The events of 11 September 2001 in New York and Washington DC and the dissemination of anthrax spores through the United States Postal Service in the fall of 2001 highlighted the need for public health preparedness for the possible use of biological or chemical weapons (CBW) to cause harm. Health organizations in both developing and industrialized countries were overwhelmed by requests for information and guidance on various aspects of CBW.

The World Health Assembly of May 2002, by means of resolution WHA55.16, requested the Director-General, inter alia, “to continue to issue international guidance and technical information on recommended measures to deal with the deliberate use of biological and chemical agents to cause harm and to make available this information on WHO’s web site”.

This e-library contributes to WHO’s efforts to respond to the request of Member States and improve preparedness and response programmes for these public health threats.