

City of San José Office of Emergency Services

What You Need to Know About the Threat of Terrorism

Frequently Asked Questions

-

Introduction

At this time, authorities are not aware of any credible terrorism threat to the Bay Area. Residents and businesses should try to maintain normal activities and lessen their anxiety through obtaining accurate information. Many questions are currently being asked by San Jose residents. Here are the answers to the most commonly asked questions.

Q. What should I do about terrorism?

Heightened awareness of your surroundings is your best behavior change. In the work place, parcels, boxes, or other items that are out of place should be reported to a supervisor immediately, who should then evaluate and report to Security or the Police. People who don't belong should be challenged, and Security should be called to have them either properly identified or removed. Badging should be taken seriously. Food preparation and HVAC areas should be closely monitored. General building security should be heightened - keep doors locked, pay attention to people's ID when they sign in, badge everyone!

At home, maintain the same kind of **heightened awareness of people and packages in your neighborhood**. Call the Police if you see a person, parcel or event that does not seem right to you.

Maintain your emergency preparedness plan for your family. Have an **out of state contact number** so family members can exchange information after a disaster when the local phones may not be able to receive calls. Have a **family reunification point** in addition to your home. If there were a natural disaster such as a flood or wildland fire you might not be able to go home right away. Select a location with a parking lot and some landmarks and establish a spot where your family will meet. Develop an emergency response kit for each family member. A downloadable flier is available at www.ci.san-jose.ca.us/oes/oes.htm. Develop a shelter-in-place kit, in case there is a chemical release or smoky fire in your area. A downloadable brochure on sheltering in place is available at the link listed above.

Q. Should I get a flu shot?

In general, yes. Check with your doctor to see if you have any medical reasons why you should not get the shot: allergies to eggs, some medication interactions. A flu shot will help to protect you from a known viral disease, and may prevent unnecessary false alarms

for other diseases. In addition, all adults should have a tetanus shot every 10 years. All children should be immunized according to your pediatrician's schedule. MMR is very important to eliminate pox diseases that would cause unnecessary alarms.

Q. Should I get a vaccination?

Currently vaccinations against smallpox are only being administered to a limited population. There are about 15 million doses available, and they would be used in any community where smallpox was known to break out. The government has 54 million doses under development right now, and is putting out a contract for 250 million more doses. This new vaccine is being created using human cell lines rather than the old animal-based method.

Q. Should I buy a gas mask for each of my family members?

No. "Gas masks" filter air through canisters that are generally designed to neutralize one chemical. Therefore, without knowing what chemical could be involved, you would have no idea which filter to purchase. Second, gas masks require extra respiratory effort. When this equipment is assigned to emergency response personnel they are first given a respiratory test to ensure that they are able to use them safely. Third, to be effective the mask must have a tight seal around the face. To ensure this correct fit, you must be fitted by someone skilled in this.

Finally, masks have to be used properly to be safe. During the Gulf War the government issued gas masks to residents in areas of Israel where SCUD missiles were landing. People who did not follow the mask directions died from improper use of the masks, even though no gas was ever deployed. The Israeli experience suggests that more people get hurt using the gas mask improperly than would be hurt in an attack.

Q. What medications should I stockpile for myself and my children?

None. Medications cannot be safely stockpiled. They have to be prescribed for a specific disease to be effective. Overuse of antibiotics leads to the mutation of pathogenic organisms, and they become resistant to antibiotic therapy. The dosage of any medication must be selected for the individual patient. Age and physical size are important considerations for physicians when they select a medication and dosage for a patient.

Physicians must also consider pre-existing medical conditions in the patient, and possible drug interactions that would be harmful to the patient. Finally, all medications have to be properly stored to maintain potency. Most medications can only be safely stored in home conditions of fluctuating temperatures and humidity for short periods of time. This is one reason why medications are prescribed in the exact amount required to cure a specific disease.

Furthermore, the Federal government has developed stockpiles of the medications that might be needed in the event of a terrorist attack on a community. These stockpiles are stored at locations throughout the United States. They can be delivered to an affected community within 12 hours to reinforce the existing local supplies available under normal circumstances in pharmacies and hospitals. A larger supply chain is also in place to enable appropriate dosages to be provided to victims.

Q. Should I store iodine tablets for my family?

No. Some European countries with old-style nuclear reactors have issued potassium iodine (KI) tablets to residents who are downwind of their facilities. This was done in reaction to the Chernobyl nuclear accident, where there was a known potential source for radioactive release under accidental conditions. Such conditions do not exist in our community. There is no need to store KI at home. In the unlikely event it were needed, supplies would be made available rapidly enough to protect the thyroid.

Still have questions? Visit some of the disaster information links available on our [Disaster and Emergency Management Information](#) web page or call the City of San José Office of Emergency Services at 408-277-4595 from 8 am through 5 pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.