

May 2013

Emergency Preparedness Pointers

Partners In Prevention

The tragic events that took place in Boston on April 15, 2013 are proof that a terrorist event can occur on U.S. soil at anytime. As citizen's we must all better prepare ourselves to assist in prevention efforts. As always, the first step is greater awareness of the issue.

Preparedness advocate and author, John D. Solomon, wrote the following in a Washington Post article dated May 18, 2008:

“Public engagement is important not only in responding to emergencies, but also in helping prevent them in the first place. ‘The weakest part of our homeland security is the citizen,’ 9/11 Commission chairman Thomas H. Kean told me. ‘Addressing that is very, very, very important. Ultimately, it's as likely that a terrorist attack here will be stopped by the CIA or FBI as by someone who sees something suspicious and, instead of just going home for dinner, decides to tell his or her local police.’ ”

Where To Be Very Aware

Terrorism is both a crime and a threat to national security. New technologies and techniques have increased the capabilities of federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to combat terrorist activities. Just as new technologies have benefitted these efforts, new technologies have also benefitted terrorists, making them even more difficult to stop. In the age of social media, it is very easy for groups or individuals to spread hateful or harmful messages that may enable or encourage others to act. These messages can travel around the globe in seconds making every community vulnerable to a terrorist incident. Many communities contain highly visible terrorist targets such as manufacturing or chemical facilities. Some even have biological testing sites. These types of targets may have relatively open access to the public. However, security for these locations is normally managed by on site staff. Other possible targets include:

- Public Assemblies
- Public Buildings
- Places of Historic or Symbolic Significance
- Mass Transit Systems
- Places of High Economic Impact
- Telecommunications Facilities

In these locations, it is important that people are aware of their surroundings and report suspicious activity.

Reporting Suspicious Activity

It is difficult at times to determine what “suspicious activity” looks like. Here are some guidelines to consider when observing something or someone that seems out of place. Trust your instincts, report as needed.

If a person is...

- Asking unusual questions about facility security, emergency exits, fire suppression or specific events.
- Filming, photographing, drawing, taking notes or just watching for extended periods of time a building's security cameras, hallways, fire exits and ingress or egress routes.
- Dressed in bulky clothes (coats etc.) unseasonably and acting nervous or strangely.
- Carrying an unusual package (may have odd shape, stains, odors or be very heavy for it's size).

Packages...

- Be especially aware of packages, backpacks or suitcases that have been left unattended in crowded places.

Vehicles...

- Pay attention to vehicles parked in unusual ways or locations in congested areas.

Never approach a suspicious circumstance personally. Move away from the area before you make a call. To report an emergency Dial 911, for non-emergency reports in Ada County dial 208-377-6790.

