STATE OFFICIALS PARTICIPATE IN ANNUAL HOMELAND SECURITY EXERCISE

TALLAHASSEE -- Governor Jeb Bush today joined Florida’s Cabinet officers, state agency heads and law enforcement and emergency management officials to conduct the fourth annual homeland security “tabletop” exercise at the State Emergency Operations Center. The exercise is an annual drill where the Governor and top state officials respond to mock terrorism and homeland security threats.

"Our all-hazard approach to emergency planning ensures Florida is prepared to respond to all potential threats, from natural events to man-made," said Governor Jeb Bush. "As we work to instill a "culture of preparedness" within our state, it is imperative that all Floridians have a plan in place to protect their families and their homes."

The scenario of this training exercise was a terrorist attack involving a health pandemic event. The primary objective of the exercise is to give an opportunity for state, federal and local officials to simulate a homeland security threat, learning the best way to coordinate their response and recovery roles with partner agencies.

Representatives from the Department of Defense, U.S. Coast Guard, Florida National Guard and the Department of Homeland Security’s Federal Emergency Management Agency also participated in the half-day drill.

“Governor Bush has put together a disaster preparedness team that is second to none in the nation,” said Florida Department of Law Enforcement Commissioner Guy Tunnell. “Exercises such as these give us the opportunity to work as a team, fine-tune our response skills and explore new and better ways to manage and respond to different kinds of disasters.”

In 2005, each of Florida’s seven Regional Domestic Security Task Forces completed tabletop and functional exercises. These exercises provide vital training to members of all disciplines, including law enforcement, fire, health, education and the private sector. -more-
In addition to domestic security efforts by the FDLE and Division of Emergency Management, the Florida Department of Health (DOH) is continuing its preparedness programs to ensure the protection of all Floridians. On February 16th, DOH will bring together experts on pandemic flu planning to Florida’s pandemic flu summit at the Tallahassee - Leon County Civic Center. The event will allow attendees to gather valuable information from federal and state officials that they can pass along to their communities.

“Preparation for pandemic flu is just one element of our ongoing training for all events, such as hurricanes and other natural or man-made emergencies,” said Department of Health Secretary Dr. Rony Francois. “DOH stands ready to keep Floridians informed, engaged, prepared and protected.”

Florida's statewide domestic security strategy is organized around five key goals and objectives:

- Prevent, preempt and deter acts of terrorism
- Prepare for terrorism response missions
- Protect Florida's citizens, visitors and critical infrastructure
- Respond in an immediate, effective and coordinated manner
- Recover quickly and restore

“The best time to make important decisions about your family’s safety is before disaster strikes,” said Division of Emergency Management Director Craig Fugate. “Whether the disaster is natural, like a hurricane, or manmade, like a terrorist attack, past events have shown that people who think ahead, prepare and have a plan fare best during and after disaster.”

Since September 11, 2001, Florida has received more than $874 million in federal and state funding dedicated to ensure the state's domestic security and increase responder capabilities.

For more information on Florida's domestic security efforts, visit www.fdle.state.fl.us. For more information regarding family preparedness plans and the State Emergency Response Team see www.FloridaDisaster.org or www.mysafeflorida.com.

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