If you are in a train, on the subway, or on a bus:

- Assess the environment around you before taking any action.
- Avoid being lured closer to see what is happening because the risks from secondary attacks or hazardous materials could be extremely high.
- Listen for, and follow, instructions from local authorities and building personnel. If no information is immediately available from local officials, stay away from windows and doors and move to an inner area of a building until directed differently by authorities.

If you are a train, on the subway, or on a bus:

- In general, it is best to remain inside the train car unless you are in immediate danger.
- Focus on your personal safety and do not concern yourself with other passengers unless you are in immediate danger. If you hear a blast, immediately move away and look for emergency exits.
- Open windows or doors if possible and if it is safe to do so, because it can reduce the severity and number of injuries from a secondary explosion.

Caring for the injured:

- First aid you provide may save lives. In the most likely help you may need to provide is to control bleeding. Apply direct pressure to the bleeding site.
- Avoid unnecessary movement so you don’t kick up dust.
- Shout only as a last resort. Shouting can cause you to inhale dangerous amounts of dust and drain your energy.

If you are nearby, but not at the immediate site of an attack:

- Assess the area for safety before continuing.
- Avoid unneeded movement from local officials, stay away from windows and doors and move to an inner area of a building until directed differently by authorities.
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If you are trapped:

- Listen for, and follow, instructions from local authorities and building personnel. If no information is immediately available from local officials, stay away from windows and doors and move to an inner area of a building until directed differently by authorities.
- Avoid being lured closer to see what is happening because the risks from secondary attacks or hazardous materials could be extremely high.
- Avoid unnecessary movement from local officials, stay away from windows and doors and move to an inner area of a building until directed differently by authorities.

LIMIT YOUR USE OF PHONES AND OTHER COMMUNICATION DEVICES AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, BECAUSE COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS MAY BECOME OVERLOADED.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – http://emergency.cdc.gov

Local and state government websites often contain information regarding emergency preparedness and response to your area’s needs.

WHAT IS IT?

An improvised explosive device (IED) attack is the use of a "homemade" bomb and/or destructive device to destroy, incapacitate, harass, or distract. IEDs are used by criminals, vandals, terrorists, suicide bombers, and insurgents. Because they are improvised, IEDs can come in many forms, ranging from a small pipe bomb to a sophisticated device capable of causing massive damage and loss of life. IEDs can be carried or delivered in a vehicle; carried, placed, or thrown by a person; delivered in a package; or concealed on the roadside. The term IED came into common usage during the Iraq War that began in 2003.

Elements of an IED

IEDs consist of a variety of components that include an initiator, switch, main charge, power source, and a container. IEDs may be surrounded by or packed with additional materials or "enhancements" such as nails, glass, or metal fragments designed to increase the amount of damage propelled by the explosion. Enhancements may also include other elements such as hazardous materials. An IED can be initiated by a variety of methods depending on the intended target.

Materials Used as Explosives in IEDs

Many commonly available materials, such as fertilizer, gunpowder, and hydrogen peroxide, can be used as explosive materials in IEDs (see Table 1). Explosives must contain a fuel and an oxidizer, which provides the oxygen needed to sustain the reaction. A common example is ANFO, a mixture of ammonium nitrate, which acts as the oxidizer, and fuel oil (the fuel source). Concern about the use of explosives created from liquid components that can be transported in a stable form and mixed at the site of attack is the reason that in 2006 the U.S. Department of Homeland Security restricted the amount of liquids that passengers can carry on commercial aircraft.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High explosives</th>
<th>Common uses</th>
<th>Common form</th>
<th>Known IED use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ammonium nitrate and fuel oil of ANFO</td>
<td>Mining and blasting¹¹</td>
<td>Solid</td>
<td>Oklahoma City bombing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triacetone triperoxide (TATP)</td>
<td>None common uses; mixed from other materials</td>
<td>Crystalline solid</td>
<td>2005 bombings in London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semtex, C-4</td>
<td>Primarily military</td>
<td>Solid</td>
<td>Irish Republican Army bombings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethylene glycol dinitrate (EGDN)</td>
<td>Component of liquid</td>
<td>Liquid</td>
<td>Millennium Bomber, intended for Los Angeles airport, 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nitroglycerin</td>
<td>Component</td>
<td>Solid</td>
<td>World Trade Center 1993</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explosives Used as IEDs

- High explosives
- Low explosives
- Smokeless powder
- Ammunition

¹¹The primary focus in this fact sheet is explosive-based IEDs; it does not address IEDs used for dispersing chemical, radiological, or biological materials, also known as “dirty bombs." See the other fact sheets in this series for information on chemical, radiological, or biological dispersion.

A fact sheet from the National Academies and the Department of Homeland Security

IDEA ATTACK

IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES

Examples of Terrorist IED Attacks

Oklahoma City Bombing

On the morning of April 19, 1995, a truck bomb exploded in front of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The bomb was improvised from ammonium nitrate fertilizer and nitromethane, which were put into the back of the truck and left to explode. It was the worst terrorist attack on U.S. soil up to that time, killing 169 people. Timothy McVeigh was convicted and executed for the crime; his accomplice, Terry Nichols, is serving a life sentence in federal prison.

Madrid Train Attacks

Ten explosions rocked through four commuter trains during rush hour on March 11, 2004, in Madrid, Spain. The bombs had been made from bags stuffed with explosives, allegedly the explosive known as Goma-2 ECQ, and metal fragments. Cell phones with timers were used to initiate the explosions. The attack, which was carried out by violent Islamist extremists, killed 191 people, and injured more than 1,800.

July 2005 London Bombings

Fifty-two people were killed and hundreds more injured in a series of coordinated attacks on the London transportation system on the morning of July 7, 2005. The attacks were carried out by four suicide bombers. Authorities had difficulty identifying the explosive used in the IEDs; they believe it was TATP on the basis of finding TATP in the London apartment of the biochemist arrested in Cairo in association with these bombings.

Olympic Park Bombing

In the midst of the 1996 Olympics, an IED composed of “pipe bombs” concealed in a backpack exploded in the Centennial Olympic Park in Atlanta, Georgia, where the games were being hosted. The bomb contained nails to increase its lethality. Two people died and many were injured. Eric Rudolph pleaded guilty in 2005.
Damage to Structures and to Infrastructure
An explosion in or near a building or public transportation venue may blow out windows, destroy walls, and shut down building systems such as power, ventilation, fire suppression, water/sewage, and others. Exit routes may be disrupted or destroyed, and smoke and dust may travel upward through stairways and elevator shafts, making navigation difficult. Building failure may result in the release of hazardous materials used within a building, such as radioactive material from medical devices, or incorporated within the structure of a building, such as asbestos insulation. An IED attack may cause disruptions in municipal services such as electricity, water, communications, and transportation, which may continue for days to weeks after the attack. Individuals and businesses should have a plan for addressing these interruptions.

The Possibility of Secondary Devices and/or Multiple Explosions
A known bomber tactic is to use a distraction, such as gunfire, small bombs, or other surprises, to attract bystanders to a window, a doorway, or outside, and then to detonate a secondary device at the gathering point. In an attack, there may be bombings at multiple locations. Rescue efforts can be hampered by the need to respond to more than one site.

Secondary Hazards
The explosion of a bomb can cause secondary explosions if gasoline, natural gas, or other flammable material is ignited. Secondary hazards that can arise include fire with possibly toxic smoke, disruption of electric power, ruptured natural gas lines and water mains, and debris. There can be loss of traffic control in the area of the blast with possible traffic accidents involving fleeing citizens.

Immediate Health Effects
Explosions create a high-pressure blast that sends debris flying and lifts people off the ground. The type of injuries and the number of people hurt will vary depending on the physical environment and the size of the blast; the amount of shielding between victims and the blast; fires, or structural damage that results from the explosion; and whether the explosion occurs in a closed space or an open area. Injuries common to explosions include:

- Overpressure damage to the lungs, ears, abdomen, and other pressure-sensitive organs. Blast lung injury, a condition caused by the extreme pressure of an explosion, is the leading cause of illness and death for initial survivors of an explosion.
- Fragmentation injuries caused by projectiles thrown by the blast – material from the bomb, shrapnel, or flying debris that penetrates the body and causes damage.
- Impact injuries caused when the blast throws a victim into another object, i.e., fractures, amputation, and trauma to the head and neck.
- Thermal injuries caused by burns to the skin, mouth, sinuses, and lungs.
- Other injuries including exposure to toxic substances, crush injuries, and aggravation of pre-existing conditions (asthma, congestive heart failure, etc.).

Delayed Health Effects
Some health effects caused by IEDs, including eye injuries and abdominal injuries, may not be apparent initially, but can cause symptoms and even fatalities hours to months after the event. Psychological effects in attack survivors, first responders, and others are not unusual in the aftermath of a high-casualty event. While most symptoms diminish with time, in some cases assistance and guidance from mental health professionals may be required.

WHAT SHOULD PEOPLE DO TO PROTECT THEMSELVES?

The number one way to protect yourself and others from an IED attack is to be alert to your surroundings. Advanced technologies help police and other authorities detect possible dangers, but an even more effective tool is to encourage individuals to be alert for, and to report, anything that is out of the ordinary in their daily routine. Examples include bags or boxes in unusual places, unusual smells, and suspicious behaviors such as someone dressed in a heavy coat in summer.

Steps to Take If You See Something Suspicious

“If you see it, say it!”

It can be difficult to determine when to report something suspicious. People most familiar with a given environment are in the best position to determine whether or not something is out of the ordinary; there are some common guidelines, as follows:

- Trust your instincts; if something feels wrong, don’t ignore it.
- Do not assume that someone else has already reported it.
- Call local authorities.
- Keep your distance from a suspicious package—do not approach or tamper with it.

When you make a report, be ready to provide your name, your location, a description of what you think is suspicious, and the time you saw it. The responding officer will assess the situation, ensure the area is evacuated and call for appropriate personnel and technologies used to assess whether a package contains explosive material may include portable x-ray systems or bomb-disposal robots.

Make a Personal Plan for Response

Preparation is key. Every person can take these steps to prepare for an IED attack:

- Learn the emergency procedures at your place of work, any other sites you visit regularly, and any public transportation systems you use. Communication systems may be inoperable in an emergency, and you should be familiar with what steps to take.
- Know how to get out of the area. If you work far from home, plan backpacks to get home if the usual modes of transit are not operating.
- Know the routes to hospitals in your community.
- Make a first aid course.
- Make a family emergency plan. Remember that family members may be in separate locations at the time of an attack. Use planning tools and aids you can prepare yourself and your family.
- Designate an “out-of-area” contact, and make sure that everyone in your family has that person’s phone number.
- Have an emergency supply kit at work and at home that includes water and non-perishable food to last at least three days, battery-powered radio, first aid kit, flashlights, and batteries.

WHAT TO DO DURING AN IED ATTACK

If you are at the immediate site of an IED attack, your top priority is to get out of the area. This increases your safety in case a secondary device is present in the area and minimizes your exposure to dust, smoke, and any hazardous substances that may have been released as a result of the blast. This also allows emergency responders to find and assist the most critically injured victims.

If you are in a building:

- Get under a sturdy table or desk if objects are falling around you.
- Exit as quickly as possible, without stopping to retrieve personal possessions or make phone calls. Assist other victims to leave the area if possible. Use stairs instead of elevators. Be aware of weakened floors and stairways, and watch for falling debris as you exit the building.

Once you are out of the building:

- Move away from windows, glass doors, or other potentially hazardous areas.
- Continue moving away from the blast site and look for emergency officials who will direct you to a safe location.
- Be aware that secondary explosions may occur at or near the original bombing site, especially as rescue personnel arrive. Use caution to avoid debris that could be hot, sharp, or cause puncture wounds.

Detecting IEDs
Detection of IEDs presents a real challenge for security screeners, employees, first responders, and military personnel. Training security guards, airport staff and other personnel to be alert for suspicious behavior and IED indicators is the most common and best defense. Various bomb detection technologies continue to be developed for use in high-risk areas or situations such as airports and high-profile events. These technologies include “trace detectors” that identify trace amounts of common explosives in the air and “millimeter-wave technology” that detects dense objects, hidden under clothing. Explosives detection dogs, trained to detect and locate chemical explosives, are used in many security scenarios.

Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threat Description</th>
<th>Explosive Capacity</th>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>Detonation Distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smoulder Package/s</td>
<td>1 lb</td>
<td>650 ft</td>
<td>300 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pipe Bomb</td>
<td>5 lb</td>
<td>1,200 ft</td>
<td>400 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duffel Bag</td>
<td>15 lb</td>
<td>1,900 ft</td>
<td>700 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internally Bagged</td>
<td>30 lb</td>
<td>1,700 ft</td>
<td>1,100 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Package</td>
<td>50 lb</td>
<td>1,400 ft</td>
<td>900 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car Parked</td>
<td>50 lb</td>
<td>1,400 ft</td>
<td>900 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Size Carriable</td>
<td>1,000 lb</td>
<td>2,400 ft</td>
<td>1,400 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van/Box Truck</td>
<td>4,000 lb</td>
<td>3,800 ft</td>
<td>2,300 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery Truck</td>
<td>10,000 lb</td>
<td>5,100 ft</td>
<td>3,500 ft</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

The extent of damage caused by an IED depends on its size, construction, and placement, and whether it incorporates a high explosive or propellant. Table 2 predicts the damage radius based on the volume or weight of explosive (TNT equivalent) and the type of bomb. Vehicle bombs, also known as vehicle-borne IEDs, can carry significantly more explosive material, and therefore do more damage than those same explosives placed in a building.

Damage to Structures and to Infrastructure

An explosion in or near a building or public transportation venue may blow out windows, destroy walls, and shut down building systems such as power, ventilation, fire suppression, water/escape, and others. Exit routes may be disrupted or destroyed, and smoke and dust may travel upward through stairs, elevator shafts, and other spaces. Building failure may result in the release of hazardous materials used within a building, such as radioactive material from medical devices, or incorporated within the structure of a building, such as asbestos insulation. An IED attack may cause disruptions in municipal services such as electricity, water, communications, and transportation, which may continue for days to weeks after the attack. Individuals and businesses should have a plan for addressing these interruptions.

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The explosion of a bomb can cause secondary explosions if gasoline, natural gas, or other flammable material is ignited. Secondary explosion hazards that require special precautions include fire with possible toxic smoke, disruption of electric power, ruptured natural gas lines and water mains, and debris. There can be loss of traffic control in the area of the blast with possible traffic accidents involving fleeing citizens.

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Explosions create a high-pressure blast that sends debris flying and lifts people off the ground. The type of injuries and the number of people hurt will vary depending on the physical environment and the size of the blast; the amount of shielding between victims and the blast; fires; and structural damage that result from the explosion; and whether the explosion occurs in a closed space or an open area. Injuries common to explosions include:

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Steps to Take If You See Something Suspicious

“If you see it, say it!”

It can be difficult to determine when to report something suspicious. People most familiar with a given environment are in the best position to determine whether or not something is out of the ordinary. If you notice something unusual, and follow these guidelines:

- Trust your instincts; if something feels wrong, don’t ignore it.
- Do not assume that someone else has already reported it.
- Call local authorities.
- Keep your distance from a suspicious package—do not approach or tamper with it.

When you make a report, be ready to provide your name, your location, a description of what you think is suspicious, and the time you saw it. The responding officer will assess the situation, ensure the area is evacuated if needed, and notify law enforcement personnel as appropriate. Technologies used to assess whether a package contains explosive material may include portable x-ray systems or bomb-disposal robots.

Make a Personal Plan for Response

Preparation is key. Every person can take these steps to prepare for an IED attack:

- Learn the emergency procedures at your place of work, any other sites you visit regularly, and any public transportation systems you use. Communication systems may be disrupted in an emergency, and you should be familiar with what steps to take.
- Know how to get out of the area. If you work far from home, plan backups to get home if the usual modes of transit are not operating.
- Know the routes to hospitals in your community.
- Take a first aid course.
- Make a family emergency plan. Remember that family members may be in separate locations at the time of an attack. Use planning tools at ready.gov to prepare yourself and your family.
- Designate an “out-of-area” contact, and make sure that everyone in your family has that person’s phone number.
- Have an emergency supply kit at work and at home that includes water and non-perishable food to last at least three days, battery-powered radio, first aid kit, flashlights, and batteries.

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If you are at the immediate site of an IED attack, your top priority is to get out of the area. This increases your safety in case a secondary device is present in the area and minimizes your exposure to dust, smoke, and any hazardous substances that may have been released as a result of the blast. This also allows emergency responders to find and assist the most critically injured victims.

If you are in a building:

- Get under a sturdy table or desk if objects are falling around you.
- Exit as quickly as possible, without stopping to retrieve personal possessions or make phone calls. Assist other victims to leave the area if possible. Use stairs instead of elevators. Be aware of weakened floors and stairways, and watch for falling debris as you exit the building.

Once you are out of the building:

- Move away from windows, glass doors, or other potentially hazardous areas.
- Continue moving away from the blast site and look for emergency officials who will direct you to a safe location.
- Be aware that secondary explosions may occur at or near the original bombing site, especially as rescue personnel arrive. Use caution to avoid debris that could be hot, sharp, or cause puncture wounds.

The number one way to protect yourself and others from an IED attack is to be alert to your surroundings.
Limit your use of phones and other communications devices as much as possible, because communications systems may become overloaded.

If you become trapped:
- Cover your nose and mouth with anything you have on hand to limit inhalation of dust or other hazardous materials. Dense-weave cotton material can act as a good filter.
- Avoid unnecessary movement from local officials, stay away from windows and doors and move to an inner area of a building until directed differently by authorities.

If you are nearby, but not at the immediate site of an attack:
- Assess the environment around you before taking any action.
- Avoid being lulled closer to see what is happening because the risks from secondary attacks or hazardous materials could be extremely high.
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If you are in a train, on the subway, or on a bus:
- In general, it is best to remain inside the train car unless you are in immediate danger.
- Use the communication system on the train car to receive instructions.
- If you are in danger and must leave the car, be aware of hazards on the tracks or in the tunnel and move with caution to the nearest station or point where you can contact emergency personnel.
- Open windows or doors if possible and if it is safe to do so, because it can reduce the severity and number of injuries from a secondary explosion.

Caring for the injured:
- First aid you provide may save lives. The most likely help you may need to provide is to control bleeding. Apply direct pressure to the bleeding site.
- Nearby hospitals may be overwhelmed with victims. If you need to transport victims who are not bleeding, go to a hospital that is further from the bombing site.

Additional Information

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – http://emergency.cdc.gov

Local and state government websites often contain information regarding emergency preparedness and response to hazardous materials. Dense-weave cotton material can act as a good filter.

Cover your nose and mouth with anything you have on hand to limit inhalation of dust or other hazardous materials. Components of low explosives are solid:

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Solid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urea nitrate</td>
<td>Solid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nitromethane</td>
<td>Solid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nitroglycerin</td>
<td>Solid</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table: Explosives

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<td>Solid</td>
<td>Used in the Madrid train attacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TATP</td>
<td>No common uses, mixed from other materials</td>
<td>Crystaline solid</td>
<td>Considered a feasible explosive, but not used in IEDs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANFO</td>
<td>Mining and blasting</td>
<td>Solid</td>
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