

Client Briefing (11)

October 2001

ADVICE TO BUSINESSES ON CHEMICAL OR BIOLOGICAL ATTACK

We have received from the City of London Police the following advice to businesses on chemical or biological attack. The police have agreed that the advice can be given the widest possible circulation.

ADVICE TO BUSINESSES ON CHEMICAL OR BIOLOGICAL ATTACK

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This paper gives advice on how to prevent or to mitigate the effects of a chemical or biological attack against buildings. The advice is precautionary and follows recent cases of anthrax in the US. It is stressed that there is no evidence to suggest that any terrorist group is currently planning a chemical or biological attack in the UK.

2. The Threat

- 2.1 The current government assessment of the threat to Great Britain from the use of chemical or biological material is 'LOW', and this should be borne in mind when considering the remainder of this advice.

3. Prevention Advice

Air Conditioning Plant Room

- 3.1 Prevent unauthorised access to main AC plant. Ensure all existing keys are accounted for. Change locks and reissue keys on a controlled basis if necessary. Alarm all points of access to the plant room and cover with CCTV for alarm verification. Verify identity of any contractors working on the air conditioning and supervise whilst present on the premises.

Air Conditioning Intakes

- 3.2 Identify them all.
- 3.3 Prevent unauthorised access, secure access routes and alarm with CCTV coverage or verification.

On Site Water Storage Tanks

- 3.4 Prevent unauthorised access, secure access routes and alarm with CCTV coverage for verification.

Review Access Control Systems

- 3.5 Ensure access control is working effectively for staff, visitors and contractors. Passes should be worn visibly and a 'challenge culture' adopted, to ensure only authorised people are on the premises.

Post Room Procedures

- 3.6 Review procedures for dealing with all mail in accordance with the advice contained in 'Bombs-Protecting People and Property', and in particular:
- 3.7 Ensure that all incoming mail, despatch, lorry, van and motorcycle courier deliveries, or hand delivered items are processed at one single location i.e. the post room;
- 3.8 If available, scan or x-ray all mail.
- 3.9 Check all mail for suspicious signs:

Point of Origin e.g. from postmark or name of sender, if given. If from an unusual point or sender.

Manuscript of Sender if this indicates, for example, a foreign style of writing, and if such is not usually received.

Flap of Envelope, usually there is an un-gummed gap of about 3-5mm; if the flap of the envelope is stuck down completely.
- 3.10 Do not open, or continue to open any package deemed suspicious.

4. Dealing with an Incident

The following four examples will help when developing your contingency plans:

4.1 Suspicious package in the post room

Do not open it. Do not pass it around.

If unopened, immediately place the suspicious package in clear sealable plastic bag, for larger objects use a clear sealable plastic container. If opened leave it in situ.

Shut windows in the post room;

Evacuate the room, closing the door;

Switch off the air conditioning system;

Evacuate all the floors below the post room, the floor on which the post room is located and the floor directly above; and

Dial 999 for the police, making sure you state you believe chemical or biological material is involved.

4.2 In addition to the above, take the following action if any material may have been released in the post room:

Close all fire doors in the building - where premises have automated closing fire doors this may be achieved by re-configuring the fire alarm system to provide an additional function of automatically closing the fire doors without the fire alarm sounding;

Close all windows in the rest of the building;

Evacuate the building - where evacuation is not possible, for example where the only evacuation route is through the contaminated area, move staff up the building to await instructions from the emergency services.

4.3 Device outside the building:

Switch off the air conditioning system;

Close all fire doors in the building;

Close all windows in the building;

Move all occupants located on the ground and below ground floors up the building to the first floor and above to await instructions from the emergency services; and

Dial 999 for the police, making sure you state you believe chemical or biological material is involved.

4.4 Internal device in the entrance foyer (This assumes that the existing access control procedures limit unauthorised access to the entrance foyer only)

Switch off the air conditioning system - this may require the installation of an isolation switch within the Security Control Room;

Close all fire doors in the building;

Isolate the foyer - close all doors that give access to the foyer and close off the lifts;

Close all windows in the rest of the building;

Evacuate the building; and

Dial 999 for the police, making sure you state you believe chemical or biological material is involved.

5. Contaminated Persons

5.1 The following action should be taken for any person suspected of being in contact with a suspected chemical or biological device, prior to the arrival of the emergency services:

5.2 Wash hands in a weak bleach solution (one teaspoonful of domestic bleach to one litre of water), and then rinse with ordinary soap and water;

5.3 Keep the person finding the device separate from others and available for immediate attention from the emergency services;

5.4 Try to ascertain how many other people may have been exposed to the material - keep a detailed list including details of their family doctor; and

5.5 Keep all suspected contaminated people separate from others.

6. Further Advice and Guidance

6.1 Further advice and guidance on all the above can be obtained through your local police by asking for the Counter Terrorist Crime Prevention Officer.

6.2 The Home Office publications 'Bombs-Protecting People and Property' and 'Business as Usual' can be obtained at the following web sites:

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/oicd/bombs.pdf

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/oicd/business.pdf