuals here in Central Indiana, as we face our fair share of threats and hazards. According to Indiana’s recent Threat Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA), natural disasters, industrial emergencies and cyber-attacks rank among the highest concerns. I also received a briefing last week from the Department of Homeland Security regarding the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction. Chemical, biological, nuclear and radiological attacks are still very real threats. A successful attack in the Indianapolis area could severely strain our medical and hospital systems, and have grave consequences for our people and our economy.

After the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the 9/11 Commission, co-led by former Indiana Congressman Lee Hamilton, stated that one of the main failures that led to the attack was our own lack of imagination. Although Central Indiana may be more susceptible to events such as flooding and

tornadoes, we must not let our own failure of imagination catch us flat footed and we must be prepared for the range of threats to which we are vulnerable.

For example, there are many unexpected incidents that can occur in our area. As we saw in the West, Texas fertilizer explosion a few months ago, an industrial incident, whether intentional or accidental, can cause great damage, injury and loss of life. In addition, we must also be ready for the large special events that we host, such as the Indianapolis 500, the Final Four, and the Super Bowl, which all present unique situations and challenges for law enforcement, responders, and emergency managers.

As we approach September, which is National Preparedness Month, we must ask ourselves if we are doing everything that we can to be prepared. After the Boston bombings, I asked myself how would we have handled a similar attack? In Boston, we saw a coordinated response from first responders, law enforcement personnel and medical personnel that no doubt saved lives and mitigated damages. Are we as prepared? Boston's success was, in part, due to their preparations for this type of event. They effectively used federal grant dollars to improve their security programs, they held training and exercises to test their plans, and they promoted the use of interoperable communications across multiple jurisdictions and sectors. In November of last year, the city took part in an exercise called "Urban Shield." The scenario was designed to assess the region's overall response capabilities to a series of complex incidents. The exercise tested among other things, operational coordination and public health and medical service capabilities. Additionally, the helicopter borne Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) Imaging Unit that the Massachusetts State Police used to locate and capture Dzhokhar Tsarnaev was purchased with State Homeland Security Grant program funds.

We have held some emergency related exercises here in Indiana. On July 21, NORTHCOM began an exercise called Vibrant Response 13-2 at Muscatatuck Urban Training Center. This exercise simulates a nuclear detonation in an urban environment, spans five weeks, and includes 8,000 personnel from 22 states. Later this month, the Navy and Department of Energy will conduct an exercise focusing on the derailment of a train transporting spent fuel shipments. This exercise is designed to provide practical experience to emergency management personnel and policymakers, with an opportunity to observe how the Navy and Department of Energy officials will interact during this type of incident.

Today, I want to learn what else Central Indiana is doing to prepare for a mass casualty event. I would like to hear what planning, training and exercises are taking place, and I also want to hear of any areas where we may need to improve in order to be as prepared as we can be. Benjamin Franklin once said that, "By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail." Let's use our imaginations. In doing so, I believe we'll be better prepared - for both the known and unknown.

We have two very distinguished panels of witnesses here today and I look forward to their testimony.

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