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Standard Guide for Operational Guidelines for Initial Response to Suspected Biological Agents and Toxins¹

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INTRODUCTION

A threat with a biological agent or toxin is a serious matter that affects public health, public safety, the economy and the general confidence of the people. The National Strategy for Homeland Security and its National Response Framework focuses homeland security efforts on preventing and disrupting terrorist attacks, protecting the American people, our critical infrastructure and key resources, and responding to and recovering from incidents that do occur while continuing to strengthen the foundation of our nation. As laid out by the National Response Framework, a coordinated and synchronous response to suspected acts of bio-terrorism requires advance planning, including the equipping and training of emergency responders prior to an incident. The goal of this standard guide is to support national standards for responding to and collecting suspected biological agents and toxins with guidance centered on coordination among representatives of emergency response teams, including hazardous materials response teams, law enforcement, public health, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) national Laboratory Response Network (LRN), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). This standard guide provides uniform guidance that covers all of the following components: response planning, responder training, competency evaluation, proficiency testing, concept of operations, hazard assessment, threat evaluation, sample collection, field screening, risk communication and documentation for responding to an incident suspected of a biological agent or toxin, or both.

1. Scope

1.1 This guide provides considerations for decision-makers when responding to incidents that may involve biological agents and toxins. This guide provides information and guidance for inclusion in response planning, on activities to conduct during an initial response to an incident involving suspected biological agents or toxins, or both.

1.2 This guide delineates fundamental requirements for developing a sampling and screening capability for biological agents or toxins, or both, within a jurisdiction, practice, or operational area to assure proper involvement, communication, and coordination of all relevant agencies.

1.3 This guide applies to emergency response agencies that have a role in the initial response to unknown threats that are suspected biological agents and toxins. This guide is designed

for but not limited to emergency response services such as law enforcement, fire departments, hazardous materials, public health, and emergency management.

1.4 This guide assumes implementation begins well before the recognition of an event with a suspected biological agent or toxin, or both, and ends when emergency response actions cease or the response is assumed by federal response teams.

1.5 This guide utilizes risk-based response architecture and the guidance as described in the National Response Framework and is intended to be coupled with the authority having jurisdiction's (AHJs) understanding of local vulnerabilities and capabilities when developing its plans and guidance documents on response to incidents involving a suspected biological agent or toxin, or both.

1.6 This guide is compliant with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and uses Incident Command System (ICS) common terminology. Full compliance with NIMS is recognized as an essential part of emergency response planning. In developing this standard, every effort was made to ensure that all communications between organizational elements during an incident are presented in plain language

¹ This guide is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E54 on Homeland Security Applications and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E54.01 on CBRNE Sensors and Detectors.

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