

# Outside-the-Box Thinking Improves New York City's Ability to Respond

Large, high-population density cities are vulnerable to all types of public health hazards—from disease outbreaks, to severe weather, to acts of terrorism. Intelligence sources believe terrorist groups may attempt to use unconventional weapons, such as chemical weapons, to maximize casualties. Preventing use of a chemical weapon of mass destruction, such as nerve agents, is the primary goal. However, if a chemical weapon attack occurred, CDC's CHEMPACK program provides resources for first responders to save lives.

CDC's CHEMPACK program supports state and city governments across the United States in chemical weapons response capability. CHEMPACK provides sustainable, deployable containers of antidotes that can be immediately accessed to treat people exposed to nerve agents. In New York City (NYC), the Emergency Management Department (NYCEM) and the Fire Department of NY (FDNY) partners with the CDC to oversee and manage the City's CHEMPACK activities and resources.

CHEMPACK containers are typically stored in hospitals or fire stations. Providing CHEMPACK resources to affected people usually takes a few minutes up to two hours. In NYC, however, NYCEM Health and Medical Unit Director Mordy Goldfeder recognized that a new mobile storage unit could result in even faster deployment of

CHEMPACK resources. In 2006, the city designed and incorporated a unique mobile unit. In early 2013, Goldfeder requested CDC approval to increase the quantity of CHEMPACK resources within the mobile unit. This request was approved, the additional resources were added in early 2014, and a second mobile unit was added in late 2015.

NYC's mobile CHEMPACK units have dedicated drivers who can leave their locations within one to three minutes of notification. This enables the FDNY to treat people exposed to nerve agents within three to six minutes. Faster response times will result in more lives saved during a chemical weapon event. Each of NYC's two mobile

CHEMPACKS can provide more than 5,440 treatments—twice the amount of the standard containers stored at fire stations. The mobile units are stationed across NYC approximately 12 times a year during major events such as New Year's Eve in Times Square, the Thanksgiving Day parade, and major sporting events.

Prior to the shift from stationary CHEMPACK containers to mobile units, Goldfeder said, "I used to stay up at night worrying about chemical weapon events and was so concerned that the antidotes would not reach people fast enough. Since moving to the mobile units, NYC is now as prepared as it can be and I'm not losing as much sleep!"



*Mordy Goldfeder,  
NYCEM Health and  
Medical Unit  
Director*

*More than **1,960 CHEMPACKs** are strategically placed in approximately **1,340 locations** in all states, territories, island jurisdictions, and the District of Columbia.*