

Testimony of  
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*Homeland Security Advisory System: Threat Codes and Public Response*

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, for your gracious invitation to testify this morning. My name is Chuck Connor and I serve as Senior Vice President of Communications and Marketing at the American Red Cross national headquarters.

The timing of this hearing is most appropriate—March has traditionally been designated “American Red Cross Month” by the President to highlight the work of an organization that was founded in 1881 by Clara Barton and chartered by the Congress in 1905 to provide humanitarian services to the United States in times of need. Every year since 1943, the President of the United States has proclaimed March as Red Cross Month. This year, President George W. Bush signed the Presidential Proclamation, continuing this proud tradition. As a result, March has become a time for the Red Cross to commemorate its past accomplishments and to look forward to future goals.

Our dedication to helping make families and communities safer at home and around the world is continuous. Governed by volunteers and supported by charitable donations, the American Red Cross is a nationwide network of nearly 900 chapters and 36 Blood Services regions dedicated to saving lives and helping people prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies. With 1.2 million volunteers and 32,000 employees, the Red Cross annually mobilizes relief to families affected by nearly 70,000 disasters, trains almost 12 million people in lifesaving skills and exchanges more than a million emergency messages between U.S. military service personnel and their families. The Red Cross is the largest supplier of blood and blood products to more than 3,000 hospitals across the nation and also assists victims of international disasters and conflicts at locations worldwide.

As the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) marked its one-year anniversary a few weeks ago, the Red Cross was recognized for its pivotal role in keeping the nation prepared. As a valuable partner with DHS, the Red Cross continues to help equip Americans for emergency situations by training the public in lifesaving skills, recruiting volunteers and providing valuable preparedness information to individuals, families, schools and workplaces.

In fact, the strong relationship that exists between DHS and the Red Cross has been mentioned on numerous occasions by Secretary Ridge, most recently as an integral partner in preparedness and response.

We are the only non-governmental agency assigned a lead role in the Federal Response Plan coordinated under FEMA and DHS. We are the lead agency for Emergency Support Function #6 -- Mass Care - the shelter, feeding and clothing of disaster victims - and we're a support agency to the Department of Health and Human Services for Emergency Support Function #8 - Health and Medical Services. That's the provision of blood, first aid, basic health care and mental health counseling. As the Federal Response plan is rolled into the new, more comprehensive National Response Plan, Red Cross anticipates an expanded role.

Furthermore, the Red Cross has a position on the Interagency Incident Management Group (IIMG) as the subject matter expert for Mass Care and serves as the only non-governmental organization with an assigned staffing position. At the first sign of an increased threat, the IIMG is stood up to provide policy recommendations to Secretary Ridge. For example, the Red Cross staffed the IIMG during last summer's northeast blackout, Hurricane Isabel, on New Year's Eve and during the recent "Unified Defense 04" national terrorism training exercise.

We also commend the dedicated efforts of our President, our partners at DHS, and each of you for the significant actions that have been undertaken to strengthen our nation's homeland security.

The importance of partnerships in our work cannot be understated. Going it alone is no longer an option as the frequency, scope and scale of disasters—both natural and human-made—is on the rise. Perhaps our most important partner is the government at every level—federal, state and local. The government relies on us as well to address the huge challenges of public preparedness, particularly in an all-hazards environment. And, the Red Cross cannot be effective unless we're at the table working closely with the government.

We are all partners in this endeavor—government, the Red Cross, the private sector, and each and every American. All of us in this room and beyond need to prepare ourselves for whatever may come. The federal government cannot do that for us—necessity dictates that it address the nation's capabilities and response strategies from the top down. That's where the Red Cross comes in.

As the Department of Homeland Security has assumed the mammoth responsibility for domestic security, it has focused on operational preparedness. It has been marshalling resources, modeling terrorist scenarios and their likely implications, focusing on the needs of the first responder community—police, firemen, and EMTs—as they should.

But, while the Department of Homeland Security oversees massive efforts to prepare governments and public agencies at all levels for every type of disaster, it's our responsibility at the Red Cross to prepare the general public. And we take that responsibility very seriously.

Before I address the specific focus of this hearing—the threat alert system—I would like to briefly expand upon the importance of public preparedness—the theme for Red Cross Month 2004—and the role of the Red Cross.

In January, Red Cross President and CEO Marty Evans issued a strong wake up call to the American public to remember the importance of being prepared. Despite growing concerns about terrorism and human-made disasters, in addition to the onslaught of fires, tornadoes, floods and other natural disasters that the United States faces every year, Americans continue to go unprepared. Amazingly, there are 175 million people out there who are basically asleep at the switch when it comes to their own, and their family's, safety and security.

Last year reminds us all that we live in unpredictable times. Not only did we observe the second anniversary of a devastating terrorist attack, but we also had to face our vulnerability to the forces of nature. An extraordinary string of more than 516 tornadoes wiped out large swaths of the Midwest and Southeast - killing 39 people in a single month. Hurricane Isabel battered the East coast in September. And, wildfires and mudslides ravaged whole communities in Southern California in October. It was tragic to see an entire community burned to the ground.

Add to that a rash of power outages in the Northeast in August and the tens of thousands of single-family house fires across the nation over the course of the year, and you get a sense of how busy we've been at the Red Cross. Most of these disasters never make the news; we call them our “silent” disasters. With over half the U.S. population living in coastal communities... and nearly a third in the top nine metropolitan areas, the risk of catastrophic and mass casualty disasters increases annually. And that's without adding in the threat of terrorism. To highlight the myriad of disasters that impacted our nation last year and to focus the public's attention on the continuing importance of preparedness, we will be releasing *America's Disasters 2003—A Call to Action* in the coming weeks with valuable information and statistics.

As Admiral Evans noted in her remarks, we are a nation of resilient, optimistic individuals. We have not let the increased threat of danger deter us from living our lives, and we applaud and share that spirit.

But, what concerns us is the lack of reasonable preparedness on the part of the general public. According to a study the Red Cross commissioned last year, close to 60 percent of Americans are wholly unprepared for a disaster of any description. They don't have a family emergency plan, nor are they aware of school, workplace and community procedures. They have not stocked emergency supplies, nor have they sought even basic first-aid and CPR training. They're not giving blood, nor are they donating their time or money to emergency support services like the American Red Cross.

In February 2003, the Red Cross launched the *Together We Prepare* campaign, challenging individuals, businesses and communities to take responsibility for their safety

and that of their families, homes and their neighborhoods. By following five basic steps, we can all move toward greater safety.

- Make a plan—Design a Family (Home) Disaster Plan. Work with neighbors and co-workers to create Community and Workplace Disaster Plans.
- Build a kit—Assemble Disaster Supply Kits, which contain items that people may need (1) if confined to their home or place of business for an extended period or (2) if they are told to evacuate on short notice.
- Get trained—Learn to save lives. The Red Cross offers classes year round to individuals and businesses on first aid, CPR, and use of automated external defibrillators, or AEDs.
- Volunteer—Give of yourself. Supporting the Red Cross mission, whether sharing your time or money, means that they will be there to respond immediately whenever the need arises.
- Give blood—Become a regular and frequent blood donor to ensure a blood supply that meets all needs, all of the time. It is critical that the Red Cross maintain at least a 5- to 7-day blood supply. To do so, more Americans need to become first time and repeat donors. Only five percent of the eligible population donates blood. Having current donors donate more frequently is not sufficient to meet that need. So mark your calendars—our next blood drive in the House of Representatives is scheduled for April 15.

Whether it's an act of terrorism or an act of God, the five easy steps I just outlined will help you prepare for it. You can make a plan, build a kit, get trained, volunteer and give blood... the five basic building blocks of the Red Cross *Together We Prepare* program.

We introduced the *Together We Prepare* program to empower people to shoulder the responsibility for their own safety and security by laying out the five pro-active steps that individuals and families can take to prepare for any emergency.

That's the critical point, actually. The more empowered and self-sufficient you and I feel, the more immediately effective we can be in a crisis situation. We become less of a burden to the 9-1-1 emergency call system, and our state and local public health and emergency responders. It makes sense—if you and your family have a plan, it goes into action in a disaster. You're not fumbling around looking for help and guidance. You're in charge of your own destiny.

Now, I would like to turn to the primary focus of this hearing. Our efforts to advocate disaster preparedness to the American public cannot be understated. This nationwide education effort focuses on personal and family preparedness for disasters of all types and magnitudes—whether at home, at school, or in the workplace. A critical part of this effort includes public education regarding the meaning of each alert level within the

Homeland Security Advisory System and the immediate actions required to ensure safety and security.

As you know, the White House issued Homeland Security Directive #3 in March 2002, which established five threat conditions for possible terrorist attack:

Green—Low  
Blue—Guarded  
Yellow—Elevated  
Orange—High  
Red—Severe

General explanations were given for preparedness activities for each level, but these were intended mainly for government agencies. However, across the country, questions of “What does a condition ‘yellow’ mean to me or my family?” or “What does this mean for my business or my children’s school?” Working with the Office of Homeland Security at that time, Red Cross developed specific disaster readiness guidelines for individuals, families, neighborhoods, schools and businesses, and released a complementary set of guidelines. Each color-coded threat category was further expanded to provide recommended actions for different constituencies as follows:

Individuals  
Families  
Neighborhoods  
Schools  
Businesses

As part of our expanding preparedness and response role, we are continuing to keep America informed of the Department’s Terrorism Threat Level recommendations and the appropriate actions to take if the level is raised or lowered. We are also working with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) on the most effective means of providing bioterrorism risk information.

Through our nationwide, community-based network of chapters and blood services regions, and supported by resources at the regional and national level, we have forged many collaborative partnerships with federal, state, and local agencies. Once notified of a status level change, the Red Cross implements procedures and protocols to ensure the organization can provide a swift, efficient, and supportive response in the case of an incident.

Similarly, the Red Cross is looked upon by the public as a primary source of emergency preparedness information. When a change in status takes place, the Red Cross communicates this change and critical emergency preparedness information, and its meaning, to the public through national news releases and the communication resources of our nationwide disaster services network.

Preparedness information, once taken to heart, empowers all who use it to be more responsible for their own security and that of their family. This preparedness education effort belies our stature as America's premiere disaster response organization.

For information about any Red Cross programs or opportunities to support Red Cross, you can log on to [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) or call 1-866-GET-INFO. Taking a step toward your own safety and security is as easy as picking up the phone... signing up at the next company blood drive... storing some water and non-perishables in the basement. So, why don't we all do it?

In a world where the forces of nature and man too often collide, the Red Cross is a beacon showing people the way to safety. We owe it to ourselves, our families, our communities to prepare for the unexpected. That's our challenge to America today—don't let disaster take you or your family by surprise again! Like the Red Cross, have a plan, get involved, join with us.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to appear before this distinguished panel. I would be pleased to answer your questions.



## Homeland Security Advisory System Recommendations

### Individual

<u>Risk of Attack</u>	<u>Recommended Actions</u>
<b>SEVERE</b> <i>(Red)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Complete recommended actions at lower levels</i></li> <li>• Listen to radio/TV for current information/instructions</li> <li>• Be alert to suspicious activity and report it to proper authorities immediately</li> <li>• Contact business to determine status of work day</li> <li>• Adhere to any travel restrictions announced by local governmental authorities</li> <li>• Be prepared to shelter in place or evacuate if instructed to do so by local governmental authorities</li> <li>• Provide volunteer services only as requested</li> </ul>
<b>HIGH</b> <i>(Orange)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Complete recommended actions at lower levels</i></li> <li>• Be alert to suspicious activity and report it to proper authorities</li> <li>• Review your personal disaster plan</li> <li>• Exercise caution when traveling</li> <li>• Have shelter in place materials on hand and review procedure in <a href="#">Terrorism: Preparing for the Unexpected</a> brochure</li> <li>• If a need is announced, donate blood at designated blood collection center</li> <li>• Prior to volunteering, contact agency to determine their needs</li> </ul>
<b>ELEVATED</b> <i>(Yellow)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Complete recommended actions at lower levels</i></li> <li>• Be alert to suspicious activity and report it to proper authorities</li> <li>• Ensure disaster supplies kit is stocked and ready</li> <li>• Check telephone numbers and e-mail addresses in your personal communication plan and update as necessary</li> <li>• Develop alternate routes to/from work/school and practice them</li> <li>• Continue to provide volunteer services</li> </ul>
<b>GUARDED</b> <i>(Blue)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Complete recommended actions at lower level</i></li> <li>• Be alert to suspicious activity and report it to proper authorities</li> <li>• Review stored disaster supplies and replace items that are outdated</li> <li>• Develop emergency communication plan with family/neighbors/friends</li> <li>• Provide volunteer services and take advantage of additional volunteer training opportunities</li> </ul>
<b>LOW</b> <i>(Green)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain copy of <a href="#">Terrorism: Preparing for the Unexpected</a> brochure from your local Red Cross chapter</li> <li>• Develop a personal disaster plan and disaster supplies kit using Red Cross brochures <a href="#">Your Family Disaster Plan</a> and <a href="#">Your Family Disaster Supplies Kit</a></li> <li>• Examine volunteer opportunities in you community; choose an agency to volunteer with and receive initial training</li> <li>• Take a Red Cross CPR/AED and first aid course</li> </ul>

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## Homeland Security Advisory System Recommendations

### Family

<u>Risk of Attack</u>	<u>Recommended Actions</u>
<b>SEVERE</b> (Red)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Complete recommended actions at lower levels</i></li> <li>• Listen to radio/TV for current information/instructions</li> <li>• Be alert to suspicious activity and report it to proper authorities immediately</li> <li>• Contact business/school to determine status of work/school day</li> <li>• Adhere to any travel restrictions announced by local governmental authorities</li> <li>• Be prepared to shelter in place or evacuate if instructed to do so by local governmental authorities</li> <li>• Discuss children's fears concerning possible/actual terrorist attacks</li> </ul>
<b>HIGH</b> (Orange)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Complete recommended actions at lower levels</i></li> <li>• Be alert to suspicious activity and report it to proper authorities</li> <li>• Review disaster plan with all family members</li> <li>• Ensure communication plan is understood/practiced by all family members</li> <li>• Exercise caution when traveling</li> <li>• Have shelter in place materials on hand and understand procedure</li> <li>• Discuss children's fears concerning possible terrorist attacks</li> <li>• If a need is announced, donate blood at designated blood collection center</li> </ul>
<b>ELEVATED</b> (Yellow)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Complete recommended actions at lower levels</i></li> <li>• Be alert to suspicious activity and report it to proper authorities</li> <li>• Ensure disaster supplies kit is stocked and ready</li> <li>• Check telephone numbers and e-mail addresses in your family emergency communication plan and update as necessary</li> <li>• If not known to you, contact school to determine their emergency notification and evacuation plans for children</li> <li>• Develop alternate routes to/from school/work and practice them</li> </ul>
<b>GUARDED</b> (Blue)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Complete recommended actions at lower level</i></li> <li>• Be alert to suspicious activity and report it to proper authorities</li> <li>• Review stored disaster supplies and replace items that are outdated</li> <li>• Develop an emergency communication plan that all family members understand</li> <li>• Establish an alternate meeting place away from home with family/friends</li> </ul>
<b>LOW</b> (Green)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain copy of <a href="#">Terrorism: Preparing for the Unexpected</a> brochure from your local Red Cross chapter</li> <li>• Develop a personal disaster plan and disaster supplies kit using Red Cross brochures <a href="#">Your Family Disaster Plan</a> and <a href="#">Your Family Disaster Supplies Kit</a></li> <li>• Take a Red Cross CPR/AED and first aid course</li> </ul>

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## Homeland Security Advisory System Recommendations

### Neighborhood

<u>Risk of Attack</u>	<u>Recommended Actions</u>
<b>SEVERE</b> <i>(Red)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Complete recommended actions at lower levels</i></li> <li>• Listen to radio/TV for current information/instructions</li> <li>• Be alert to suspicious activity and report it to proper authorities immediately</li> <li>• Adhere to any travel restrictions announced by local governmental authorities</li> <li>• Be prepared to shelter in place/evacuate and assist neighbors who are elderly or have special needs to do the same</li> </ul>
<b>HIGH</b> <i>(Orange)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Complete recommended actions at lower levels</i></li> <li>• Be alert to suspicious activity and report it to proper authorities</li> <li>• Check on neighbors who are elderly or have special needs to ensure they are okay. Review disaster plan with them</li> <li>• If a need is announced, contact nearest blood collection agency and offer to organize a neighborhood blood drive</li> </ul>
<b>ELEVATED</b> <i>(Yellow)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Complete recommended actions at lower levels</i></li> <li>• Be alert to suspicious activity and report it to proper authorities</li> <li>• Have neighborhood meeting in order to identify neighbors who are elderly or have special needs. Assist them in development of a personal disaster plan and disaster supplies kit if requested.</li> </ul>
<b>GUARDED</b> <i>(Blue)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Complete recommended actions at lower level</i></li> <li>• Be alert to suspicious activity and report it to proper authorities</li> <li>• Ask the local Red Cross chapter to offer a presentation called "Preparing for the Unexpected" at an upcoming neighborhood meeting</li> </ul>
<b>LOW</b> <i>(Green)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have neighborhood meeting to discuss emergency plans and establish a 'Neighborhood Watch'</li> <li>• Obtain copies of <a href="#">Terrorism: Preparing for the Unexpected</a> brochure from your local Red Cross chapter and distribute at neighborhood meeting</li> <li>• Promote or arrange for people in the neighborhood to take a Red Cross CPR/AED and first aid course</li> </ul>

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## Homeland Security Advisory System Recommendations

### Schools

<u>Risk of Attack</u>	<u>Recommended Actions</u>
<b>SEVERE</b> <i>(Red)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Complete recommended actions at lower levels</i></li> <li>• Listen to radio/TV for current information/instructions</li> <li>• Be alert to suspicious activity and report it to proper authorities immediately</li> <li>• Close school if recommended to do so by appropriate authorities</li> <li>• 100% identification check (i.e. -driver's license retained at front office) and escort of anyone entering school other than students, staff and faculty</li> <li>• Continue offering lessons from Masters of Disaster "Facing Fear: Helping Young People Deal with Terrorism and Tragic Events" curriculum</li> <li>• Ensure mental health counselors available for students, staff and faculty</li> </ul>
<b>HIGH</b> <i>(Orange)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Complete recommended actions at lower levels</i></li> <li>• Be alert to suspicious activity and report it to proper authorities</li> <li>• Review emergency plans</li> <li>• Offer Masters of Disaster "Facing Fear: Helping Young People Deal with Terrorism and Tragic Events" lessons in grades K-12</li> <li>• Prepare to handle inquiries from anxious parents and media</li> <li>• Discuss children's fears concerning possible terrorist attacks</li> </ul>
<b>ELEVATED</b> <i>(Yellow)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Complete recommended actions at lower levels</i></li> <li>• Be alert to suspicious activity and report it to the proper authorities</li> <li>• Ensure all emergency supplies stocked and ready</li> <li>• Obtain copies of <a href="#">Terrorism: Preparing for the Unexpected</a> brochure from your local Red Cross chapter and send it home with students in grades K-12, staff and faculty</li> </ul>
<b>GUARDED</b> <i>(Blue)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Complete recommended actions at lower level</i></li> <li>• Be alert to suspicious activity and report it to proper authorities</li> <li>• Conduct safety training/emergency drills following the school's written emergency plan for all grades</li> <li>• Ensure emergency communication plan updated and needed equipment is purchased</li> <li>• Continue offering lessons from "Masters of Disaster" curriculum for grades K-8 regarding emergency preparedness for natural disasters</li> </ul>
<b>LOW</b> <i>(Green)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use Red Cross <a href="#">Emergency Management Guide for Business and Industry</a> to develop written emergency plans to address all hazards including plans to maintain the safety of students, staff, and faculty, as well as an emergency communication plan to notify parents in times of emergency. Disseminate relevant information to families of children, staff and faculty.</li> <li>• Initiate offering "Masters of Disaster" curriculum for grades K-8 regarding emergency preparedness for natural disasters</li> <li>• Ensure selected staff members take a Red Cross CPR/AED and first aid course</li> </ul>

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## Homeland Security Advisory System Recommendations

### Businesses

<u>Risk of Attack</u>	<u>Recommended Actions</u>
<b>SEVERE</b> <i>(Red)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Complete recommended actions at lower levels</i></li> <li>• Listen to radio/TV for current information/instructions</li> <li>• Be alert to suspicious activity and report it to proper authorities immediately</li> <li>• Work with local community leaders, emergency management, government agencies, community organizations, and utilities to meet immediate needs of the community</li> <li>• Determine need to close business based on circumstances and in accordance with written emergency plan</li> <li>• Be prepared to work with a dispersed or smaller work force</li> <li>• Ensure mental health counselors available for employees</li> </ul>
<b>HIGH</b> <i>(Orange)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Complete recommended actions at lower levels</i></li> <li>• Be alert to suspicious activity and report it to proper authorities</li> <li>• Review emergency plans to include continuity of operations and media materials on hand</li> <li>• Determine need to restrict access to business or provide private security firm support/reinforcement</li> <li>• Contact vendors/suppliers to confirm their emergency response plan procedures</li> <li>• If a need is announced, contact nearest blood collection agency and offer to organize a blood drive</li> </ul>
<b>ELEVATED</b> <i>(Yellow)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Complete recommended actions at lower levels</i></li> <li>• Be alert to suspicious activity and report it to proper authorities</li> <li>• Contact private security firm for security risk assessment and to determine availability of support/reinforcement</li> <li>• Contact voluntary organizations you support to determine how you can provide assistance in case of emergency</li> </ul>
<b>GUARDED</b> <i>(Blue)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Complete recommended actions at lower level</i></li> <li>• Be alert to suspicious activity and report it to proper authorities</li> <li>• Dialogue with community leaders, emergency management, government agencies, community organizations and utilities about disaster preparedness</li> <li>• Ensure emergency communication plan updated to include purchase of needed equipment.</li> <li>• Ask the local Red Cross chapter to provide a "Terrorism: Preparing for the Unexpected" presentation at your workplace for employees</li> </ul>
<b>LOW</b> <i>(Green)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use Red Cross <a href="#">Emergency Management Guide for Business and Industry</a> to develop written emergency plans to address all hazards. Include an emergency communication plan to notify employees of activities; designate an off-site 'report to' location in case of evacuation.</li> <li>• Develop continuity of operations plan to include designating alternate work facility/location for business</li> <li>• Arrange for staff to take a Red Cross CPR/AED and first aid course</li> <li>• Obtain copies of <a href="#">Terrorism: Preparing for the Unexpected</a> and <a href="#">Preparing Your Business for the Unthinkable</a> brochures from your local Red Cross chapter for distribution to all employees/management as appropriate.</li> </ul>

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