

POTENTIAL INDICATORS

POTENTIAL INDICATORS OF THREATS INVOLVING WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION (WMD) AND EMERGENCY ACTIONS

This document is intended to provide general information to assist in efforts to recognize potential WMD-related threats or incidents. The information is not all encompassing, and its applicability should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with local conditions, policies, and procedures.

Chemical, biological, and radiological material can be dispersed in the air we breathe, the water we drink, or on surfaces we physically contact. Dispersion methods could include placing an open container in a heavily used area, using conventional (garden)/commercial spray devices, or detonating an improvised explosive device to disseminate chemical, biological or radiological material.

Chemical incidents are characterized by the rapid onset of medical symptoms (minutes to hours) and easily observed signatures (colored residue, dead foliage, pungent odor, and dead insect and animal life). In the case of a biological or radiological incident, the onset of symptoms requires days to weeks and there are typically few characteristic signatures.

In all cases, being alert to the following could assist law enforcement and emergency responders in evaluating potential threats.

POTENTIAL INDICATORS OF WMD THREATS OR INCIDENTS

- Unusual packages or containers, especially those found in unlikely or sensitive locations, such as near HVAC or air intake systems
- Unusual powders or liquids/droplets/mists/clouds, especially those found near air intake/HVAC systems
- Indications of tampering in targeted areas/equipment (i.e., locked ventilation/HVAC systems; stocks of food; water supply).
- Reports of suspicious person(s) or activities, especially those involving sensitive locations within or around a building.
- Surveillance of targeted areas, including but not limited to hotels, entertainment venues, subway systems, aircraft; water sources, office buildings, apartment buildings.
- Theft of chemical products/equipment.
- Dead animals/birds, fish, or insects
- Unexplained/unusual odors. Smells may range from fruity/flowery to sharp/pungent, garlic/horseradish-like, bitter almonds, peach kernels, and new mown grass/hay
- Unusual/unscheduled spraying or discovery of spray devices or bottles

PROTECTIVE MEASURES

- Maintain a heightened sense of awareness.
- Place an increased emphasis on the security of immediate surroundings.

- Conduct periodic inspections of building facilities and HVAC systems for potential indicators/irregularities.
- Review emergency operations and evacuation plans/procedures for all locations/organizations to ensure that plans are up to date.
- Promptly report suspicious activities to appropriate law enforcement authorities

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES – POTENTIAL THREAT IDENTIFIED/CONFIRMED

- Maintain a safe distance/evacuate area (if outside move to upwind location; if inside keep outside doors/windows closed).
- Call your local 911 (law enforcement and public safety personnel) after reaching safe area.
- Do not handle or disturb suspicious objects
- Remove possibly contaminated external clothing (including hats, shoes, gloves).
- Follow emergency operations plans/instructions from emergency response personnel.

Source: [PEMA Website](#)