



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **MEMA AND RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION OF MARYLAND CONDUCT FOOD SECURITY EXERCISE**

REISTERSTOWN, Md. (April 1, 2004) – Yesterday, an exercise was conducted to examine the security of Maryland’s food supply. This exercise, a public-private partnership between the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and the Restaurant Association of Maryland, brought attendees from restaurants and their suppliers to the table with federal, State, and local responders to identify issues related to a potential terrorist event involving the supply of the food our people eat.

“By having this exercise, we are executing this national homeland security policy on the state level and increasing our ability to protect Maryland’s food supply chain,” said Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr.

Additional exercises will be conducted over the next thirteen months. These exercises are part of an effort by the Ehrlich-Steele Administration to address the issues in President Bush’s Homeland Security Presidential Directive # 9, which establishes a national policy to defend the agriculture and food system against terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies.

“This exercise proved to be a successful first step in forging a partnership between government and the foodservice industry in our mutual efforts to defend our food supply against potential threats,” said Marcia S. Harris, President and CEO of the Restaurant Association of Maryland. “We will use what we’ve learned to raise awareness among industry employers and employees, and work proactively to ensure consumer confidence.”

**(more)**

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The exercise focused on three aspects of a terrorist event – a potential threat, an actual incident, and the recovery operations. Each aspect was analyzed from a national level, state level, local level, restaurant level, and a public information viewpoint. The groups reported from each perspective, and worked to identify where the different elements interfaced, and what potential issues would need to be resolved as a result of those interfaces.

“The exercise provided an excellent opportunity to examine the interface between responders and the private sector,” said John Droneburg, Director of MEMA. “Governor Ehrlich directed MEMA to prepare for many possible hazards including attacks against critical elements of infrastructure – food, utilities, transportation to name a few. By taking a strong stance to examine these issues, we increase not only our preparedness to deal with an act of terrorism against these elements, but perhaps may deter an act by increasing our vigilance.”

The after action review from this exercise is expected to be completed within 60 days. This exercise is part of a series of exercises that will examine different elements of the food supply chain. Future exercises will examine food processing, agriculture / aquaculture elements, and suppliers.

All of these exercises are part of the State of Maryland’s Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program. Coordinated by the MEMA, the program is a joint initiative between the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Office for Domestic Preparedness and the State of Maryland to evaluate and enhance its’ capability to responds to all hazards, including terrorism. The Office for Domestic Preparedness provides technical expertise and funding support to this initiative.

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