



## ***Evacuation plan needed*** **D.C. attack could send millions of people into W.Va., WVU prof says**

Dr. Brian Gerber knows the drill.

In the event of a terror attack in Washington, D.C. Gerber, an assistant professor of public administration at West Virginia University, says he knows exactly what will happen.

Suburban residents will scurry to their cars and literally head for the hills, he says, taking them right through West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle, which nudges the Washington-Baltimore metro area.

How many?

Up to 7 million people, he says, and a mass exodus that would make for a catastrophe in its own right.

Gerber presented the findings of his study Wednesday (Aug. 23) to West Virginia Gov. Joe Manchin and more than 100 public safety officials from across the region gathered in Davis, W.Va., for a conference.

Officials were also attending from the District of Columbia, Virginia, Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Kentucky.

The event was considered to be a first step toward creating a regional evacuation plan.

And Gerber told them all to get ready for the push, should the unthinkable happen.

"There's going to be some sort of large-scale self evacuation," Gerber said. "This is a very real issue that should be addressed."

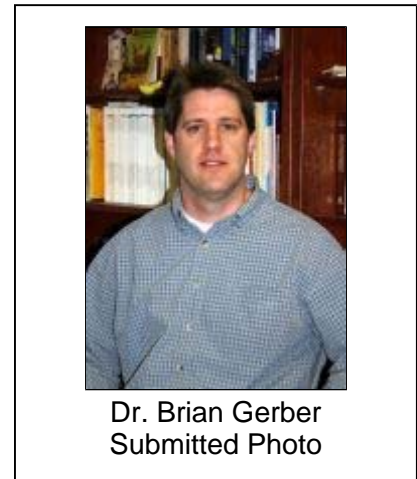
For the past several months, the professor has been doing just that. Gerber this past February received an \$80,000 National Science Foundation grant to look at ways local governments might handle the aftermath of such an attack on a major American city – and what might happen as residents flee the menace.

What he's found so far, is that municipalities aren't ready yet for an onslaught that could clog roadways while straining outreach services past the breaking point.

West Virginia, for example, could handle contingents of evacuees, Manchin said, but not if the numbers of them stack up into hundreds of thousands or millions.

A regional evacuation plan with constituent, uniform policies is the way to go, Gerber said, especially since there's a real fear among residents that just such an attack is imminent.

Gerber surveyed 800 people in West Virginia, Virginia and Maryland who told him it wasn't a matter of "If," but "When?"



The terror could take a tragic, ripple effect if no uniform plan is in place, Gerber said when he launched his study. "If local governments are either unwilling or unable to be proactive, then the nation is more likely to suffer," he said.

For more information on the project, contact Gerber at [brian.gerber@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:brian.gerber@mail.wvu.edu) or 304-293-2614, ext. 3154.

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