

# ESP FOCUS

## Be Aware! WMDs



Terrorists may use various weapons to threaten or harm people. Some weapons, like bombings, can injure small numbers of people but gain lots of publicity. Other types of weapons can harm large numbers of people over a longer time frame. These are

sometimes called Weapons of Mass Destruction or WMDs for short. These weapons can be chemical, biological or radiological in nature.

A chemical attack is the deliberate release of poisonous vapors, aerosols, liquids or solids that have toxic effect on people, animals, birds or plants. These substances are called chemical agents. They can be released into the air by bombs or aircraft, or they can be introduced into the environment in liquid form.

A biological attack is the deliberate release of germs or other substances, which are called biological agents. To become sick from a biological agent, a person must eat or breathe it, or it must enter the bloodstream through an open cut in the skin. The diseases that biological agents cause may or may not be passed from person to person.

A "dirty bomb" is a kind of radiological attack that uses conventional explosives to spread radioactive materials over a targeted area. A "dirty bomb" kills or injures people with the impact and debris of the explosives. A "dirty bomb" does not produce a nuclear explosion.

## TAKE ACTION

Check out the other side of this sheet for practical, affordable and useful things you can do to help protect yourself, your family, your neighborhood and your coworkers. These simple steps may help you balance protection with peace of mind.

## CHECK THESE WEBSITES

- [www.bt.cdc.gov](http://www.bt.cdc.gov) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- [www.whitehouse.gov/homeland](http://www.whitehouse.gov/homeland) (United States Department of Homeland Security)
- [www.hopkins-biodefense.org](http://www.hopkins-biodefense.org) (John Hopkins University Center for Biodefense Studies)
- [www.labt.org](http://www.labt.org) (Los Angeles County Department of Public Health)
- [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) (American Red Cross)
- [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov) (Federal Emergency Management Agency)
- [www.howstuffworks.com/dirty-bomb.htm](http://www.howstuffworks.com/dirty-bomb.htm) (How Stuff Works)
- [www.terrorismanswers.com/weapons/dirtybomb](http://www.terrorismanswers.com/weapons/dirtybomb) (Council on Foreign Relations)



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# A P R I L

[www.espfocus.org](http://www.espfocus.org)

## WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

- Learn the correct procedures to follow and the safest actions to take in case of a chemical, biological or radiological attack.
- Assemble and maintain an emergency supply kit.
- Don't purchase gas masks or stockpile antibiotics.
- Keep good records of family members' medical history, inoculations, prescriptions and allergies.
- Have a list of important telephone numbers—including your physician's number—available and current.
- Use good personal hygiene. Wash your hands often.
- Always stay alert to your surroundings:
  - Tell authorities if you see any unusual or unattended parcels or suitcases.
  - Pay attention to unusual behavior, incidents, or smells.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO IN CASE OF AN ATTACK

If you become aware of an unusual or suspicious release of an unknown substance nearby:

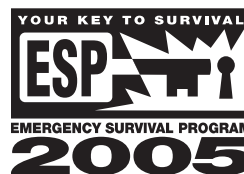
- Remain calm.
- Get away from the substance as quickly as possible.
- Cover your mouth and nose with layers of fabric that can filter the air but still allow you to breathe.
- If possible, remove and bag any contaminated clothing and wash with soap and water.
- Contact your local police, sheriff, or workplace security.

If a WMD emergency is declared in your area:

- Listen for official news and instructions:
  - The signs and symptoms of the suspected illness
  - The groups or areas that authorities consider to be in danger
  - Plans for distributing medications or vaccines
- Be especially alert to signs of illness, but do not automatically assume that any illness is the result of the attack.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- If you think you have been exposed to a chemical, biological or radiological agent, seek medical advice.

Listen to the radio or television for official instructions, and follow them carefully. Official instructions might include:

- Evacuate: Authorities may tell you to leave your house and go to a safer area. In this case, take your emergency kit, identification, keys, and pets.
- Shelter in Place: Stay exactly where you are (your house, workplace or even car), and close windows, doors and vents until it is safer to breathe the outside air.



This focus sheet is produced as part of the Emergency Survival Program (ESP). ESP is an awareness campaign designed to increase home, neighborhood, business and school emergency preparedness. ESP was developed by the County of Los Angeles. The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) and representatives from Contra Costa, Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Marin, Mono, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, and Ventura counties, Southern California Edison, the Southern California Earthquake Center and the American Red Cross assist in the development of campaign materials and coordination of the campaign.