

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-13-616](#), a report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection, and Security Technologies, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

In October 2012, Hurricane Sandy caused widespread damage across multiple states. Further, threats to CI are not limited to natural disasters, as demonstrated by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. In 2009, DHS initiated the RRAP, a voluntary program intended to assess regional resilience of CI. RRAP projects are to analyze a region's ability to adapt to changing conditions, and prepare for, withstand, and rapidly recover from disruptions.

GAO was asked to examine DHS's efforts to manage the program. GAO assessed the extent to which DHS (1) developed criteria for identifying RRAP project locations, (2) worked with states to conduct RRAP projects and share information with CI partners to promote resilience, and (3) is positioned to measure results associated with RRAP projects.

GAO reviewed applicable laws, DHS policies and procedures, and all 17 RRAP reports completed since the program inception in 2009. GAO also interviewed officials from 10 states with issued RRAP reports, DHS officials who conducted 20 RRAP projects from 2009 through 2012, and other federal officials representing nine departments and agencies involved in RRAP projects. While the results of the interviews are not generalizable, they provided insight.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DHS document final RRAP selections and develop a mechanism to measure whether RRAP participation influences facilities to make RRAP-related enhancements. DHS concurred with the recommendations.

View [GAO-13-616](#). For more information, contact Stephen L. Caldwell at (202) 512-8777 or caldwells@gao.gov.

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CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION

DHS Could Strengthen the Management of the Regional Resiliency Assessment Program

What GAO Found

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has developed nine criteria that consider various factors—including the willingness of various stakeholders, such as asset owners and operators, to participate and concentrations of high-risk critical infrastructure—when identifying possible locations for Regional Resiliency Assessment Program (RRAP) projects. According to DHS officials, final project selections are then made from a list of possible locations based on factors including geographic distribution and DHS priorities, among other considerations. However, it is unclear why some RRAP projects are recommended over others because DHS does not fully document why these decisions are made. Federal internal control standards call for agencies to promptly record and clearly document transactions and significant events. Because DHS's selection process identifies a greater number of potential projects than DHS has the resources to perform, documenting why final selections are made would help ensure accountability, enabling DHS to provide evidence of its decision making.

DHS has worked with states to improve the process for conducting RRAP projects and is considering an approach for sharing resilience information with its critical infrastructure (CI) partners, including federal, state, local, and tribal officials. Since 2011, DHS has worked with states to improve the process for conducting RRAP projects, including more clearly defining the scope of projects. According to DHS officials, these efforts have been viewed favorably by states. DHS is currently considering an approach to more widely share resilience lessons learned with its CI partners, including a possible resiliency product or products that draw from completed RRAP projects. DHS officials stated that they engage CI partners in meetings and conferences where partners' resilience information needs are discussed and have been incorporating this input into their efforts to develop a resilience information sharing approach.

DHS has taken action to measure efforts to enhance security and resilience among facilities that participate in the RRAP, but faces challenges measuring results associated with RRAP projects. DHS performs security and vulnerability assessments at individual CI assets that participate in RRAP projects as well as those that do not participate. Consistent with the *National Infrastructure Protection Plan*, DHS also performs periodic follow-ups among asset owners and operators that participate in these assessments with the intent of measuring their efforts to make enhancements arising out of these surveys and assessments. However, DHS does not measure how enhancements made at individual assets that participate in a RRAP project contribute to the overall results of the project. DHS officials stated that they face challenges measuring performance within and across RRAP projects because of the unique characteristics of each, including geographic diversity and differences among assets within projects. GAO recognizes that measuring performance within and among RRAP projects could be challenging, but DHS could better position itself to gain insights into projects' effects if it were to develop a mechanism to compare facilities that have participated in a RRAP project with those that have not, thus establishing building blocks for measuring its efforts to conduct RRAP projects. One approach could entail using DHS's assessment follow-up process to gather and analyze data to assess whether participation in a RRAP project influenced owners and operators to make related resilience enhancements.