

# Domestic Security Preparedness Task Force

Chaired by the Attorney General, the Domestic Security Preparedness Task Force was created by the New Jersey Domestic Security Preparedness Act of 2001.

Historically, New Jersey has been home to a well-established cadre of “operational” agencies with expertise that contributes to a comprehensive, statewide homeland protection effort. However, there had never been a Cabinet-level entity dedicated to the overall planning, coordination and oversight of New Jersey’s homeland security strategy until the creation of the Task Force. By establishing and helping to maintain a cooperative effort among government agencies at all levels — and by working closely with officials in private industry at the same time — the Task Force has fostered unity in coordinating New Jersey’s homeland-security-related initiatives. The work of the Task Force is vital, because New Jersey is home to many major petrochemical, pharmaceutical, industrial and manufacturing facilities. The Port of New York/New Jersey is a hub of international commerce, and the Newark Liberty Airport is one of the East Coast’s busiest. New Jersey also provides strategic links to New York and Philadelphia via bridges and tunnels. In short, New Jersey remains an attractive target for potential terrorist activity.

## Threat Level Orange Periods

Consistent with its mission, the Task Force is responsible for developing response plans for various homeland security alert levels. In 2003, there were four Threat Level Orange periods in which the Task Force — working with agencies at all levels of government — put into action response plans to provide the state heightened protection. From August through November of 2004, finance centers in Newark and surrounding North Jersey counties were placed on Threat Level Orange alert after it was learned that al Qaeda operatives had been

conducting surveillance at Prudential in Newark. Threat Level Orange denotes a “high risk” of terrorist attack, as determined by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. It requires that state and local government mobilize preparedness efforts that are both complex and labor-intensive — including activation of the State Police Emergency Operations Center, and assigning added security around critical facilities and infrastructure.

## Infrastructure Advisory Committee

Statewide, approximately 85 to 90 percent of the New Jersey’s most critical infrastructure is owned by private industry.

Recognizing this reality, the Task Force established an Infrastructure Advisory Committee (IAC) made up of senior managers from 20 industrial sectors. These 20 industrial sectors contribute significantly to the strength of New Jersey’s economy and its quality of life.

Each of the 20 sectors has formed an industry subcommittee to develop and implement “Best Practices” for security. Each of these sectors is also paired with one or more Task Force agencies that serve as the state’s liaison to the industry. Best Practices cover such issues as target hardening and vulnerability/mitigation measures, crisis response, contingency and continuity planning, protocols for communications, background checks and adjustments to security measures as required by changing realities.

A second generation of Best Practices for industry was completed in April 2004, and the Task Force’s departmental liaisons continue to monitor compliance with those recommended practices.

## Detect and Render Safe Task Force

New Jersey’s Detect and Render Safe Task Force is a state, county and local collaboration. It involves the state’s 10 bomb squads, as well as more than two-dozen newly purchased explosive-detecting dogs working together to detect and respond to potential bomb incidents. Supported by federal grant funds and coordinated by the State Police Bomb Squad, the Detect and Render Safe Task Force provides for a uniform and consistent response to the detection of explosives before they can be detonated, and for the rendering of those explosives harmless when they are found. The Detect and Render Safe Task Force has the ability to marshal all of the state’s assets to one location, pursuant to a comprehensive Mutual Aid Agreement developed, negotiated and executed by the Domestic Security Preparedness Task Force.

## General Aviation Security Order

The Task Force issued an Order to approximately 450 general aviation facilities requiring that those facilities post signs regarding the reporting of suspicious activity, and that aircraft which remain at the facility for more than 24-hours be double-locked. This Order was subsequently incorporated into regulations adopted by the New Jersey Department of Transportation.



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