Explosions

Explosive devices can be highly portable, using vehicles and humans as a means of transport. They are easily detonated from remote locations or by suicide bombers. There are steps you can take to prepare for the unexpected.

Before an Explosion

The following are things you can do to protect yourself, your family and your property in the event of an explosion.

- Build an Emergency Supply Kit
- Make a Family Emergency Plan
- Learn what to do in case of bomb threats or receiving suspicious packages and letters
- Ensure your employers have up-to-date information about any medical needs you may have and how to contact designated beneficiaries or emergency contacts.

Bomb Threats

If you receive a telephoned bomb threat:

- Get as much information from the caller as possible. Try to ask the following questions:
    - When is the bomb going to explode?
    - Where is it right now?
    - What does it look like?
    - What kind of bomb is it?
    - What will cause it to explode?
    - Did you place the bomb?
- Keep the caller on the line and record everything that is said.
- Notify the police and building management immediately.

Suspicious Packages and Letters

Some typical characteristics postal inspectors have detected over the years, which should trigger suspicion, include parcels that:

- Are unexpected or from someone unfamiliar to you.
- Have no return address, one that doesn't match the postmark, or can't be verified as legitimate.
- Are marked with restrictive endorsements such as "Personal," "Confidential," or "Do not X-ray."
- Have inappropriate or unusual labeling such as threatening language
- Have protruding wires or aluminum foil, strange odors or stains.
- Have excessive postage or packaging material, such as masking tape and string.
- Are of unusual weight given their size or are lopsided or oddly shaped.
- Are not addressed to a specific person.

Take these additional steps against possible biological and chemical agents:

- Never sniff or smell suspicious mail.
- Place suspicious envelopes or packages in a plastic bag or some other type of container to prevent leakage of contents.
- Leave the room and close the door or section off the area to prevent others from entering.
- Wash your hands with soap and water to prevent spreading any powder to your face.
- If you are at work, report the incident to your building security official or an available supervisor, who should notify police and other authorities without delay.
- List all people who were in the room or area when this suspicious letter or package was recognized. Give a copy of this list to both the local public health authorities and law enforcement officials for follow-up investigations and advice.
- If you are at home, report the incident to local police.

During an Explosion

- Get under a sturdy table or desk if things are falling around you. When they stop falling, leave quickly, watching for obviously weakened floors and stairways.
- Do not use elevators.
- Stay low if there is smoke. Do not stop to retrieve personal possessions or make phone calls.
- Check for fire and other hazards.
- Once you are out, do not stand in front of windows, glass doors or other potentially hazardous areas.
- If you are trapped in debris, use a flashlight, whistle or tap on pipes to signal your location to rescuers.
- Shout only as a last resort to avoid inhaling dangerous dust.
- Cover your nose and mouth with anything you have on hand.

After an Explosion

- There may be significant numbers of casualties or damage to buildings and infrastructure.
- Heavy law enforcement involvement at local, state and federal levels.
- Health and mental health resources in the affected communities can be strained to their limits, maybe even overwhelmed.
- Extensive media coverage, strong public fear and international implications and consequences.
- Workplaces and schools may be closed, and there may be restrictions on domestic and international travel.
- You and your family or household may have to evacuate an area, avoiding roads blocked for your safety.
- Clean-up may take many months.