

# Protecting Americans in the 21st Century: Communicating Priorities for 2012 and Beyond

A White Paper by The National Homeland Security Consortium  
*Updated Edition: October 2012*

## Endorsing Organizations



# Protecting Americans in the 21st Century: Communicating Priorities for 2012 and Beyond

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## **Apolitical, Non-Partisan Collaboration Can Advance National Safety and Security Goals and Objectives**

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Since 2002, the Consortium has provided a forum for the public and private sector disciplines and professional organizations to come together to share and coalesce efforts, ideas, policies, and perspectives of vital concern to the nation's health, safety, and security efforts. These twenty-two national organizations — representing an array of local, state, territorial and private safety, health and security professionals — have provided an indisputable example that collaboration, coordination, and honest, open debate amongst divergent constituencies can advance comprehensive and strategic success.

Members and representatives participating in the Consortium would be the first to admit to the challenge of finding consensus and agreement on national policy positions. But they would also be the first to affirm that deliberative dialogue, transparent exchanges, and genuine relationships are the finest methods for advancing ideas that best serve the safety, security and health of our communities and our citizens.

Since its inception, the Consortium has proposed, advanced and, most importantly, **realized national progress** on multiple homeland security issues and opportunities. Even a cursory review and assessment of the nine primary and fifty-three detailed policy recommendations in the Consortium's 2008 policy paper and the six strategic calls for action from the 2010 supplement validates the practicality of the group's vision.

***Enhanced homeland security to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies, disasters, and catastrophes through strategic partnerships, collaborative strategies, and information sharing.***

While progress has been made on the issues identified by the consortium over the last several years, it is critically important that those areas of concern are continually assessed, monitored, and discussed.

### **Purpose:**

*This paper has two purposes. First, the paper will add to the continuing dialogue between the member associations of the National Homeland Security Consortium (the Consortium) and leaders of national homeland security policy and strategy efforts. This document builds upon the findings and recommendations of the Consortium's 2008 and 2010 white papers, which raised awareness of a number of policy challenges and offered many potential solutions and recommendations. This paper also highlights the success, and future potential, of collaborative policy discussions.*

*The second purpose of this paper is to illuminate several growing and emerging areas of concern that the Consortium believes require the focus of the nation's homeland security leaders and influencers. Some of these issues are well known while some are just beginning to rise on the horizon of the nation's policy and strategy discourse.*

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## Emerging Concerns Require a National Focus

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Consortium members applaud multiple efforts underway to identify, assess, and begin to prepare for the emerging threats to our nation's health, safety, and security posture. The Strategic Foresight Initiative, the Strategic National Risk Assessment, research from a variety of think tank and governmental work groups and academic institutions have all begun to add to a body of knowledge that advances awareness of these growing threats and their potential consequences. Of most concern to the Consortium's mission, this knowledge provides common foundations to begin deliberations on recommendations for national policy and strategy.

It is critically important to note that the following areas are not only of concern individually, but that the *interaction and intersection* of these threats and vulnerabilities present the most complex issues for our nation and the national homeland security community. Additionally, some will claim that many of these issues are global or external in nature and therefore not a concern to the nation's domestically focused preparedness communities. The Consortium believes that this line of reasoning presents an unacceptable posture in which we only prepare for the imminent, and not the foreseeable. (The following sections are not listed in order of priority.)

*Cyber Hazards* – One of the most troubling aspects of this threat is the lack of a cohesive framing of the problem and the wide range of potential severities and consequences. For example, proposing and promulgating an effective policy that protects individual online finances while at the same time preventing catastrophic disruptions of our national defense industry is a truly difficult task. The additional requirements to coordinate policy and strategy across the spectrum of local, tribal, state, territorial, federal, international, private and non-profit interest areas compounds the challenge of finding effective solutions. A lack of coordination could exacerbate the problem(s) and dramatically delay recovery throughout the nation. Cyber must be better understood to ensure we are prepared for disruption, sabotage, attack, and/or criminal activity.

*Climate Change* – While determining the cause of this global phenomenon may be an important factor in slowing, halting, or reversing the impacts, the Consortium is primarily concerned with the actions, policies, and strategies that will be necessary to mitigate, respond to, and recover from its consequences. The safety and security community must not only deal with the “punctuated” events such as severe weather events, but must also find a way to effect good policy and actions for long, sustained hazards such as sea level changes and dramatic seasonal climate abnormalities.

*Demands on Global Resources* – Most of this particular debate is commonly focused on energy resources. However, the concerns of growing populations versus diminishing agricultural, mineral, and water resources will present a wide range of cascading consequences and implications potentially including mass migrations and civil conflict. Implications for the homeland security community have already begun, but the most severe indirect and cascading consequences are yet to be fully recognized.

*Changing Demographics* – Geographic location, age, ethnicity, education level, nationality, employment status, residency status, and language are all examples of demographics that are constantly in a state of change both domestically and across the world. While change is constant, the implications of these changes to health, safety, and security officials can significantly affect both policy and operations. For example, shifts in population concentrations from rural to urban, or inland to coastal, can cause requirements for dramatic adjustments in resource needs, hazard preparedness levels, land use policies, and local public health and safety policy.

*Emerging technologies* – Advances in areas such as social communications, synthetic biology, genetic manipulation, advanced automation, increased connectivity, and computing power will certainly have grand societal benefits. However, we would be remiss if we did not consider the potential for accidental or intentionally malevolent applications as well. This set of concerns is significantly amplified when considered in combination with any of these other emerging areas.

*Violent Extremist Ideologies* – The decline of one violent extremist ideology does not mean the decline of all, nor does it prevent the emergence of new terroristic threats to the nation. History reveals that terrorist groups grow and merge, evolve and adapt, and whither and die. Enduring attention, analysis, and vigilance to this threat must be maintained.

*WMD Proliferation* – This global hazard and threat requires an international effort. It also emphasizes, rather than diminishes, the need for a domestically prepared nation. From bioterrorism to the use of nuclear material, this area of exceptionally high consequence requires both specific preparedness and comprehensive partnerships at all levels of government and the private sector.

*Mega-Hazards and Catastrophic Cascading Consequences* – Japan's horrific experience reminds us of how truly catastrophic events can spread their consequences exponentially and globally. For both natural and technological disasters, it is paramount that the homeland security community and those they serve recognize the complex interdependencies, and consequent vulnerabilities, of our national systems. To claim that the movement of goods, services, and people and the availability of critical infrastructures will be severely affected by the occurrence of a catastrophic event is a frightening understatement given the potential consequences.

These areas of concern not only have the potential to interact and influence each other, they may manifest when responsible agencies and officials are also under financial, political, resource availability, or other organizational pressures. These pressures, in turn, have the potential to adversely impact how the nation preserves many of its core principles such as the protection of civil liberties, privacy, human rights, federalism, separation of powers, and the appropriate use of the state and federal military.

It will be at these stressful times that the Consortium will need to keep in mind, and advocate externally, its overarching guiding principles:

- Preserve the historic principles that guide how our nation is governed.
- Require consistent and organized communication among stakeholders to build trust, resolve problems, and prevent conflicts.
- Sustain national efforts.
- Enhance our national resiliency.

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## Consortium Actions

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The members of the Consortium readily admit that the details, background, root causes, inherent risks, implications, and opportunities of all these areas of concern are not well known by them or their constituents. Therefore, the Consortium will embark on an effort to better understand these issues and the appropriate roles, responsibilities, and recommendations in light of what they learn.

The Consortium invites other partners and stakeholders to participate in these discoveries and share their thoughts and opinions on potential policy, strategy, and operational considerations for the national homeland security community. Through partnerships, collaborations, and information sharing, the Consortium intends to find methods not only to understand these current areas of concern, but also those that emerge and evolve in the future. The homeland security community must have the ability to swiftly adjust to new concerns and opportunities.

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## Rationality in an Uncertain World

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The members of the Consortium are not naïve. They understand that the “domain” of homeland security must also interact and at times compete for attention with the domains of other important securities. Economic security, national security, cultural security, ecological security, health security, family security, and community security are among the most important values we treasure and promote as a nation. Key policy, strategy and resource deliberations must acknowledge and understand how these securities influence, and are influenced by, each other. It would be unwise and illogical to focus all of our national treasures on the protection of only one, or only a few, of these security domains. There must be consideration of the appropriate focus of efforts among all these domains.

The Consortium supports the premise and philosophies recently detailed in Presidential Policy Directive-8, National Preparedness. All of our traditional threats and hazards as well as the emerging threats of concern listed above must be addressed with a rational balance of investments in prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery. Of course, what that balance should actually be between those mission areas, among the stakeholders, and among the levels of government and the private sector is inevitably and eternally debatable. The Consortium views this dilemma as an inherently positive attribute and an opportunity to demonstrate one of the very foundational values of our nation: that the public is best served by open, honest, and genuine debate amongst all those charged with the protection and service to that very public.

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## Related documents:

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*A 2010 Supplement to the White Paper: Protecting Americans in the 21st Century*, 2010, National Homeland Security Consortium, [www.nemaweb.org](http://www.nemaweb.org)

*Protecting Americans in the 21st Century: Imperatives for the Homeland*, 2010, National Homeland Security Consortium, [www.nemaweb.org](http://www.nemaweb.org).

## National Homeland Security Consortium

### Purpose

The National Homeland Security Consortium is a forum for public and private sector disciplines to coalesce efforts and perspectives about how best to protect America in the 21st Century. The Consortium consists of 22 national organizations that represent local, state and private professionals. The Consortium represents the array of professions that deliver the daily services that are vital to safety and security of the United States. The Consortium represents the first and secondary responders as well as those who will provide the sustained effort necessary to respond to any major emergency, including leadership and direction by elected and appointed officials.

The Consortium is an example of expanded local, state and private coordination necessitated by growing national demands. Our members recognize that people in the U.S. live in large population centers that have complex, overlapping and interrelated governmental and political structures. At the same time rural and less populated regions of the country also have citizens that expect and deserve safety and security from any hazard that may threaten their communities. Consequently, state and local government organizations that we represent have taken the initiative to significantly expand their collaboration in order to respond effectively in a crisis. We know that none of us can be effective attempting to work in isolation.

The Consortium provides a neutral forum for organizations to exchange ideas, have candid discussions, and galvanize input to the federal government. The differing perspectives of member organizations do not always provide for unanimity on specifics of implementing national initiatives. We do not aim for group think, but aspire to group understanding. More often than not, however, we have found easy consensus on our major goals.

### Background

Participating organizations began meeting together in 2002 at the invitation of the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA). The National Homeland Security Consortium is an outgrowth of those initial discussions regarding the need for enhanced communication and coordination between disciplines and levels of government. The Consortium is now a recognized entity by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and works in partnership with other federal agencies such as the Department of Health and Human Services and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Consortium meets at least two times annually and shares information on a regular basis on issues of common interest. Subject matter experts within the Consortium are available as needed to provide input on national strategies, plans and policies impacting state and local governments.

### Vision

Enhanced homeland security to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies, disasters and catastrophes through strategic partnerships, collaborative strategies and information sharing.

### Mission

Provide a *forum* of key national organizations through effective communication, collaboration, and coordination that positively promotes national policies, strategies, practices and guidelines to preserve the public health, safety and security of the nation.

## **Objectives**

1. Provide a broad-based resource and sounding board on homeland security issues for all national stakeholders.
2. Share information, knowledge, experiences, and practices.
3. Contribute to the homeland security debate and discussion.
4. Focus efforts to resolve issues.
5. Develop recommendations in identified areas of common interest.

## **Participating Organizations**

Adjutants General Association of the United States  
American Public Works Association  
Association of Public Safety Communications Officials  
Association of State & Territorial Health Officials  
Governors' Homeland Security Advisors Council  
International Association of Emergency Managers  
International Association of Fire Chiefs  
International City/County Management Association  
Major City Police Chiefs Association  
National Association of Counties  
National Association of County & City Health Officials  
National Association of State Chief Information Officers  
National Association of State Emergency Medical Services Officials  
National Conference of State Legislatures  
National Emergency Management Association  
National Governors' Association  
National League of Cities  
National Sheriffs' Association  
Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense & Security  
State Homeland Security Advisors  
The Council of State Governments  
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

## **For More Information:**

The National Homeland Security Consortium is currently administered by the National Emergency Management Association, PO Box 11910, Lexington, KY 40578. For more information, contact the NEMA office at (859) 244-8233.