



City of Chicago  
Richard M. Daley, Mayor

Chicago Fire Department

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Commissioner

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Mr. Tommy G. Thompson  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Thompson,

I am writing to support the considerations offered by Representative Curt Weldon, 7<sup>th</sup> District, Pennsylvania, regarding the use of hand-held bio-assay test for first responders.

Representative Weldon properly summarized first responders' sentiment regarding the use of hand held bio-assay tests as "an important screening tool". These tests have always been used only as screening tool, and never have been a consideration to replace laboratory methods for identification. Hand held bio-assays are just one tool used by the first responder to make tactical decisions on the scene of an emergency.

The published report of the efficiency and accuracy of the hand held tests clearly illustrates, that when used properly in conjunction with other assessments tools this can be an invaluable piece of data. As a first responder, I am expected to arrive in 3-5 minutes and make tactical decisions to reduce and/or eliminate hazards on the scene to protect and calm the public. Without this testing capability, I am unable to make good decisions in this area of bio-terrorism.

I urge that a collaborative effort be instituted to establish appropriate guideline for the use of this technology and interpretation of the results. This effort should include the Office of Science and Technology, experienced responders currently using the technology, the medical community and industry representatives.

As a country at war, we need to be looking to expand the capability of the first responder as well as improve the technology and the tools being used. If I can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at 312-745-1044.

Sincerely

Gene Ryan  
Chicago Fire Department  
Deputy District Chief  
Hazardous Materials Coordinator

