Using Results of Risk Analysis in Homeland Security Decisions

Strategic Planning
Homeland security strategies can be designed to address the risks that a particular jurisdiction faces, taking a long-term view to building capabilities that can mitigate risk through prevention, protection, response, and recovery activities. Homeland security strategies should shape how local jurisdictions, states, and regions approach building and sustaining capabilities. Long-term goals and objectives that look 3-5 years into the future help guide investments and programmatic activities.

Capabilities-based Planning
Risk allows planners to prioritize which capabilities might have the greatest return on investment in preparedness activities. Risk analysis can help identify which capabilities are most relevant to a local jurisdiction, state, or region. It can also allow jurisdictions to see cases where certain capabilities align with multiple risks. Ultimately, a risk-based prioritization of capabilities can help frame decisions about where to invest limited resources.

Resource Decisions
Risk analysis should be a key component of a data-driven approach to requesting and allocating resources. Risk analysis provides a useful lens to help prioritize potential courses of action. By understanding risk, jurisdictions can identify realistic capability requirements, fund projects that bring the greatest return on investment, describe desired outcomes and how they will mitigate risk, and explain the rationale behind those decisions in clear, objective, and transparent terms.

Operational Planning
Risk analysis is key to effective operational planning. By analyzing risk, local jurisdictions, states, and regions can better understand which scenarios are more likely to impact them, what the consequences would be, what risks merit special attention, what actions must be planned for, and what resources are likely to be needed.

Special Event Planning
Risk information is a useful input to pre-planning for special events. Knowing locations of and relationships among critical assets can help inform logistical decisions, such as where to stage special teams or specialized equipment. Understanding threats and hazards, vulnerability, and potential impacts can help planners think through issues such as security, traffic, medical treatment, and mutual aid requirements. Risk data can be included as an input to a dynamic common operating picture used by incident management personnel during the event.

Exercise Planning
Risk analysis can be used to identify realistic scenarios for exercises, zeroing in on specific threats/hazards and assets that are applicable to that jurisdiction. Exercise planning can focus on capabilities (for example, evacuation or mass care) that are associated with a variety of scenarios (for example, hurricanes and chemical incidents). Capabilities help derive specific tasks to test, objectives for the exercise, and scenarios that enable the validation of critical tasks.

Real-world Events
Risk analysis can enhance the situational awareness of decision makers in crisis situations and inform the choices they make dealing with events in their backyard. It can also address questions that arise when events that occur elsewhere trigger questions at home. Risk analysis can help decision makers weigh potential courses of action within a contextual understanding of the risk of different threats and hazards to critical assets, geographic areas, and population centers.

Information Sharing
A key decision point in risk management is determining what risk-related information should be shared with which stakeholders, to include government entities, private sector owners and operators of critical infrastructure, and the general public. When shared responsibly and in accordance with the law, a broader strategy for information sharing can lead to more effective responses to emerging threats. Information acquired for one purpose could lead to additional insights when fused with information from other sources.
Using Results of Risk Analysis in Homeland Security Decisions (Continued)

Assessment Strategies
Risk analysis offers a way to prioritize decisions about which sites to assess. Evaluating threat, vulnerability, and consequence across a region helps planners understand which specific assets are considered higher risk, which sectors have greater risk, and how these risks are distributed geographically. The information gathered from in-depth field assessments should support broader risk analysis performed by a jurisdiction.