



Responding to Terrorist Emergencies

The ability of first responders to take effective action in emergencies can make a big difference in the number of casualties. Preparation is crucial, and one comprehensive source of information for businesses and individuals is the government Web site www.ready.gov.

Safety First

First responders must consider safety as their most important concern. If you are on the scene of a terrorist attack, you must protect yourself so that you can protect others. If you become injured or incapacitated, you will not be able to help anyone else.

Your response to the scene of a potential terrorist attack could involve entry into a hazardous area. Deadly radioactive, chemical, or biological agents may have already contaminated the atmosphere around the scene. When you suspect hazardous substances or conditions, use only qualified personnel to secure the scene. Entry into such an area is also dangerous because terrorists often plant secondary devices intended to injure or kill you and other first responders.



Crime Scene

Unlike natural disasters, terrorist attacks are crime scenes and need to be treated as such. The emergency is just one phase of the incident. The incident ends after the successful prosecution of the guilty person(s).

Physical evidence may be crucial to connecting the perpetrator to the scene. The recognition, collection and preservation of physical evidence may be the only means to identify and successfully prosecute those responsible.



Be a Good Witness

The description that you provide to investigators, reconstructing the early minutes of the incident, can be the key to the case. At the scene, be aware of persons coming or going on foot or by vehicle. Jot down the license plate numbers and brief descriptions of those present in order to refresh your memory. Encourage witnesses and bystanders to remain at the scene until investigators have interviewed them.

Note any other unusual circumstances. Include as many details as possible. Use rough sketches to pinpoint the locations of victims and potential evidence.

Evacuation

With chemical and biological incidents, response is aimed at limiting and avoiding exposure. As is the case with explosions, this generally means evacuating the area. Because of their training and familiarity with the facilities, professional security personnel are often a critical resource for workplace evacuation procedures.

Disorganized evacuations can be confusing and dangerous. To avoid injury and property damage, evacuation plans should address:

- Circumstances requiring evacuation
- Who is authorized to order evacuation
- Procedures for assisting people with disabilities or special needs



- Designation of any shutdown or other special responsibilities
- A way to account for personnel after evacuation
- Specific evacuation procedures, including routes and exits, clearly posted for all employees

Emergency response is a specialized job for trained professionals. Talk to your security supervisor about your emergency response plan, and be prepared. The more you know about how to respond in emergencies, the safer you'll be.

For more information, check out these resources:

- <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/>
- <http://www.ready.gov/>
- <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/emergencypreparedness/index.html>
- <http://www.redcross.org/>

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