

If an incident occurs

The two most common types of terrorist incidents are a bombing or bomb threat and a kidnapping or hostage-taking.

Bomb threats require advance preparedness. Determine whether the local police have a bomb disposal unit and the extent of its services. Some may perform physical searches; others may only defuse or remove explosives. The police or fire department may be willing to survey your offices and advise where terrorists would tend to hide explosives. Ensure all personnel, especially receptionists, maintenance, and security personnel, are alert to suspicious objects or strangers. Ensure evacuation procedures cover fire, intrusion and bomb threats and different signals and procedures cover each incident. Procedures must enable personnel to detour around a dangerous location. For example, bombs have been placed in fire escapes that therefore could not be used. Suspicious packages and boxes should be inspected with care, preferably away from most offices.

Receptionists should be trained to note the exact time and words of a bomb threat. They should ask when the bomb will explode, where is it located, what kind is it, what does it look like and why is the threat being made. They should note details of the voice, including apparent age, sex, emotion, education, accent, and also any background noise.

If a possible bomb is located, do not touch it. Report the location and description to the police. Evacuate the building. Block off an area of 100 meters around the object, including above and below. Open windows and doors to minimize blast damage. Once the building is evacuated, gas and fuel lines should be cut off. If you are near an explosion get away. Leave the casualties for trained personnel. Often a smaller blast will be used to attract people into the range of a larger explosive. Innocent victims get as much publicity and create as much terror as do those directly related to the terrorists' objectives.

Letter bombs come in a variety of shapes and sizes. A letter bomb can weigh less than 30 grams, but still maim. Watch for unusual writing, post marks, or smell, especially a smell like almonds or marzipan. Above normal postage, hand-printed addresses, lopsided letters or parcels, unusually heavy parcels for their size, protruding wires, or greasy marks from sweating explosives or the feel of metal inside the envelope may also signal a letter bomb. Put the object where others cannot reach it and report it to the police; do not attempt to defuse it. Submerging the parcel in water is one of the worst things to do.

Kidnappings and hostage-takings vary from incident to incident. The following general suggestions will apply