

Polk County Preparations

Terrorists use a variety of methods to inflict harm and create fear, and bombs are used the most frequently. Because of this and other concerns, the Polk County Public Health Department is working to improve overall preparation against terrorism. One part of this preparation is to learn about protecting ourselves against possible bomb attacks.

According to the U. S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, bombings accounted for nearly 70 percent of all terrorist attacks in the U.S. and its territories between 1980 and 2001¹. If a bomb attack were to happen in our community, the Polk County Public Health Department will be the local agency responsible for guiding medical response. Working with other local, state and national agencies, the Public Health Department will also help to coordinate overall response activities and provide public information.

This information is being provided to help you prepare yourself and your family in the unlikely event that a terrorist bomb was set off in Polk County.

What can I do now?

It is important for every organization, family and individual to take time to prepare for an emergency or disaster. These steps can help you get started:

Know your work, school and community disaster plans. If you are not familiar with the plans, contact your work place supervisor, school administrators, or your local elected official for more information.

Visit http://www.redcross.org/preparedness/cdc_english/CDC.asp. The site provides guidance on creating a disaster plan and steps you can take now to protect yourself and your loved ones.

What should I do if I think someone is going to set off a bomb?

At Home: 1. Leave the area immediately. 2. Call 9-1-1 and tell the operator what you saw or know, for example a description of suspicious persons, packages or vehicles. 3. Follow directions from people in authority – police, fire, emergency services staff, military personnel.

At Work: 1. Follow existing evacuation guidelines. 2. Follow existing security reporting procedures. 3. Follow directions from people in authority – police, fire, emergency services staff, military personnel, or a workplace supervisor.

At School: 1. Follow existing evacuation guidelines. 2. Report the incident to a school official – teacher, principle, professor, security guard. 3. Follow directions from people in authority – police, fire, emergency services staff, military personnel, or school administrator.

In Public: 1. Leave the area immediately. 2. Call 9-1-1 and tell the operator what you saw or know, for example a description of suspicious persons, packages or vehicles. 3. Follow directions from people in authority – police, fire, emergency services staff, military personnel.

What should I do during a terrorist bombing?

If you are in a bombing event:

- Leave the area immediately.
- Avoid crowds. Crowds of people may be targeted for a second attack.
- Avoid unattended cars and trucks. Unattended cars and truck may contain explosives.
- Stay away from damaged building or areas. You want to avoid falling glass and other materials. Move at least 10 blocks or 200 yards away from a damaged building.
- Follow directions from people in authority – police, fire, emergency services staff or military personnel – or from school or workplace supervisors.
- Call 9-1-1 once you are in a safe area and if police, fire or emergency services have not arrived.
- Help others who are hurt or need assistance to leave the area – if you are able. If you see someone who is seriously injured, seek help. Do not try to manage a serious injury alone.

What should I do after the bombing?

When the explosion is over follow you family, job or school emergency disaster plan for leaving and staying away from the scene of the event. Remember, returning to the scene will increase the risk of danger for rescue workers and you. Also, follow items mentioned above and listen to your radio or television news for more information and instructions.

What if rescue workers are not available to transport me or other injured persons?

9-1-1 services may be delayed – or not available – following a terrorist event. In that case, try to arrange for your own transportation. And listen to reliable news sources and follow advice from local public safety officials – local Public Health Officer, emergency medical services, fire and police departments.

When should I go to the hospital or clinic?

Seek medical attention if you have any of the following problems:

- Excessive bleeding
- Trouble breathing
- Persistent cough
- Trouble walking or using an arm or leg
- Stomach, back or chest pains
- Headache or blurred vision or burning eyes
- Dry mouth
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Rash or burning skin
- Hearing problems
- Injuries that increase pain, redness or swelling
- Injuries that do not improve after 24 to 48 hours

Where should I go for care?

If you can, go to a hospital or clinic away from the event. Most victims will go to the nearest hospital and hospitals away from the event may be less busy.

What can I expect at the hospital?

Triage. Following a terrorist attack or any disaster, injuries are treated on a “worst first” basis called triage. Triage is not “first come, first served”. If your injuries are not immediately life threatening, other may be treated before you. The goal of triage is to save as many lives as possible.

Long waits. If your injuries are not life threatening, you may have to wait some time before being treated. Going to a hospital farther away from the event might help. While this may increase your travel time, you might receive care sooner.

Limited information. In a large-scale emergency such as a terrorist attack, police, fire, emergency medical services, and even hospitals, cannot track every individual by name. Keep in mind that it may be difficult for hospitals to provide information about loved ones following a terrorist attack. Be patient as you seek information.

If you have any questions about preparing for an emergency, please contact the **Polk County Health Department at 515-286-3798**. Public Health Department staff members are available to answer your questions Monday to Friday from 8 am to 5 pm.

For more information about how to prepare for a terrorist bombing and other disasters, visit the Department of Homeland Security at www.ready.gov, the American Red Cross at www.redcross.org/services/disaster, or the Federal Emergency Management Agency at www.fema.gov.

For more information about mass casualties and injuries from terrorism, visit the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention's *Emergency Preparedness and Response Website* at www.bt.cdc.gov

