

## “SUPER GRAS” REQUIRED SUPER PLANNING

New Orleans, Louisiana, hosted the Super Bowl for the 10th time in 2013. However, it was only the second time that the city hosted the game in the middle of Mardi Gras. This rare coincidence, coined “Super Gras,” drew more than one million visitors to the city of New Orleans and across multiple jurisdictions in the state. Large-scale events like this are at a high risk for terrorist activity due to the increased number of visitors as well as the immense viewership of the televised event. In addition, people are at an increased risk of illness and injury at special events with large crowds. In efforts to prepare for “Super Gras,” the coalition of partners on the Public Health and Medical Subcommittee designed a plan to provide medical support as well as assist law enforcement and public safety agencies for routine and mass casualty response.

The Public Health and Medical Subcommittee, made up of the New Orleans Emergency Medical Service, Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals Office of Public Health, and New Orleans Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness Planning, among others, developed and implemented the plan for the event. Public health preparedness activities included food inspections and monitoring of over-the-counter drug purchases as an indicator for possible foodborne outbreaks. Flu vaccinations, biological surveillance, lab services, and medical countermeasures and mitigation were also incorporated in public health preparedness plans.

The subcommittee participated in planning efforts for a year leading up to the event, including learning about unusual outbreaks common during large-scale events. The success of the event can be attributed to effective communication and thorough preparation through on-going exercises, after action reviews, trainings, and preparation meetings. According to Cynthia Davidson, Region One Hospital Designated Regional Coordinator, “The leadership spear-headed by CDC and FEMA was a very important piece of success for planning for the Super Bowl/Mardi Gras event. There [cannot be a] successful event [like this] without planning, training, and exercising to prepare.”

