Terrorism: Disarming the Threat



Safety Talk

Workers need to prepare for all possible emergencies, even those as unlikely as terrorist attacks. In some workplaces, this threat is considered more possible than in others. These include power plants, large governmental agencies and places that make or use nuclear, biological or chemical materials. Other possible targets are waste treatment facilities, important bridges or tunnels, well-known buildings and national landmarks. Often terrorists will select high-traffic places, such as airports or large cities, where they can disappear into a crowd.

Terrorism is politically motivated, pre-planned violence, usually caused by a group trying to influence an audience. The attacks typically are designed to disrupt security and communication systems, destroy property, and kill or injure as many civilians as possible.

Terrorists employ a variety of weapons and tactics, including gunfire, arson, hijacking, kidnapping and bombs. Biological and chemical attacks are also possible. Biological terrorism uses toxins, bacteria or viruses to make people and livestock sick and to damage crops. Chemical terrorism uses poisonous substances that may cause serious injuries or death.

You are more prepared for a terrorist attack if you are cautious and alert. Here are a few wise habits:

- When in an area that could be targeted, be aware of your surroundings. Notice heavy objects that could topple in an explosion, and mentally note a spot where you would be safe if large windows shattered.
- Plan ahead in case you need to leave the building quickly. Locate emergency exits and stairways. Remember: Don’t use elevators in an emergency.
- While traveling, watch for unusual behavior. Don’t accept packages from strangers or leave your luggage unattended.
- If you work in a multi-level building, know where fire extinguishers are located and ensure they are in working order. Know where emergency supplies are stored. Ideally, each floor should have a first aid kit, flashlights, battery-operated radio, extra batteries, fluorescent tape for roping off areas and hardhats.
- Learn first aid.
- If you receive a bomb threat at work, keep the caller on the phone and get as much information as possible. Try to record everything. Call police and management, and then get out. After a threat, don’t touch any suspicious packages. Clear the area and notify police. As the building is evacuated, move

away from windows and don’t block emergency officials’ paths.

You have a valuable role in your company’s emergency-preparedness plan. Being prepared for even an unlikely threat is an important part of that plan.