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News Release

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ECBC engineers develop new decontamination guidance for HazMat/WMD mass casualty incidents

U.S. Army lab partners with industry, academia to present Special Report at international HazMat conference

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. – Experts at the U.S. Army Edgewood Chemical Biological Center (ECBC) have partnered with industry and medical professionals to revise an ECBC Special Report featuring new guidance on Mass Casualty Decontamination for Hazardous Material (HazMat)/Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD) incidents.

The report is based on input from community responders, Army responders, Department of Defense (DoD) and DoD chemical-biological technical experts. The revised report was completed in May and was presented at the 2013 International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) International HazMat Conference in Baltimore, Md. in June.

“While there is no perfect solution to mass casualty decontamination and there is no single process or method that can account for all variables such as hazard, time, number of victims, environmental conditions, resource availability, etc., the information presented in Volume I and II of the revised report provides a means to help identify a simple, consistent mass casualty decontamination process that can be applied with reasonable effectiveness to any HazMat/WMD incident,” said Bill Lake, ECBC’s Engineering Support Division Chief.

Lake and ECBC colleague Stephen Divarco, Ph.D., partnered with Pete Schulze of the U.S. Army Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) School and Robert Gougelet, M.D., from the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth University, to upgrade the original April 2009 report to include new empirical data and technical information. Research for new decontamination scientific advances was incorporated into the revised report, “Mass Casualty Decontamination during a HazMat/WMD Incident, Volumes I and II (ECBC-SP-024).”

Volume I is a quick reference book with short, concise descriptions of procedures and checklists to set up and execute a mass casualty decontamination. Volume II was revised to include an in-depth discussion of HazMat/WMD mass casualty

decontamination. Both volumes now include high resolution graphics developed for emergency reference and follow-on training in multi-lingual communities.

“Life safety, especially in the event of a mass casualty situation like the recent Boston Marathon bombing incident, is always the highest priority. Mass casualty decontamination requires timely response, gaining rapid control of victims, and applying proven, life-saving decontamination techniques in an efficient and timely manner,” said Lake. “The guidelines presented in the revised ECBC Special Report provide first responders with consistent means to countermeasure the after effects of mass casualty incidents.”

The ECBC Special Report can also be seen as a companion piece to a higher level national report, “Patient Decontamination in a Mass Chemical Exposure Incident: National Planning Guidance for Communities,” which will be published by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Both documents support local planning and response actions for mass casualty incidents, especially in situations involving the accident release of hazardous materials and terrorist events that utilize weapons of mass destruction.

For more information about ECBC, visit http://www.ecbc.army.mil/.

ECBC is the Army’s principal research and development center for chemical and biological defense technology, engineering and field operations. ECBC has achieved major technological advances for the warfighter and for our national defense, with a long and distinguished history of providing the Armed Forces with quality systems and outstanding customer service. ECBC is a U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command laboratory located at the Edgewood Area of Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. For more information about the Edgewood Chemical Biological Center, please visit our website at http://www.ecbc.army.mil or call (410) 436-7118.

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