



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services

Response to a White Powder Call

Experiences and Lessons Learned

Ashley Hawes, MPH, CQA
Austin Public Health



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Introduction

- History of White Powder Calls
- My First White Powder Call
- Experience & Success
- Lessons Learned
- Training
- Questions

White Powder Calls

A Brief History



TEXAS
Health and Human Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services

Source: CDC

My First White Powder Call

But not a first in Austin



**WHITE POWDER SENT TO TEXAS
AG'S OFFICE; FBI INVESTIGATING**



TEXAS
Health and Human Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services

My First White Powder Call

- November 9, 2023
- Texas Attorney General's Office
- 3 Exposed
- Responders at Scene:
 - FBI
 - Austin Fire Department Hazmat
 - Austin/Travis County EMS
 - Travis County Hazmat
- Sample tested at TX DSHS Laboratory by the BioThreat Team



Source: Spectrum News



TEXAS
Health and Human Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Experience & Success

Relationships

- People knew who I was

Incident Command System

- I knew who to speak to

Training

- I knew the general flow of the scene
- I knew how to conduct interviews
- Confidence in speaking on the topic

Relationships

- Need to know people long before a call
- Important to Show Up
- Where to Start:
 - Healthcare Coalition Meetings
 - BioWatch
 - Exercises



TEXAS
Health and Human Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services

Incident Command System

- Yes, I know the trainings are boring
- Creates a common Language
- Gives you an understanding of structure on scene
 - Incident Commander



TEXAS
Health and Human Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services

Training

- Exercises
 - Practiced and observed various exercises
 - Familiarity with people and roles
- Interview Training
- Laboratory Training
 - Timeline and Processes
 - Results
 - Common Language
- Criminal Epidemiology Training



TEXAS
Health and Human Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Lessons Learned

- No Formal Protocol or Checklist
- Communication
- Empathy
- Practice, practice, practice



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services

Summary for Q&A

- Build Relationships
- Make sure your contacts are up-to-date
- Always remember empathy in the process
- Training is available
 - Criminal Epidemiology

Questions?



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

**Texas Department of State
Health Services**

Closing

Ashley Hawes, MPH, CQA
Ashley.hawes@austintexas.gov