

## Communications Toolkit for Stakeholders Resources for Fourth Generation Agent Emergency Preparedness and Response

### *Sample cover email from stakeholders to their members*

Dear Members,

New resources are available from the U.S. government to help emergency responders and healthcare workers develop specific guidance and training to protect themselves and save lives during incidents involving fourth generation nerve agents, also known as Novichoks or A-series nerve agents. The resources are available on the Chemical Hazards Emergency Medical Management (CHEMM) website at <https://chemm.nlm.nih.gov/nerveagents/FGA.htm>.

After the incidents in the United Kingdom in 2018 involving a fourth generation agent, the White House National Security Council convened a federal interagency working group to identify and develop resources to help the emergency response community prepare for and respond to a fourth generation agent incident if one ever occurs in the U.S. The resources are available for U.S. emergency response professionals seeking to learn more about the agent used in the U.K. and how to protect themselves and respond if such incidents ever occur in their communities. No illicit use or manufacture of a fourth generation agent or other nerve agent is known to have occurred in the U.S., and there is no known threat of nerve agent use in the U.S.

The following resources were developed and tailored to various segments of the emergency response community and are available on the CHEMM website:

- *Safety Awareness for First On-Scene Responders Bulletin* – Designed to educate and prepare first responders for situations when law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services personnel are first to arrive on scene and initially may be unaware that a fourth generation agent is present. This bulletin will assist departments and agencies develop specific guidance and training to enhance overall preparedness efforts.
- *Reference Guide* – Designed to educate and prepare hazardous materials response teams, the guide includes chemical and physical properties of fourth generation agents, as well as detection, firefighting, personal protective equipment, and decontamination recommendations for situations when responding to a known or suspected fourth generation agent incident. This guide will assist hazardous materials response teams develop specific guidance and training to enhance overall preparedness efforts.
- *Medical Management Guidelines* – Designed to educate and prepare fire, EMS, and hospital staff and guide the medical management of patients exposed or potentially exposed to a fourth generation agent.

Attached is a communications toolkit to assist you in providing information to your departments and agencies, and to use in responding to inquiries from the media about these new resources. The toolkit includes a sample cover email to your colleagues, sample social media posts, a sample newsletter story, and public affairs guidance (talking points, reactive statement, and anticipated questions and answers).

Please contact me with any questions.

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### *Sample social media posts*

**Twitter:** New! Find out what first responders and healthcare workers need to know to protect themselves and #SaveLives if an incident involving a fourth generation nerve agent, also known as Novichoks or A-series nerve agents, ever occurs in the U.S.

<https://chemm.nlm.nih.gov/nerveagents/FGA.htm>

**Facebook/LinkedIn:** New resources are now available to help emergency responders and healthcare workers protect themselves and save lives if an incident, such as what happened in the United Kingdom in 2018, ever occurs in the U.S. involving a fourth generation nerve agent, also known as Novichoks or A-series nerve agents.

<https://chemm.nlm.nih.gov/nerveagents/FGA.htm>

### *Sample story for stakeholder newsletters*

#### **New resources available to prepare and respond to nerve agent emergencies**

New resources are available from the U.S. government to help emergency responders and healthcare workers develop specific guidance and training to protect themselves and save lives during incidents involving fourth generation nerve agents, also known as Novichoks or A-series nerve agents. The resources are available on the Chemical Hazards Emergency Medical Management (CHEMM) website at <https://chemm.nlm.nih.gov/nerveagents/FGA.htm>.

After the incidents in the United Kingdom in 2018 involving a fourth generation agent, the White House National Security Council convened a federal interagency working group of experts to identify and develop resources to help the emergency response community prepare for and respond to a fourth generation agent incident if one ever occurs in the U.S. No illicit use or manufacture of a fourth generation agent or other nerve agent is known to have occurred in the U.S., and there is no known threat of nerve agent use in the U.S.

The U.S. government used an extensive, collaborative process to develop these resources. The federal interagency working group included experts in medicine, science, public health, law enforcement, fire, EMS, HAZMAT, and occupational safety and health from the Department of Defense, Department of Health and Human Services (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health), Department of Transportation (Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Office of Emergency Medical Services), Department of Homeland Security, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and Environmental Protection Agency.

The group collaborated with stakeholders representing law enforcement, fire, EMS, HAZMAT, and hospital-based first receivers to be sure the new resources meet their needs and can be incorporated into existing plans as part of ongoing preparedness for potential hazards.

The resources include the *Safety Awareness for First On-Scene Responders Bulletin*, a one-page document summarizing symptoms of exposure, protective actions, and decontamination procedures; a *Reference Guide* with greater detail for HAZMAT response teams; and *Medical Management Guidelines* to prepare fire, EMS, and hospital staff and guide the medical management of patients.

These resources are based on the interpretation of available data on fourth generation agents by U.S. government experts and previously developed federal guidance related to nerve agents. They will be updated as new data becomes available that can further support any response to a potential fourth generation agent incident and help protect responders if such an incident ever occurs in the U.S.

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### *Sample talking points*

- The federal government developed a suite of resources as part of ongoing preparedness efforts for potential hazards.
  - After the incidents in the United Kingdom in 2018 involving a fourth generation agent, the White House National Security Council convened a federal interagency working group to identify and develop resources to help the emergency response community prepare for and respond to a fourth generation agent incident if one ever occurs in the U.S., as well as support the development of specific guidance and training to enhance overall preparedness efforts.
  - The resources are available for U.S. emergency response professionals seeking to learn more about the agent used in the U.K. and how to protect themselves and respond if such incidents ever occur in their communities.
  - Fourth generation agents, also known as Novichoks or A-series nerve agents, belong to a category of chemical warfare agents that are unique organophosphorus compounds. They are more persistent than other nerve agents and are at least as toxic as VX.
  - No illicit use or manufacture of a fourth generation agent or other nerve agent is known to have occurred in the U.S., and there is no known threat of nerve agent use in the U.S.
- Three resources were developed and tailored to various segments of the emergency response community.
  - *Safety Awareness for First On-Scene Responders Bulletin* – Designed to educate and prepare first responders for situations when law enforcement, fire, and emergency

medical services personnel are first to arrive on scene and initially may be unaware that a fourth generation agent is present. This bulletin will assist departments and agencies develop specific guidance and training to enhance overall preparedness efforts.

- *Reference Guide* – Designed to educate and prepare hazardous materials response teams, the guide includes chemical and physical properties of fourth generation agents, as well as detection, fire fighting, personal protective equipment, and decontamination recommendations for situations when responding to a known or suspected fourth generation agent incident. This guide will assist hazardous materials response teams develop specific guidance and training to enhance overall preparedness efforts.
  - *Medical Management Guidelines* – Designed to educate and prepare fire, EMS, and hospital staff and guide the medical management of patients exposed or potentially exposed to a fourth generation agent.
  - The resources are available on the Chemical Hazards Emergency Medical Management (CHEMM) website at <https://chemm.nlm.nih.gov/nerveagents/FGA.htm>
- The U.S. government used an extensive, collaborative process to develop these resources.
    - The White House National Security Council convened a federal interagency working group of experts in medicine, science, public health, law enforcement, fire, EMS, HAZMAT, and occupational safety and health from the Department of Defense, Department of Health and Human Services (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health), Department of Transportation (Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s Office of Emergency Medical Services), Department of Homeland Security, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and Environmental Protection Agency.
    - The process included listening sessions and consultations with stakeholders representing law enforcement, fire, EMS, HAZMAT, and hospital-based first responders.
    - The resources are based on previously developed federal guidance related to nerve agents and the interpretation of data available on fourth generation agents as of January 18, 2019.
    - The resources will be updated as new data becomes available that can further support any response to a potential fourth generation agent incident and help protect responders if such an incident ever occurs in the U.S.

### *Sample Q&A for response to inquiries*

*Why were these materials developed?*

These resources were developed as part of ongoing hazard preparedness efforts. The resources meet the needs of U.S. emergency response professionals who sought to learn more about the agent used in the incidents in the United Kingdom in 2018 and how to protect themselves and respond if such incidents ever occur in their communities.

*Why now? Are you concerned about the use of nerve agents in the U.S.?*

The incidents in the United Kingdom in 2018 involving fourth generation agents serve as a reminder that as a nation we need to be prepared continually for all types of hazards and as a teachable moment for chemical incident preparedness. The White House National Security Council took the opportunity to convene a federal interagency working group that identified and developed these new resources to help the emergency response community prepare for and respond if a fourth generation agent incident ever occurs in the U.S., as well as support the development of specific guidance and training to enhance overall preparedness efforts. No illicit use or manufacture of a fourth generation agent or other nerve agent is known to have occurred in the U.S., and there is no known threat of nerve agent use in the U.S.

*How likely are nerve agents to be used in the U.S.?*

No illicit use or manufacture of a fourth generation agent or other nerve agent is known to have occurred in the U.S., and there is no known threat of nerve agent use in the U.S.

*What is a fourth generation agent?*

Fourth generation agents, also known as Novichoks or A-series nerve agents, belong to a category of chemical warfare agents that are unique organophosphorus compounds. They are more persistent than other nerve agents and are at least as toxic as VX.

While fourth generation agents share similar characteristics with other nerve agents, fourth generation agents also pose several unique challenges in terms of toxicity, detection, persistence, and potential for delayed onset of symptoms.

*How are people most likely to be exposed, and what are the signs/symptoms/health effects of fourth generation agents?*

Fourth generation agents are most likely to be encountered as a liquid. The most likely route of exposure is skin contact, but fourth generation agents can also be absorbed into the body by contact with your eyes, nose, or mouth, inhaled, or swallowed. All nerve agents are extremely toxic chemicals that attack the nervous system.

Fourth generation agents cause signs and symptoms similar to other nerve agent exposure such as runny nose, sweating, blurred vision, headache, difficulty breathing, drooling, nausea, vomiting, muscle cramps and twitching, confusion, convulsions, paralysis, and coma. Symptoms may occur immediately or may be delayed for up to 3 days after being exposed.

*How prepared is the U.S. for a nerve agent attack?*

We have made significant progress in preparing for all hazards since the 9-11 terrorist attacks and the 2001 anthrax attacks on the East Coast. These and other incidents around the world provide lessons learned and best practices and allow us to update our training materials and response plans – preparedness has to be continuous and sustained.

*How are you getting this information to healthcare workers, especially nurses, and training them?*

The events in the U.K. provide a reminder of the need for the healthcare community to be ready at any time for the unexpected, whether that's an emerging infectious disease or a chemical incident. Fire, EMS, and hospital staff should have standard operating procedures (SOPs) to prevent exposure when treating patients who have been exposed to a nerve agent.

Each federal department and agency involved in developing these resources is responsible for distributing them to their stakeholders and working with those organizations to share the information with their members in law enforcement, fire, EMS, HAZMAT, emergency management, healthcare, public health, and occupational safety and health. We encourage the healthcare community to update their SOPs and training for HAZMAT incidents and discuss the management of such a situation with their public safety colleagues.

Many of the same resources used in responses to incidents involving toxic industrial chemicals will be required to respond to incidents involving other hazardous materials, so planning for one helps planning for the other. Healthcare coalitions can be an excellent resource to collaborate on plans and training.

*What funding is available to train first responders and healthcare workers on responding to nerve agents?*

Federal departments and agencies are working with stakeholder organizations to ensure healthcare staff and other emergency responders are aware of these resources and have the ability to request training. Existing hazardous materials and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) training is relevant, particularly on the proper use of personnel protective equipment (PPE) and donning/doffing PPE.

*What does the average person need to know about nerve agents?*

Follow the instructions from your local emergency officials if an incident involving a nerve agent ever occurs in your community. Their instructions are designed to save lives. Nerve agents are chemical warfare agents, similar to but much more potent than some types of insecticides or pesticides. They are colorless to amber-colored, tasteless liquids and can be deadly. There are antidotes for nerve agent poisoning but they must be administered quickly after exposure. Immediate decontamination is critical and hospitalization may be needed.

*Are young children more prone to illness or death than adults? Are the symptoms in kids different from adults?*

For a variety of reasons, such as their size, children may be affected faster than adults, and some of their symptoms may be different. For example, children may be more prone to seizures than adults may be. Children may need different doses of medications or different medications than adults.

*What policies do hospitals have in place to protect other patients in the hospital and healthcare workers?*

Hospitals treat workers and residents who are exposed to chemicals resulting from industrial and transportation accidents and would use similar procedures to protect the staff and patients during a nerve agent incident.

### ***Federal statement for response to inquiry***

*Federal departments and agencies will use the following statement in response to inquiries about the resources developed for fourth generation agent preparedness and response:*

Preparing for all hazards is fundamental to U.S. national security, and the U.S. government is committed to providing the best available information to help emergency responders protect our communities. After the incidents in the United Kingdom in 2018 involving a fourth generation agent, the White House National Security Council convened a federal interagency working group of experts to identify and develop resources to help the emergency response community prepare for and respond to a fourth generation agent incident if one ever occurs in the U.S., as well as support the development of specific guidance and training to enhance overall preparedness efforts.

The resources are available for U.S. emergency response professionals seeking to learn more about the agent used in the U.K. and how to protect themselves and respond if such incidents ever occur in their communities. No illicit use or manufacture of a fourth generation agent or other nerve agent is known to have occurred in the U.S., and there is no known threat of nerve agent use in the U.S. The resources are available on the Chemical Hazards Emergency Medical Management (CHEMM) website at <https://chemm.nlm.nih.gov/nerveagents/FGA.htm>.

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