

Chemical and Biological Weapons

Chemical or biological terrorists (“bioterrorists”) use diseases and chemicals to sicken or kill people.

Bioterrorists attack by introducing rare diseases. Doctors may never have seen these diseases. They could have a hard time diagnosing a person quickly. A disease could spread without anyone being aware of it. The attack might not be obvious for days or weeks.

A chemical attack would be obvious quickly. Some people would be affected immediately if they were at the site of the attack. Chances are, emergency instructions would reach you by radio or television in time for you to get into a protected place.



Biological Weapons

Biological weapons are categorized by availability and severity. Category A diseases like anthrax, plague, and smallpox, are considered the easiest to “weaponize,” but they are very difficult to spread effectively. Anthrax and plague can be cured if caught immediately. Any odd powder in a piece of mail or spread about a work area should be investigated. Sudden, severe, flu-like symptoms or cough should be examined by a doctor.

Category B and C diseases, like Q fever, hanta virus, and tickborne hemorrhagic fever, are even more difficult for terrorists to obtain and spread.

Chemical Agents

Chemical weapons burn, poison, and make people ill. Hundreds of chemicals could be made into weapons. Some are ordinary agents, others are more rare. They include agents that cause nerve damage, bleeding, blistering, or lung damage. Others are heavy metals, pesticides, explosives, poisons, and flammable gases and liquids.



Remember...

- Learn about emergency plans in your area.
- Stay alert for signs of rare disease or unusual events.
- Contact health or law enforcement agencies if you have any information to share.

For More Information Contact:

www.syndistar.com/terrorism

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

1-800-311-3435 www.cdc.gov

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
1-877-696-6775 www.os.dhhs.gov

Chemical and Biological Terrorism: Being Aware, Being Prepared



Chemical and Biological Terrorism



Terrorist attacks attempt to make political or religious points using surprise violence, usually against non-military targets. Chemical or biological terrorists ("bioterrorists") use biological elements (diseases) or chemicals as weapons to attack large numbers of people. Biological or chemical agents can also affect crops and animals and the people who eat them.

Addressing the Problem

Public health and government agencies are responsible for preparing the public for any threat related to a bioterrorist attack. You can assist by remaining informed, alert to unusual activity, and calm.

Governmental Steps

Emergency management agencies are preparing for chemical or bioterrorist attacks. Large stocks of vaccines and antibiotics are on hand. Health workers are receiving special training. Communication networks are in place to keep the public informed.

What You DO NOT Need

An attack would come by surprise. It is not possible for you to keep defenses for every kind of event. It may seem safer to have special safety gear on hand, but it could be useless or worse.

- **Don't buy gas masks.**

No one type of mask protects against all chemical and biological weapons. Gas masks need proper maintenance. They also break down in time. If your mask worked at all, you would have to wear it 24 hours a day. People can even be smothered by gas masks that are broken or used incorrectly.



Your Involvement Counts

Be the eyes and ears of health and law enforcement agencies.

- Watch for unusual activity in your community.

If you see anything out of the ordinary, call law enforcement.

- Communicate with policymakers.

Let them know your concerns and respond quickly to their requests.

- If you work in agriculture, investigate any stranger near your animals or crops. Report signs of disease to local health, law, or agricultural agencies.

- One cause for alarm would be the unexplained death of pets or livestock.

Being Prepared

Remain calm. If you panic, you're likely to cause more problems. Prepare for a terrorist attack just as you would for any disaster. Listen to the radio and television for information and instructions.

In a chemical or biological weapons attack, you may need to "shelter in place." This means staying sealed in your home or office, away from doors or windows, until the emergency passes. It could last several days.

Have a survival kit ready:

- Canned or sealed-package foods for 3-7 days.
- One gallon of water per day per person for 3-7 days.
- Battery-powered radio, flashlight, and batteries.
- First-aid kit, extra eyeglasses, prescriptions, toilet paper, paper towels, diapers, etc.
- Clothes, sturdy shoes, and a blanket or sleeping bag per person.
- Car keys, credit card, or traveler's checks.

You do need to remain alert. If you have questions or concerns, contact your local or state health department, federal health agency, or law enforcement agency.

Don't Panic

The best thing that you can do is to remain calm and try not to worry. Government officials are on high alert. People who overreact may do more harm than good.

