

TERRORISM

GENERAL SITUATION

In the wake of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing in New York and the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, terrorism became a serious concern for emergency management, emergency responders, and the public at large. However, the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and subsequent attacks such as the Boston Bombing and the Orlando and San Bernardino mass shootings has elevated our concern about terrorism to a level we never imagined, and requires us to be prepared to respond to situations that go beyond the terrorist incident scenarios that we are familiar with.

Terrorism is defined as the use of fear for intimidation, usually political goals. Terrorism is a crime where the threat of violence is often as effective as the commission of the violent act itself. Terrorism affects us through fear, physical injuries, economic losses, psychological trauma, and erosion of faith in government. Terrorism is not an ideology. Terrorism is a strategy used by individuals or groups to achieve their political goals.

Terrorists espouse a wide range of causes. They can be for or against almost any issue, religious belief, political position, or group of people of one national origin or another. Because of the tremendous variety of causes supported by terrorists and the wide variety of potential targets, there is no place that is truly safe from terrorism. Throughout California there is nearly limitless number of potential targets, depending on the perspective of the terrorist. Some of these targets include: government offices, pregnancy centers, religious facilities, public places (such as shopping centers), schools, power plants, refineries, utility infrastructures, water storage facilities, dams, private homes, prominent individuals, financial institutions and other businesses.

There are unique challenges to a terrorist event involving a Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD), such as a nuclear, radiological, biological, explosive or chemical weapon. As in all incidents, WMD incidents may involve mass casualties and damage to buildings or other types of property. However, there are a number of factors surrounding WMD incidents that are unlike any other type of incidents that must be taken into consideration when planning a response.

- The situation may not be recognizable until there are multiple casualties or a secondary event occurs that indicates that the first was not an accident. Most chemical and biological agents are not detectable by conventional methods used for explosives and firearms. Most agents can be carried in containers that look like ordinary items.
- There may be multiple events (i.e., one event in an attempt to influence another event's outcome).
- Responders are placed at a higher risk of becoming casualties because agents are not readily identifiable. Responders may become contaminated before recognizing the agents involved.
- First responders may, in addition, be targets for secondary releases or explosions.

- The location of the incident will be treated as a crime scene. As such, preservation and collection of evidence is critical. Therefore, it is important to ensure that actions on-scene are coordinated between response organizations to minimize any conflicts between law enforcement authorities, who view the incident as a crime scene, and other responders, who view it as a hazardous materials or disaster scene.
- In addition to local response coordination challenges, the WMD incident will add a myriad of state and federal agencies into the system. Coordination and communication issues between all response levels (local, state, and federal) will constantly need to be assessed.
- Contamination of critical facilities and large geographic areas may result. Victims may carry an agent unknowingly to public transportation facilities, businesses, residences, doctors' offices, walk-in medical clinics, or emergency rooms because they don't realize that they are contaminated. First responders may carry the agent to fire or precinct houses, hospitals, or to the locations of subsequent calls.
- The scope of the incident may expand geometrically and may affect mutual aid jurisdictions. Airborne agents flow with the air current and may disseminate via ventilation systems, carrying the agents far from the initial source.
- There will be a stronger reaction from the public than with other types of incidents. The deliberate destruction of life and property is both horrific and difficult to process, and the fear of additional attacks as well as the unknown makes the public's response more severe. Also, the thought of exposure to a chemical or biological agent or radiation evokes terror in most people.
- Time is working against responding elements. The incident can expand geometrically and very quickly. In addition, the effects of some chemicals and biological agents worsen over time.
- Support facilities, such as utility stations and 911 centers along with critical infrastructures, are at risk as targets.
- Specialized State and local response capabilities may be overwhelmed.

TERRORISM HAZARDS

Terrorism hazards may be WMD (including conventional explosives, secondary devices, and combined hazards) or other means of attack (including low-tech devices and delivery, attacks on infrastructure, and cyber terrorism).

WMD Hazard Agents

Weapons of mass destruction are defined as any weapon that is designed or intended to cause death or serious bodily injury through the release, dissemination, or impact of toxic or poisonous chemicals; disease organisms; radiation or radioactivity; or explosion or fire. At least two important considerations distinguish these hazards from other types of terrorist tools. First, in the case of chemical, biological, and radioactive agents, their presence may not be immediately obvious, making it difficult to determine when and where they have been released, who has been exposed, and what danger is present for first responders and medical technicians. Second, although there is a sizable body of research on battlefield exposures to

WMD agents, there is limited scientific understanding of how these agents affect civilian populations.

Chemical

Chemical agents are intended to kill, seriously injure, or incapacitate people through physiological effects. A terrorist incident involving a chemical agent will demand immediate reaction from emergency responders—fire departments, police, hazardous materials (HazMat) teams, emergency medical services (EMS), and emergency room staff—who will need adequate training and equipment. Hazardous chemicals, including industrial chemicals and agents, can be introduced via aerosol devices (e.g., munitions, sprayers, or aerosol generators), breaking containers, or covert dissemination. Such an attack might involve the release of a chemical warfare agent, such as a nerve or blister agent or an industrial chemical, which may have serious consequences. Some indicators of the possible use of chemical agents are listed in Table 1. Early in an investigation, it may not be obvious whether an outbreak was caused by an infectious agent or a hazardous chemical; however, most chemical attacks will be localized, and their effects will be evident within a few minutes. There are both persistent and nonpersistent chemical agents. Persistent agents remain in the affected area for hours, days, or weeks. Nonpersistent agents have high evaporation rates, are lighter than air, and disperse rapidly, thereby losing their ability to cause casualties after 10 to 15 minutes, although they may be more persistent in small, unventilated areas.

Table 1. General Indicators of Possible Chemical Agent Use

| |
|--|
| Stated Threat to Release a Chemical Agent |
| <p>Unusual Occurrence of Dead or Dying Animals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example, lack of insects, dead birds |
| <p>Unexplained Casualties</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple victims • Surge of similar 911 calls • Serious illnesses • Nausea, disorientation, difficulty breathing, or convulsions • Definite casualty patterns |
| <p>Unusual Liquid, Spray, Vapor, or Powder</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Droplets, oily film • Unexplained odor • Low-lying clouds/fog unrelated to weather |
| <p>Suspicious Devices, Packages, or Letters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unusual metal debris • Abandoned spray devices • Unexplained munitions |

Biological

Recognition of a biological hazard can occur through several methods, including identification of a credible threat, discovery of bioterrorism evidence (devices, agent, clandestine lab), diagnosis (identification of a disease caused by an agent identified as a possible bioterrorism agent), and detection (gathering and interpretation of public health surveillance data).

When people are exposed to a pathogen such as anthrax or smallpox, they may not know that they have been exposed, and those who are infected, or subsequently become infected, may not feel sick for some time. This delay between exposure and onset of illness, the incubation period, is characteristic of infectious diseases. The incubation period may range from several hours to a few weeks, depending on the exposure and pathogen. Unlike acute incidents involving explosives or some hazardous chemicals, the initial detection and response to a biological attack on civilians is likely to be made by direct patient care providers and the public health community.

Terrorists could also employ a biological agent that would affect agricultural commodities over a large area (e.g., wheat rust or a virus affecting livestock), potentially devastating the local or even national economy.

Responders should be familiar with the characteristics of the biological agents of greatest concern for use in a bioterrorism event. Unlike victims of exposure to chemical or radiological agents, victims of biological agent attack may serve as carriers of the disease with the capability of infecting others (e.g., smallpox, plague). Some indicators of biological attack are given in Table 2.

Table 2. General Indicators of Possible Biological Agent Use

| |
|--|
| Stated Threat to Release a Biological Agent |
| Unusual Occurrence of Dead or Dying Animals |
| Unusual Casualties <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unusual illness for region/area• Definite pattern inconsistent with natural disease |
| Unusual Liquid, Spray, Vapor, or Powder <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spraying; suspicious devices, packages, or letters |

Nuclear/Radiological

The difficulty of responding to a nuclear or radiological incident is compounded by the nature of radiation itself. In an explosion, the fact that radioactive material was involved may or may not be obvious, depending upon the nature of the explosive

device used. The presence of a radiation hazard is difficult to ascertain, unless the responders have the proper detection equipment and have been trained to use it properly. Although many detection devices exist, most are designed to detect specific types and levels of radiation and may not be appropriate for measuring or ruling out the presence of radiological hazards. Table 3 lists some indicators of a radiological release.

Table 3. General Indicators of Possible Nuclear Weapon/Radiological Agent Use

| |
|---|
| Stated Threat to Deploy a Nuclear or Radiological Device |
| Presence of Nuclear or Radiological Equipment <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Spent fuel canisters or nuclear transport vehicles |
| Nuclear Placards/Warning Materials Along with Otherwise Unexplained Casualties |

Conventional Explosives and Secondary Devices

The easiest to obtain and use of all weapons is still a conventional explosive device, or improvised bomb, which may be used to cause massive local destruction or to disperse chemical, biological, or radiological agents. The components are readily available, as are detailed instructions on constructing such a device. Improvised explosive devices are categorized as being explosive or incendiary, employing high or low filler explosive materials to explode and/or cause fires. Explosions and fires also can be caused by projectiles and missiles, including aircraft used against high-profile targets such as buildings, monuments, and special events. Bombs and firebombs are cheap and easily constructed, involve low technology, and are the terrorist weapon most likely to be encountered. Large, powerful devices can be outfitted with timed or remotely triggered detonators and can be designed to be activated by light, pressure, movement, or radio transmission. The potential exists for single or multiple bombing incidents in single or multiple municipalities. Historically, less than five percent of actual or attempted bombings were preceded by a threat. Explosive materials can be employed covertly with little signature and are not readily detectable. Secondary explosive devices may also be used as weapons against responders and the public in coincident acts. Other diversionary events or attacks could also be aimed at responders.

Combined Hazards

WMD agents can be combined to achieve a synergistic effect—greater in total effect than the sum of their individual effects. They may be combined to achieve both immediate and delayed consequences. Mixed infections or toxic exposures may occur, thereby complicating or delaying diagnosis. Casualties of multiple agents may exist; casualties may also suffer from multiple effects, such as trauma and burns from an explosion, which exacerbate the likelihood of agent contamination. Attacks may be planned and executed so as to take advantage of the reduced effectiveness of protective measures produced by employment of an

initial WMD agent. Finally, the potential exists for multiple incidents in single or multiple municipalities.

Other Terrorism Hazards

Planners also need to consider the possibility of unusual or unique types of terrorist attacks previously not considered likely.¹ Although it is not realistically possible to plan for and prevent every conceivable type of terrorist attack, planners should anticipate that future terrorism attempts could range from simple, isolated attacks to complex, sophisticated, highly coordinated acts of destruction using multiple agents aimed at one or multiple targets. Therefore, the plans developed for terrorist incidents must be broad in scope yet flexible enough to deal with the unexpected. These considerations are particularly important in planning to handle the consequences of attacks using low-tech devices and delivery, assaults on public infrastructure, and cyber terrorism. In these cases, the training and experience of the responders may be more important than detailed procedures.

Low-Tech Devices and Delivery

Planning for the possibility of terrorist attacks must consider the fact that explosives can be delivered by a variety of methods. Most explosive and incendiary devices used by terrorists would be expected to fall outside the definition of a WMD. Small explosive devices can be left in packages or bags in public areas for later detonation, or they can be attached directly to a suicide bomber for detonation at a time and place when and where the terrorist feels that maximum damage can be done. The relatively small size of these explosive devices and the absence of specific security measures in most areas make these types of terrorist attacks extremely difficult to prevent. Small explosive devices can also be brought onto planes, trains, ships, or buses, within checked bags or hand carried. Larger quantities of explosive materials can be delivered to their intended target area by means of car or truck bombs.

Mass Shootings

In 2014 the Federal Bureau of Investigation initiated a study of active shooter incidents to provide federal, state, local, campus and tribal law enforcement with accurate data to better understand how to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from these incidents.

The FBI identified 160 active shooter incidents between 2000 and 2013, with most happening after 2007. The vast majority of mass shooting incidents have not been classified as terrorism. However, the Paris and Orlando mass shootings have demonstrated that this is a potential terrorist tactic that we need to be prepared for.

¹ Prior to the World Trade Center attack, the use of multiple commercial airliners with full fuel loads as explosive, incendiary devices in well-coordinated attacks on public and governmental targets, was not considered a likely terrorist scenario.

Infrastructure Attacks

Potential attacks on elements of the nation's infrastructure require protective considerations. Infrastructure protection involves proactive risk management actions taken to prevent destruction of or incapacitating damage to networks and systems that serve society, according to the 1997 report of the President's Commission on Critical Infrastructure Protection. This commission was formed in 1996 to evaluate the vulnerability to disruption of the nation's infrastructures, including electric power, oil and natural gas, telecommunications, transportation, banking and finance, and vital government services. The commission's report, issued in October 1997, concluded, "Waiting for disaster is a dangerous strategy. Now is the time to act to protect our future."

Cyber Terrorism

Cyber terrorism involves the malicious use of electronic information technology to commit or threaten to commit acts dangerous to human life, or against a nation's critical infrastructures in order to intimidate or coerce a government or civilian population to further political or social objectives (FBI NIPC, Congressional testimony, August 29, 2001). As with other critical infrastructure guidance, most cyber protection guidance focuses on security measures to protect computer systems against intrusions, denial of service attacks, and other forms of attack rather than addressing issues related to contingency and consequence management planning.

Unlike natural disasters, a disaster resulting from a terrorist incident is also a crime scene. Therefore, two response operations need to be managed simultaneously in the event of this type of incident. HSPD-5 says to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies, the United States Government shall establish a single, comprehensive approach to domestic incident management. The objective of the United States Government is to ensure that all levels of government across the Nation have the capability to work efficiently and effectively together, using a national approach to domestic incident management. In these efforts, with regard to domestic incidents, the United States Government treats crisis management and consequence management as a single, integrated function, rather than as two separate functions.

SPECIFIC SITUATION

In response to a growing concern about terrorism at the federal, state and local level, the City of Oxnard regularly participates and is an active member of both the County's Terrorism Early Warning Group, Terrorism Working Group and the Joint Regional Information Center.