

Bomb, Chemical and Biological Incidents

General Indicators

It is extremely difficult to prepare for and prevent acts of extortion, politically motivated violence or criminal attack due to the covert nature of these activities, however there are a number of indicators that often precede these attacks, regardless of the type of threat or the type of target. These include:

- Surveillance – photography or videotaping.
- Loitering – access to secure or even unsecured areas by unknown or unidentified persons with no reasonable excuse.
- Information requests – requests for plans, blueprints, or engineering specifications for buildings by those who have no official reason to have them.
- Inappropriate clothing – people wearing inappropriate clothing relative to the weather (eg. excessive clothing worn on warm days).
- Multiple indicators – it may be difficult to accurately identify potential terrorist behaviour on the basis of a single indicator. Multiple indicators, however, should arouse considerable suspicion and caution.



Bomb incidents

How to respond to a bomb incident

You should use the following guidelines when dealing with any suspicious item believed to be an explosive:

- Turn off all radio frequency emitting electronic equipment. Radios, pagers, and mobile phones may cause an explosive device to detonate. Use traditional landline telephones to call authorities.

If receiving a call regarding a possible bomb threat, leave the land line open and off the hook for later investigation.

- Open any available windows and doors to dissipate explosive energy and mitigate potential damage.
- If a suspicious package or device is found, do not touch it. Immediately evacuate the area and have all people move as far as is possible away from the suspicious package or device.
- If you can see the suspicious package or device, it can see you. Evacuate to a position of safety where you cannot see the device. This will greatly reduce the likelihood of you being injured if it explodes.

If you are in a building or structure, particularly a high-rise building that is a target of terrorist activity, consider the following:

- During the initial attack, you should seek cover under desks or tables. If these items are not readily available, move against an interior wall and protect your head with your arms. Move away from windows and balconies.
- If you are able, immediately evacuate the area and move to a safe location.
- During evacuation procedures, immediately move away from the targeted location and seek shelter inside a secure area. Glass windows and other building materials may be dislodged and may fall outwards several hundred metres.
- If you are outdoors near the targeted location during the initial attack, duck behind an item that will provide you cover, such as a tree or doorway, and get down as low as possible. After the initial attack, move to a safe area away from the targeted location. Stay out of damaged buildings.
- Consider the possibility that additional attacks or secondary explosions may occur.

Chemical incidents

Chemical agents are a means by which terrorist groups may conduct attacks against urban populations. Some examples of chemical agents include:

- Nerve agents: Man made, extremely toxic.
- Choking agents: Gases that cause immediate coughing and choking.
- Blister agents: These are usually liquids and evaporate slowly. An example is mustard gas. Symptoms include reddening of the skin and blistering.
- Blood agents: These are inhaled. An example is hydrogen cyanide. Symptoms include a flushed face with red lips, frothing at the mouth, vomiting, unconsciousness, and death.

Chemical agents enter the body through any one or more means by:

- Inhalation – Breathed in.
- Ingestion – Swallowed. Normally via food or water source.
- Absorption – Penetration of skin or eyes.
- Injection – Physically injected into person or transferred by explosive fragmentation.

During a chemical terrorist attack, the best place to be is upwind and on high ground far from the dissemination location. Changing weather conditions may require personnel to be moved quickly from one location to another position of safety.

Chemical incidents (indicators)

- Dead animals/fish – Numerous animals dead in the same area.
- Blisters/rashes – Numerous individuals experiencing unexplained water-like blisters, weals (like bee stings) and/or rashes.
- Mass casualties – Health problems including nausea, disorientation, difficulty in breathing, convulsions and death.

- Patterns of casualties – Casualties will likely be distributed downwind, or if indoors, by the ventilation system.
- Unusual liquid droplets – A number of surfaces exhibit oily droplets/film. Water surfaces may also have an oily film on the surface.
- Dead/withered vegetation – Trees, bushes, food crops and/or lawns that are dead, discoloured or withered, without drought conditions.
- Unexplained odours – Smells ranging from fruity to flowery, sharp/pungent, or garlic/horseradish like bitter almonds. All smells will be completely out of character for the surroundings.
- Low-lying clouds – Unusual low-lying cloud and fog-like conditions.

Biological Incidents

There are two basic forms of biological agents. They are micro-organisms and toxins. These agents comprise living organisms. Examples of bacteria are anthrax and pneumonic plague. An example of a virus is Ebola. Toxins are poisonous substances produced by plants or animals, and include examples such as botulism and ricin. Toxins and bacteria, such as anthrax, are not contagious. However, viruses such as Ebola are contagious and may be spread from person to person.

Characteristics of biological agents include the following:

- No immediate effect. The symptoms take time to appear, from hours/weeks.
- They must be inhaled or ingested. They do not penetrate unbroken skin.
- They are adversely affected by weather conditions such as sunlight. Therefore, they are more likely to be used at night or in enclosed areas.
- Likely to be spread through the use of aerosols.
- Symptoms include flu-like symptoms.



Biological agents enter the body through any one or more means by:

- Inhalation – Breathed in.
- Ingestion – Swallowed. Normally via food or water source.
- Absorption – Penetration of skin or eyes.
- Injection – Physically injected into person or transferred by explosive fragmentation.

There are no characteristic or immediate signatures of the release of biological agents as they are usually colourless and odourless. A biological incident can therefore only be determined on the basis of its effects upon the surrounding area, and generally after a period of time.

Biological incidents (indicators)

Unusual number of sick and dying –
Casualties may occur minutes to hours to days or weeks after an incident has occurred. The time required before symptoms are observed is dependent on the agent used.

Unscheduled and unusual spray –
Especially outdoors during periods of darkness.

Abandoned spray devices –
Devices will have no distinct odours.

How to respond to a chemical or biological incident

Biological and chemical agents may be disseminated in a variety of fashions, including the use of letters or packages containing these agents. If you receive a letter or package that you suspect is contaminated, do the following:

- Do not handle further.
Don't shake/bump it.
- Isolate the package or mail.
- Remain where you are.
- Isolate yourself and all others who came into contact with the suspicious item.

- Do not show it to any further people including your supervisor. You need to minimise the amount of persons who have contact with the item.
- Shut down the air conditioning or ventilation system or contact via landline someone in the building who can.
- Don't open, smell, taste or touch it. This includes your clothing.
- Ensure all persons who handled the package wash their hands with soap and water.
- Do not brush your clothing.
- Remove clothing and place it in a plastic bag as soon as possible (removing of clothing can remove about 80% of the contaminant).
- Shower with soap and water. Do not use bleach or other disinfectants.
- Make a list of all the people who had contact with the substance or package and give it to the investigating authorities.

This advice still applies if the agent is disseminated by other means – for example, through a ventilation system or some other dispersal method.

