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Dirty Bomb Threat Could Find Las Vegas Without Antidote

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Rick Eaton, Director of Homeland Security in Nevada

The threat of a dirty bomb is a serious. Any community could fall victim at any time. The federal government says it's ready for a dirty bomb attack, but how ready are we on the state level?

The government has a stockpile of something called Prussian Blue. It's an antidote given to anyone exposed to a radioactive dirty bomb but right now, the state doesn't have a supply.

Nevada's Homeland Security Commission says it's something we must have to protect residents and the millions of visitors we get each year.

There's no telling when, where or even if a radioactive dirty bomb could hit the Las Vegas area. But if the threat were to turn into a reality, right now Nevada's response to its citizens, first responders and tourists would be limited.

Rick Eaton, Director of Homeland Security in Nevada said, "We are, a recent study, 9th in the country targeted for an attack in Las Vegas. We absolutely need to factor that in."



Bob Fisher of the Homeland Security Commission

Many dirty bombs carry radioactive cesium 137, sometimes used as a weapon of terror. It can cause serious illness, even death to those contaminated. But while the federal government has a national stockpile of the antidote Prussian Blue, Nevada doesn't have its own supply.

"We should have our own stockpile until they can come to our aid. Many of the other states are looking at this and we need to look at," said Eaton.

Sheriff Jerry Keller said, "If the federal government responded as fast as they could, it would still be two to three days before they're here. So not only do we need to have the public take care of themselves, we as a state must take care of our public."

The possibility of radioactive waste being transported to Yucca Mountain is another reason why some say the antidote Prussian Blue is a must in Nevada. And while the Homeland Security Commission figures out ways to fund a state-wide stockpile, commission leaders agree there's no time to waste.

"If we wait for the federal government to come in, we are going to have a lot of casualties," said Bob Fisher of the Homeland Security Commission.

Sheriff Doug Gillespie said, "This level of urgency has to stay high. We can't become complacent because something hasn't happened."

And though there's no way of knowing if it will ever be a reality, state leaders all agree it's better to be prepared -- just in case.

The commission says they will start to look at different funding options including possible grants from the federal government. They also want to look at how the antidote would be distributed in the event of an attack.



Sheriff Jerry Keller

How much it could cost the state depends on how many doses they want. Right now, each dose costs about

\$40. The state is only looking at getting enough doses for two to three days until the federal government came in to help.

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