

Funding vamped since terror attacks
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When terror struck New York City, shock engulfed the eyes and hearts of many Americans. Individual cities scurried to make sure that their own security was at the highest level. Since then, funding from the government has shifted on a national, state and local level.

"Many grants have either been created or enhanced in preparation and prevention in cases of terrorism," Assistant Emergency Management Coordinator, C.J. Howard said.

Equipment has been upgraded, strategies have been implemented and public education is constantly being detailed in preparation for an emergency. The Center for Disease Control, Public Communications and Homeland Security Departments have been enriched as part of the Urban Area Security Initiative created in 2004.

Plano Public Communications Department has acquired new technology, such as radio equipment and other hardware that will aid first level responders in communicating efficiently.

"I think we have taken it as far as we can technologically," said Director of Public Safety, Ron Timmons.

"But, for people to be aware of situations that seldom occur will be the new frontier for the next five years."

Situations like terrorist attacks or even natural disasters are less frequent than fires or car wrecks. Operators have learned how protocol for situations like that, but the preparation for national crisis is still in the works.

"The technology is capable of so much, but knowing the depth of the technology, studying and testing its capabilities will be something we have to learn more about," Timmons said.

The ability for operators on a local level to communicate with federal agents has also been implemented, and training for all of the new programs is constantly being updated. All of these capabilities have been made possible by the federal government passing grants down state and locally.

The CDC has benefited from the United States Health and Human Services Department, as part of a federal initiative to upgrade awareness and processes in response to chemical and biological terrorism. Since Sept. 11, nearly \$2.5 million in grants have been given to Health Services and bioterrorism.

The epidemiology and bioterrorism areas have been engaged to analyze and survey outbreaks and how to prevent them. Also, the process of communication between local police, hospitals and health departments has become more of a collaborative effort than individual protocols.

"We have been enriched by the federal funding across the board since 9-11," said Von Roebuck, spokesperson of the CDC. "The programs were there before, but funding allowed us to develop plans, work through and execute them."

The local community has worked with state and federal programs to gain funding in areas that were affected or needed improvement. The Law Enforcement Terrorism Preparedness Grant, the Bufferzone Protection Program Grant, and the Assistance to Firefighters Grant are all part of the funding for Homeland Security that have been created or improved to ultimately protect local communities.

The Bufferzone Protection Program helps identify soft targets in local areas where masses of people are and hardens the local agencies. It's funding provides equipment, management and administration actions and reduces the vulnerability in the community infrastructure.

"Most of the grants have been given to provide training to the first level responders, conduct planning, public education and public education activities," Howard said.

The REDI guides that were passed out during Hurricane Katrina and are still available, and are the main source of public awareness. The government funding aided in creating the guides and also continues to create more programs to help train the community and city officials for emergency situations.

The residual effect of 9-11 and other disasters has made Homeland Security more prevalent, and the government has made a conscientious effort to improve the quality of technology and training.