



South Central Public Health District

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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DIRTY BOMB AS A TERRORISM EVENT

What is a “dirty bomb”?

A dirty bomb, or radiological dispersion device, is a bomb that combines conventional explosives, such as dynamite, with radioactive materials in the form of powder or pellets. The idea behind a dirty bomb is to blast radioactive material into the area around the explosion. This could possibly cause buildings and people to be exposed to radioactive material.

What is the purpose of a “dirty bomb”?

A dirty bomb is designed to spread radioactive material and contaminate a small area. The main purpose of a dirty bomb is to frighten people and make buildings or land unusable for a long period of time.

What should I do following an explosion?

Radiation cannot be seen, smelled, felt, or tasted by humans. Therefore, if people are present at the scene of an explosion, they will not know whether radioactive materials were involved or if they were exposed. If people are not too severely injured by the initial blast, they should:

- Leave the immediate area on foot. Do not panic. Do not take public or private transportation such as buses, subways, or cars because if radioactive materials were involved, they may contaminate cars or the public transportation system.
- Go inside the nearest building. Staying inside will reduce your exposure to any radioactive material that may be on dust at the scene.
- Remove your clothes as soon as possible, place them in a plastic bag, and seal it. Removing clothing will remove most of the contamination caused by external exposure to radioactive materials. Saving the contaminated clothing will allow testing for exposure without invasive sampling of your body.
- Take a shower or wash yourself off the best you can. Washing with soap and water will reduce the amount of radioactive contamination on the body and will effectively reduce total exposure.
- Be on the lookout for information. Once emergency personnel assess the scene and the damage, they will be able to tell people whether radiation was involved.

How will I find out if radioactive material was involved in the blast?

Keep your television and radio tuned to local news networks. If radioactive material was released, you will be told where to report for radiation monitoring and blood tests to determine whether you were exposed to the radiation as well as what steps to take to protect your health.

Where can I get more information?

For more information, please contact South Central Public Health District at 734-5900 ext. 239.