

## Section 18 – Terrorism

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### Hazard Profile

Terrorism can strike not just large cities, but in communities of any size. While no amount of planning and mitigation can remove 100-percent of the risk from terrorism, hazard mitigation and preparedness can help reduce the risk.

Terrorism is the use of force or violence against persons or property in violation of criminal laws of the United States for purposes of intimidation, coercion, or ransom. Terrorists often use threats to create fear among the public, to convince citizens that government is powerless to prevent terrorism, and to get immediate publicity for their causes. Weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including incendiary, explosive, chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear agents, have the capability to cause death or serious bodily injury to a significant number of people, thus posing the threat of a catastrophic incident. Terrorism includes the following hazards:

- Conventional bomb
- Biological agent
- Chemical agent
- Nuclear bomb
- Radiological agent
- Arson/incendiary attack
- Armed attack
- Agriterrorism
- Intentional hazardous materials release
- Assaults on the infrastructure and electronic information systems that could result in consequences affecting human life, health and safety

## Section 18 – Terrorism

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The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) categorizes terrorism in the United States as one of two types—domestic terrorism or international terrorism. Domestic terrorism involves groups or individuals whose terrorist activities are directed at elements of our government or population without foreign direction. International terrorism involves groups or individuals whose terrorist activities are foreign-based and/or directed by countries or groups outside the United States, or whose activities transcend their national boundaries.

A terrorist attack can take several forms, depending on the technological means available to the terrorist, the nature of issue motivating the attack, and the points of weakness of the terrorist's target. Bombings are the most frequently used terrorist method in the United States. A terrorist using a chemical or biological weapon is of particular concern to officials. Special training and equipment is needed in order to safely manage a WMD incident.

Biological agents are infectious microbes or toxins used to produce illness or death in people, animals or plants. Biological agents can be dispersed as aerosols or airborne particles. Terrorists may use biological agents to contaminate food or water because they are extremely difficult to detect.

Chemical agents kill or incapacitate people, destroy livestock, or ravage crops. Some chemical agents are odorless and tasteless and are therefore difficult to detect. They can have an immediate effect (a few seconds to a few minutes) or a delayed effect (several hours to several days).

The Department of Defense estimates that as many as 26 nations may possess chemical agents and/or weapons and an additional 12 may be seeking to develop them. The Central Intelligence Agency reports that at least ten countries are believed to possess or to be conducting research on biological agents for weaponization.

Whether intentional or accidental, terrorist incidents – as with other natural and technological disasters – involve the application of one or more modes of harmful force to the built environment. These modes include contamination (as in the case of chemical, biological radiological or nuclear hazards), energy (explosives, arson, and even electromagnetic waves), or denial of service (sabotage, infrastructure breakdown, and transportation service disruption).

"We are here to do the work that ensures no other family members have to lose a loved one to a terrorist who turns a plane into a missile, a terrorist who straps a bomb around her waist and climbs aboard a bus, a terrorist who figures out how to set off a dirty bomb in one of our cities. This is why we are here: to make our country safer and make sure the nearly 3,000 who were taken from us did not die in vain; that their legacy will be a more safe and secure Nation."

-- Barack Obama, Speech in the U.S. Senate, March 6, 2007

### ***Location***

There is no distinct geographic boundary to the threat of terrorism. An event is possible throughout the TCRFC.

### ***Spatial Extent***

There are heightened periods of risk for terrorism based on intelligence and other information. A potential terrorist event could devastate the community physically, economically and psychologically for many years to come. Warning time for terrorism is minimal to none.

### ***Historical Occurrences***

The history of terrorism on United States soil includes the attacks of September 11, 2001, on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. and the ensuing anthrax attacks; the 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City; and earlier bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993.

No community in the Lower Colorado River Basin has experienced a terrorist act. While we may not be able to prevent an attack, it is well within our ability to lessen the likelihood and/or the potential effects of an incident. Cities in the basin continue to improve their readiness to respond to a terrorist incident through participation in state and federal programs that provide training and equipment for agencies that would respond to a local terrorist incident, and in exercises that help to improve agency coordination and test local response plans.

### ***Probability of Future Events***

The types, frequencies, and locations of many natural hazards are identifiable and, even in some cases, predictable. They are governed by the laws of physics and nature. Malevolence, however, cannot be forecast with any accuracy. There is, therefore, some potential for most, if not all, types of intentional terrorist acts to occur anywhere and at any time.

### ***Vulnerability Assessment***

There is no defined geographic boundary for a terrorist event. All population, buildings, critical facilities, infrastructure and lifelines and hazardous materials facilities are considered exposed to the hazards of terrorism and could potentially be impacted.

The Homeland Security Advisory System, issued by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, is a color-coded terrorism warning system that sets out five threat levels. Terrorism Warning Threat Levels are described in Table 18-1.

**Table 18-1. Terrorism Warning System Threat Levels<sup>1</sup>**

| <b>Color</b>  | <b>Threat Level</b>                           | <b>Governmental actions to be taken</b>  |
|---------------|---|--|
| <b>Green</b>  | Low:<br><br>Low risk of attacks.              | Requires “protective measures” such as regularly assessing facilities for weaknesses and finding ways to reduce them, and making sure State and local government employees are trained to handle terrorism situations.   |
| <b>Blue</b>   | Guarded:<br><br>General risk of attacks.      | Requires government agencies to review and update emergency response procedures and communications systems, as well as provide the public with necessary information.  |
| <b>Yellow</b> | Elevated:<br><br>Significant risk of attacks. | Includes increasing surveillance of critical locations, coordinating emergency plans with nearby jurisdictions and implementing contingency and emergency response plans.  |
| <b>Orange</b> | High:<br><br>High risk of attacks.            | Requires coordinating necessary security efforts with armed forces or law enforcement agencies, taking additional precautions at public events, preparing to work at an alternative site or with a dispersed workforce and restricting access to essential personnel.  |
| <b>Red</b>    | Severe:<br><br>Severe risk of attacks.        | Includes assigning emergency response personnel and setting up specially trained teams; monitoring, redirecting, or constraining transportation systems; closing public and government facilities; and increasing or redirecting personnel to address emergency needs. |

<sup>1</sup> Department of Homeland Security

The current threat level may be found at:

[http://www.dhs.gov/xinfo/share/programs/Copy\\_of\\_press\\_release\\_0046.shtm](http://www.dhs.gov/xinfo/share/programs/Copy_of_press_release_0046.shtm).

The Red Cross also issues Advisory System Recommendations for individuals, families, neighborhoods, schools and businesses for each alert level. These may be found at: [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).

### ***Impact***

Terrorist events can have a substantial severity of impact. They can cause multiple deaths, completely shut down facilities for thirty days or more, and cause more than fifty percent of affected properties to be destroyed or suffer major damage.