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Standards Will Help Businesses Prepare For Possible Attacks

On Wednesday, May 19th, Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge endorsed the creation of a voluntary readiness standard for businesses to employ in order to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters and emergencies. During his testimony before the 9/11 Commission hearing investigating emergency response at the World Trade Center, Secretary Ridge discussed the guidelines, developed by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). This national emergency-readiness standard would require businesses to voluntarily conduct evacuation drills, improve emergency communications, and create continuity plans.

As the 9-11 Commission found, evacuation and emergency preparedness procedures were not emphasized by many of the companies housed in the Twin Towers. The Commission is concerned that even after the events of September 11, the private sector is still unprepared for terrorist attack.

The ANSI/NFPA guidelines create a benchmark for preparedness, helping companies determine their preparedness needs. The Commission notes that on 9/11 and in other crisis situations, civilians are often the first to respond to an attack. In an emergency, lives can be saved by split second decisions. These standards provide businesses a plan so they might make informed, effective decisions in a crisis.

Consistent with the principles behind the Committee bill, H.R. 3266, The Faster and Smarter Funding for First Responders Act, the ANSI/NFPA standards encourage the development and maintenance of national voluntary consensus standards.

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