Reviewer's report

Title: Preparedness of Emergency Departments in NorthWest England for Managing Chemical Incidents: a structured interview survey

Version: 1 Date: 5 June 2007

Reviewer: Virginia Murray

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With minor changes this paper should be published.

My recommendations are below:

This is an interesting and comprehensive audit of the capability of Emergency Departments in the North West of England to decontaminate chemically contaminated casualties. It highlights the significant short-falls in resilience.

Although this is a timely reminder that this is a problem, it does not really add to the body of evidence. These limitations have been described previously. It would be more useful if the authors could make some suggestions about how these could be rectified. For example:

1. with regard to disposal or storage of run off water:
   * Are EDs required to store water?
   * What ways are there to increase the storage capacity?
   * Who is responsible for its disposal and who should EDs contact when developing their chemical incident plans.

2. What suggestions do the authors have for increasing decontamination capacity?

It is widely recognised that the evidence base for these issues is sparse, but this means that is more important for the authors to use the benefit of their experience to make some suggestions to overcome these problems.