

Safe Korea Exercise Conducted to Prepare for Bioterrorism Threats

- Joint full-scale and tabletop exercises involving relevant agencies were conducted to ensure a swift and coordinated initial on-site response.

Osong, 30 September 2025 – The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) conducted the 2025 Infectious Disease Disaster Response Safe Korea Exercise on Tuesday, September 30, with participation from relevant ministries, local governments, and hospitals.

* Pursuant to Article 35 (Implementation of Disaster Preparedness Drills) of the Framework Act on The Management of Disaster and Safety, this is a nationwide, government-wide disaster preparedness exercise that has been conducted annually since 2005 as directed by the Ministry of the Interior and Safety.

This exercise, carried out in accordance with relevant regulations and manuals, simulates real-world scenarios to enhance readiness for disasters relevant to each participating agency's area of responsibility. Its purpose is to review the agencies' response systems and minimize public harm by ensuring swift and coordinated action during a crisis.

In particular, this year's exercise placed special emphasis on strengthening inter-agency collaboration to minimize on-site damage and disruption, in preparation for the successful hosting of the APEC Summit at the end of October.

The exercise activated the whole-of-government disaster response system required throughout all stages of post-incident response in a bioterrorism scenario, and was conducted in parallel with on-site activities. These included:

- Rapid initial response
- Issuing an alert level and activating the incident management system with inter-ministerial cooperation following a situation assessment meeting
- On-site medical response
- Recovery operations

With KDCA taking the lead, 13 organizations took part in the exercise, including the Ministry of the Interior and Safety, the Ministry of Health and Welfare, and the Ministry of National Defense.

* Participating agencies: KDCA, Ministry of Health and Welfare, Ministry of the Interior and Safety, Ministry of Defense, National Fire Agency, Gyeongsangbuk-do Provincial Government, Gyeongju Police Station, Gyeongju Fire Station, and Gyeongju Public Health Center, Gyeongbuk Center for Infectious Diseases Control & Prevention, Dongguk University Gyeongju Hospital, private-sector experts, among others.

The exercise consisted of two components:

- Full-scale exercise focuses on on-site response measures following confirmation of a bioterrorism attack and exposure of individuals.
- Tabletop exercise aims at activating the response system and formulating countermeasures in response to a bioterrorism alert level.

In the full-scale exercise, participants reviewed rapid response procedures for an outbreak caused by bioterrorism. This included pathogen identification through

rapid on-site testing, management of exposed individuals and confirmed patients, operation of the on-site support headquarters, and activation of the inter-agency cooperation system.

In the tabletop exercise, participants conducted rapid risk assessments based on field reports to evaluate the bioterrorism alert level and develop countermeasures. The Bioterrorism Response Support Headquarters convened to discuss inter-ministerial countermeasures, focusing on key strategies and coordinated action to resolve the simulated crisis.

KDCA Commissioner Dr Seung-kwan Lim stated, “Ahead of the important national event, the APEC Summit, we organized this exercise to preemptively simulate the full scope of response from initial outbreak detection to containment and recovery in the event of a bioterrorism-related infectious disease. This will help us ensure a rapid response and minimize potential damage in the case of an actual attack.”

He added, “We expect this exercise, designed to simulate real disaster conditions, not only to demonstrate Korea’s thorough readiness both domestically and internationally, but also to serve as a valuable opportunity to identify areas for improvement in advance.”