



## What Communities Should Know: Terror Threats

It is an unfortunate sign of the world in which we live that there are persons who desire to cause harm to the innocent simply to disrupt the way we do things or to gain attention for his/her cause. As the recent National Intelligence Estimate has indicated, while there is currently no credible evidence that any terrorist organization is prepared to attack us in the United States, we are in a period that warrants increased vigilance by every American.

Attacks can take many forms, but ultimately, their aftermath often mirrors the effects of unexpected natural disasters for which we should all prepare. Instead of feeling fear or panic, individuals, families and communities should use terror or violence alerts as opportunities to take proactive measures in much the same way as they can prepare for the consequences of other emergencies. Besides those common elements of emergency preparedness, every family also needs to:

- **Talk to law enforcement:** Get a better idea of your area's vulnerability at work and home to terrorist attack, law enforcement's role in the response to suspicious activity, and what is happening locally and in the world. Consider joining or forming a neighborhood watch program. Research travel advisories before departing to different parts of the world. The U.S. State Department provides information at their website: <http://www.state.gov/countries/>.
- **Be vigilant:** If you see something suspicious, say something to local law enforcement authorities. Be constantly aware of your surroundings and be on the lookout for unusual persons and activities, such as:
  - Unusual, unexpected deliveries or unsolicited/unauthorized service personnel at work or home;
  - Suspicious items, packages or bag left unattended in or around public facilities, large gathering place, or on mass transit systems;
  - Anyone tampering with surveillance cameras or entering unauthorized areas; and
  - Individuals simply "hanging around" for no apparent reason or those photographing or documenting areas that would not be of ordinary interest to a tourist or others.
  - Individuals in bulky clothing inappropriate for their circumstances, surroundings or weather.
- **Review and enforce facility security:** At your job, school or place of business. Restrict visitors to only public areas. Identify and appropriately clear all visitors before they enter. Consider doing a simple survey or assessment of points of access and egress and your routine for securing the site at the end of the business day. Have an evacuation and emergency plan.
- In an **Armed Intruder or Hostage situation:** Call for help. If immediate evacuation from the area or building is not possible, try to lock-down in a safe room inside the building. DO NOT try to confront the intruder, but pay attention and try to get as much information as possible to report to the police.
- **In the event of a bomb or bomb threat:** Be prepared to respond appropriately.
  - If the threat is made in writing, call the police and handle the note as little as possible.

- If the threat is made by email, call the police and do NOT delete the email.
  - If you receive a bomb threat by phone,
    - Remain calm and keep the caller on the phone for as long as possible and
    - Do NOT hang-up the phone even if the caller does (this helps in tracing the call).
    - If possible, alert someone else so they can call the police from another phone.
    - Listen carefully, be polite and show interest so that you can obtain as much information as possible.
    - Attempt to ask the caller: where the bomb is located (building, floor, room, etc.); when it will go off; what does it look like; what kind of explosive is it and does the bomb contain harmful chemicals or biological material; what will make it explode; did the caller place the bomb (yes or no); why did they plant bomb; where are you; and what is your name.
    - Attempt to record the exact words of the threat and note the tone, any accent and possible sex of the caller, as well as their demeanor (angry, anxious, excited, crying, slurred speech, attempting to disguise voice, etc).
    - Listen for and note any background noises and sounds.
  - Any unknown and suspicious package could be a bomb. Signs of a suspicious package include: a package left unattended; unexpected delivery; no return address; excessive or foreign postage; stains on the package; strange odors or sounds; poorly handwritten labeling; misspelled words; incorrect titles or non-existent persons; or restrictive notes and instructions.
  - If you have any reason to believe that a package may contain a bomb, EVACUATE IMMEDIATELY and call the police (911). Do NOT touch or handle the package. Make sure you can assist the responding agencies with information on location and appearance of the package.
- **Prepare:** A **Disaster Supplies Kit** that includes enough items to last your family or staff for 3-5 days with essentials such as food, water and medications and have a family communication plan which includes both a local and out of state phone contacts, as well as an agreed upon secondary meeting place. Plan ahead, as to who will be responsible for children and understand emergency policies of their schools. It is especially important to plan ahead for taking care of those with special needs in your family or neighborhood such as the elderly or physically challenged. Always keep a pair of comfortable walking shoes near your bed, in your car and at work.
  - Working together with the California Governor's Office of Homeland Security, Office of Emergency Services and your local emergency responders, Team SAFE-T is committed to encouraging students, families and community members to bear responsibility for their personal safety and the safety of our communities. Together we can keep America safe and prepared.
  - For more information on how to prepare and plan for any emergency in your home, school or community please visit the American Red Cross web site ([www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)), the California Office of Emergency Services web site ([www.oes.ca.gov](http://www.oes.ca.gov)) or the Team SAFE-T web site ([www.TeamSAFE-T.org](http://www.TeamSAFE-T.org)) to access planning and preparedness information, checklists and resources available in your area. For opportunities to become more involved and volunteer to work with emergency responders or to be prepared to help when disaster strikes, visit the California Volunteers website ([www.californiavolunteers.org](http://www.californiavolunteers.org)).