

Section 16: Terrorism

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Why Terrorism Is a Threat

Terrorism can strike not just large cities, but in any community of any size. While no amount of planning and mitigation can remove 100-percent of the risk from terrorism, hazard mitigation and preparedness can help reduce the risk.

Terrorism is the use of force or violence against persons or property in violation of the criminal laws of the United States for purposes of intimidation, coercion, or ransom. Terrorists often use threats to create fear among the public, to try to convince citizens that their government is powerless to prevent terrorism, and to get immediate publicity for their causes. Weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including incendiary, explosive, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear agents, are intended, or have the capability, to cause death or serious bodily injury to a significant number of people, thus posing the threat of a catastrophic incident. Terrorism includes the following hazards:

- Conventional bomb
- Biological agent
- Chemical agent
- Nuclear bomb
- Radiological agent
- Arson/incendiary attack
- Armed attack
- Agriterrorism
- Intentional hazardous materials release
- Assaults on the infrastructure and electronic information systems that could result in consequences affecting human life, health and safety.





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The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) categorizes terrorism in the United States as one of two types—domestic terrorism or international terrorism. Domestic terrorism involves groups or individuals whose terrorist activities are directed at elements of our government or population without foreign direction. International terrorism involves groups or individuals whose terrorist activities are foreign-based and/or directed by countries or groups outside the United States, or whose activities transcend national boundaries.

A terrorist attack can take several forms, depending on the technological means available to the terrorist, the nature of the political issue motivating the attack, and the points of weakness of the terrorist's target. Bombings are the most frequently used terrorist method in the United States. A terrorist using a chemical or biological weapon is of particular concern to officials. Special training and equipment is needed in order to safely manage a WMD incident.

Biological agents are infectious microbes or toxins used to produce illness or death in people, animals or plants. Biological agents can be dispersed as aerosols or airborne particles. Terrorists may use biological agents to contaminate food or water because they are extremely difficult to detect.

Chemical agents kill or incapacitate people, destroy livestock or ravage crops. Some chemical agents are odorless and tasteless and are difficult to detect. They can have an immediate effect (a few seconds to a few minutes) or a delayed effect (several hours to several days).

The Department of Defense estimates that as many as 26 nations may possess chemical agents and/or weapons and an additional 12 may be seeking to develop them. The Central Intelligence Agency reports that at least ten countries are believed to possess or to be conducting research on biological agents for weaponization.



Rescue worker at the World Trade Center.

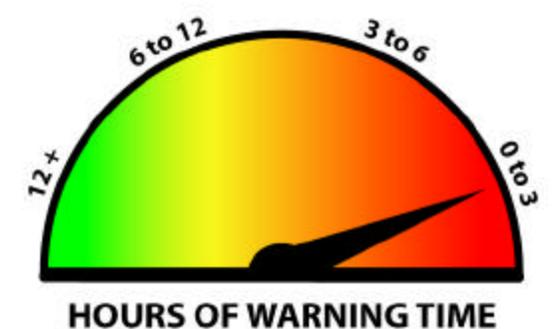
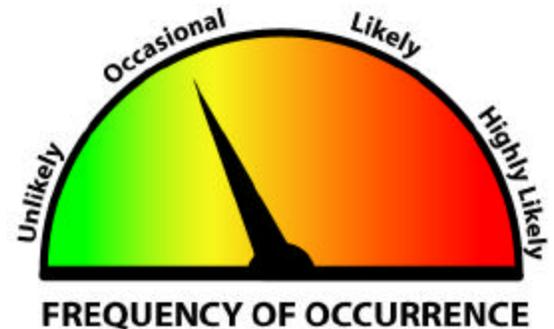
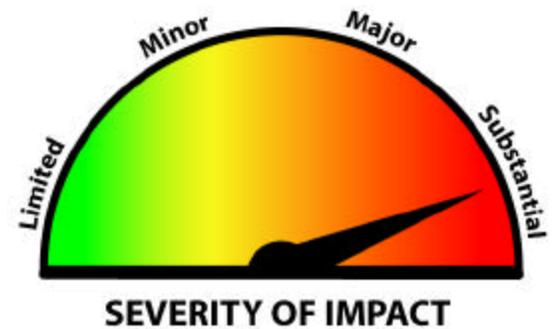
Photo by Andrea Booher/ FEMA News Photo



Whether intentional or accidental, terrorist incidents – as with other natural and technological disasters – involve the application of one or more modes of harmful force to the built environment. These modes include contamination (as in the case of chemical, biological radiological or nuclear hazards), energy (explosives, arson, and even electromagnetic waves), or failure or denial of service (sabotage, infrastructure breakdown, and transportation service disruption).

No data exists to show that a community in the Guadalupe River Basin has experienced a terrorist act. While we may not be able to prevent an attack, it is well within our ability to lessen the likelihood and/or the potential effects of an incident. Cities in the basin continue to improve their readiness to respond to a terrorist incident through participation in state and federal programs that provide training and equipment for agencies that would respond to a local terrorist incident, and in exercises that help to improve agency coordination and test local response plans.

Figure 16-1. Terrorism Hazard Profile Summary



Hazard Profile

The types, frequencies, and locations of many natural hazards are identifiable and, even in some cases, predictable. They are governed by the laws of physics and nature. Malevolence, however, cannot be forecast with any accuracy. There is, therefore, some potential for most, if not all, types of intentional terrorists acts to occur anywhere and at any time.

Terrorist events can have a substantial severity of impact. They can cause multiple deaths, completely shut down facilities for thirty days or more, and cause more than fifty percent of affected properties to be destroyed or suffer major damage. A terrorist event is possible in the Guadalupe River Basin in the next five years.

A potential terrorist event could devastate the community physically, economically and psychologically for many years to come. Warning



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time for terrorism is minimal to none. There are heightened periods of risk for terrorism based on intelligence and other information. The Homeland Security Advisory System, issued by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, is a color-coded terrorism warning system that sets out five threat levels. Terrorism Warning Threat Levels are described in Table 16-1.

Table 16-1. Terrorism Warning System Threat Levels¹

Color	Threat Level	Governmental actions to be taken
Green	Low Low risk of attacks.	Requires “protective measures” such as regularly assessing facilities for weaknesses and finding ways to reduce them, and making sure State and local government employees are trained to handle terrorism situations.
Blue	Guarded General risk of attacks.	Requires government agencies to review and update emergency response procedures and communications systems, as well as provide the public with necessary information.
Yellow	Elevated Significant risk of attacks.	Includes increasing surveillance of critical locations, coordinating emergency plans with nearby jurisdictions and implementing contingency and emergency response plans.
Orange	High High risk of attacks.	Requires coordinating necessary security efforts with armed forces or law enforcement agencies, taking additional precautions at public events, preparing to work at an alternative site or with a dispersed workforce and restricting access to essential personnel.
Red	Severe Severe risk of attacks.	Includes assigning emergency response personnel and setting up specially trained teams; monitoring, redirecting, or constraining transportation systems; closing public and government facilities; and increasing or redirecting personnel to address emergency needs.

¹ United States Department of Homeland Security





The current threat level may be found at: www.whitehouse.gov/homeland. The Red Cross issues Advisory System Recommendations for individuals, families, neighborhoods, schools and businesses for each alert level. These may be found at: www.redcross.org.





History of Terrorist Incidents

The history of terrorism on United States soil includes the large-scale attacks of September 11, 2001, on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. and the ensuing anthrax attacks; the 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City; and earlier bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993. There have been more numerous smaller scale bombings and fires as a result of terrorist incidents. The Guadalupe River Basin has not experienced a terrorist act that we know of.

Location of Hazardous Areas

There is no defined geographic boundary for terrorism although critical facilities and services and large gatherings of people are at higher risk.

People and Property at Risk

Because there is no defined geographic hazard boundary, all people and property in the Guadalupe River Basin are exposed to risk from damage from a terrorist event. Table 16-2 shows the total number of people and property exposed to risk from a terrorist event, by occupancy class.

TABLE 16-2. People and Property Exposed to Risk from a Terrorist Event, by Occupancy Class

Jurisdiction	Popula- tion (2000)	Residential Buildings		Commercial Buildings		Critical Facilities
		Number	Value (\$)	Number	Value (\$)	Number
Caldwell	32,194	11,374	2,387,436,000	60	285,885,000	33
Calhoun	20,647	9,835	2,171,890,000	78	281,066,000	75
Comal	78,021	42,027	10,237,572,000	214	927,348,000	70
DeWitt	20,013	6,983	1,530,674,000	50	249,433,000	33
Gonzales	18,628	6,510	1,315,844,000	45	208,323,000	26
Guadalupe	89,023	39,668	8,760,265,000	232	950,030,000	77



Jurisdiction	Population (2000)	Residential Buildings		Commercial Buildings		Critical Facilities
		Number	Value (\$)	Number	Value (\$)	Number
Hays	97,589	45,837	12,655,070,000	333	1,433,860,000	64
Kendall	23,743	12,844	3,164,217,000	85	391,066,000	23
Refugio	7,828	2,953	640,396,000	11	54,484,000	22
Victoria	84,088	36,206	9,418,849,000	348	1,548,383,000	69
TOTALS	471,774	214,237	52,282,213,000	1,456	6,329,878,000	492
Jurisdiction	Infrastructure and Lifelines				Hazardous Materials Facilities	
	Oil Pipe (km)	Gas Pipe (km)	Highway (km)	Railroad (km)	Number of Sites	Number of Materials
Caldwell	211	83	142	65	1	3
Calhoun	62	151	170	56	6	107
Comal	-	46	153	87	7	16
DeWitt	89	223	213	52		
Gonzales	138	1	329	65	3	8
Guadalupe	170	92	224	69	6	14
Hays	38	21	227	67	6	6
Kendall	-	46	139	-		
Refugio	380	838	147	65		
Victoria	302	680	223	157	5	43
TOTALS	1,391	2,181	1,967	684		



Potential Damages and Losses

Given the lack of information on observed historical damages, frequency of occurrence, intensity and damage parameters, no estimate is available on potential dollar losses from a potential terrorist event.

GBRA facilities (described on pages 4-18 and 4-19) are also at risk from this hazard. However, no estimate is currently available of potential damages and losses to those facilities.

