Homeland Security for Citizens
with the support of ZoomerOne

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1. Information Needs

After those unthinkable events have happened, homeland security is on our mind all the time. Obviously, we need to be prepared. There are many questions we need to answer. What tools do we need have? What skills do we need to acquire? How do we get our children prepared? If something happens, how do we get updates? How can we respond quickly and effectively? After a disaster, how do we support each other? How do we learn from it and prevent it from ever happening again?

We can find information from the World Wide Web. We list many good sources in this article. However, locating exactly what we need for a given situation is not that easy. We believe ZoomerOne™ provides the answer to citizens.

2. Web Resources

To keep us up to date of the current status, we can start at the Department of Homeland Security, www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/, which gives the immediate level of danger US citizens face. Then we can look at US Department of State web site, usinfo.state.gov/products/washfile/terror.shtml for the latest texts on government responses to terrorism. To check disasters of all causes, Disaster news at FEMA, www.fema.gov/ is a good source. Lexis-Nexis offers free breaking news to help people build current awareness and monitor current and emerging news topics, we can use www.lexisnexis.com/iraq/ or www.lexisnexis.com/transportationpromo/ to start. There are many other general-purpose news sources covering international and domestic news, such as Fox News at www.foxnews.com. For people wanting to know beyond the border, Global Security Newswire at www.nti.org/d_newswire/d_index.asp is a good source. Also, we can take a look what UK Home Office(www.homeoffice.gov.uk/terrorism.htm), to see what they have done.

In most cases, local news is more relevant to us than national news. We can use the National League of Cities web site, www.nlc.org/nlc_org/site/, to find information about our local area. The site is searchable by ZIP code. For preparation for any events, we can use the Citizen Corps web site www.citizencorps.gov/citizen/jsp/council_st.jsp to find our local councils, and learn about what to do right now. To find local emergency information for homeland security related issues, homeland security page which can be

searched by state is useful (www.homelandsecurity.org/statepages.cfm). New Jersey government also has its own homeland security site, www.njhomelandsecurity.com/. For New Jersey health information, we can use this state web site, www.state.nj.us/health/er/index.html.

Traveling in today's world is not just buying tickets and packing clothes. We also need to know more about the routes we are taking and the condition of our destinations. We can start with Department of State web page (www.travel.state.gov) to see if there is any travel warnings we need to know about. Then check out the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) web site (www.tsa.gov) for news and tips (www.tsatraveltips.us). Also, we need to find out destination specific health issues or warnings from CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) web site (www.cdc.gov/travel/). For international travel, we can also check out the web site of Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) at www.ds-osac.org. If you have time, you might want to look into what other countries have done in helping their citizens in traveling around the world. Such as UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office web site at www.fco.gov.uk, Canada Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade web site at www.voyage.gc.ca/main/sos/ci/v-en.asp, and Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade web site at www.dfat.gov.au/consular/advice/index.html.

There are three web sites we have to visit for preparedness of disasters in 21 century. First of all, the Ready web site, www.ready.gov/, then the Citizen Corps web site, www.citizencorps.gov/. These are great places to find all terrorism preparedness and response information. Then, the Red Cross "Together, We Prepare" web site, www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/hsas.html, recommends in detail actions to take for preparing for and responding to emergencies.

Learning about Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) takes time, we need to build up knowledge now instead of after something happens. We can find details and current news on chemical and biological agents at CDC news page, www.bt.cdc.gov/. For specific information on what to do during a chemical attack, chemical emergency preparedness & prevention, yosemite.epa.gov/oswer/ceppoweb.nsf/content/index.html is a good place to start. For bio-defense, there is a Biodefense news page at, www.niaid.nih.gov/biodefense/. Finally, current nuclear related news can be found at this nuclear news page, www.1nuclearplace.com/.

Still, these sources are not enough to cover all the needs. We can find hazards fact sheet on this FEMA web page, www.fema.gov/hazards/. Parents can help children get their pets prepared for emergencies with information on this page, www.fema.gov/kids/pets.htm. People have disabilities or have friends/relatives have special needs can use www.state.nj.us/njoem/preparedness_disabarc_contents.html, provided by New Jersey State Government, for reference.

3. Too Much Information

We have given you a long list of web sites to start with, but we know it is not complete, there are many more web sites offered by businesses, government and non-profit organizations worth reading. How can ordinary people take the time and cut through the complexity in learning all of that? In addition, many web sites overlap with each other or link to each other, this kind of design also increases complexity. Furthermore, with differences between web sites, misunderstandings and confusions can occur.

We use the web for many reasons, such as reading investment/market news, filing tax, doing online banking, finding jobs, improving skills, conducting business, finding health information, researching diseases and medicine, buying houses or cars, looking for educational material, and monitoring consumer news. Needless to say we have already spent a lot of time on the Internet. How much more time can we spend reading about homeland security?

Many people may not know that there is a big invisible web where search engines do not see, such as databases, dynamic web pages, files in non-HTLM format, etc. In other words, there are lots of quality web information, exists today or introduced tomorrow, we can not count on search engines to lead us there.

We know there are threats, we know there are things to be done and information to be learned, however, we don't know where to start. We can not read everything and learn everything after our busy daily life. Given all the great web sites, we still can not keep up to date, due to lack of time.

Also, emergencies do not happen to us everyday. After a few months or half a year, we do not see getting ready for emergencies a high priority item comparing with our other pressing needs. Sadly, only when every minute counts, learning about security and emergency becomes priority item again.

Many people choose to not do anything, due to lack of time, lack or priority, or both, and simply go on with their normal lives. What we need is a solution to help us continually being prepared without spending too much time, and to provide us with exactly what we need when emergencies strike.

4. We Have Different Needs

Web sites, such as those listed in this article, tend to have their own design. Each one has its own terminology and structure. It take users some time to understand how to best use the web site and figure out where things are. The structure of each web site usually is based on the category of information instead of users' needs, such as news in

Asia, news in Europe, etc. Who the users are, and how the users will use the information were not considered.

In fact, we do have very different needs when using those resources. For example, members of the first responder organizations and school district officials have very different purposes in mind. While the same information is presented to them, their needs may not be satisfied totally. Business leaders need to know how to help their employees, how to keep the business functioning. Volunteers need to get updated with news and new skills. Teachers and parents need to know how and what to teach children. Most web sites only try to present the same information to everyone without customization, which is not the best way to keep people interested and prepared. And, it is not the best way to help people in emergency.

5. Take Actions with ZoomerOne

Instead of surfing web sites after web sites day in and day out, instead of spending a lot of time but still not well prepared, ZoomerOne can help you zoom in and zoom out of the sea of information. ZoomerOne can help people learn how to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies. Since ZoomerOne requires little effort to use, it can keep people tuned in to most up-to-date information.

The key concept of ZoomerOne is locating necessary information from quality, reliable web sites, based on current situation, and users' needs. Experts who helped the construction of ZoomerOne make the design decisions, instead of software. Experts also keep ZoomerOne updated periodically. ZoomerOne provides effective and guided paths for citizens to best use the Web resources.

With information we have studied, we have four suggestions to every citizen: use ZoomerOne to keep you updated, prepare yourself with plans and supplies, reach out and strengthen your support network, and do your best to enjoy your normal life.