



Emergency Management and Response Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC)

INFOGRAM 44-10

November 4, 2010

***NOTE:** This INFOGRAM will be distributed weekly to provide members of the Emergency Services Sector with information concerning the protection of their critical infrastructures. For further information, contact the Emergency Management and Response- Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC) at (301) 447-1325 or by e-mail at emr-isac@dhs.gov.*

PETN Update

(Sources: CBSNews.com and GlobalSecurity.org)

[CBS News](#) confirmed that the explosive recently found in devices on planes in the United Kingdom and Dubai was the powerful agent known as PETN, which is short for pentaerythritol trinitrate. Preliminary tests of the thwarted mail bomb attacks indicated that both packages contained PETN, the same chemical used in the failed Christmas Day 2009 attack on a Detroit-bound plane.

The [Emergency Management and Response—Information Sharing and Analysis Center](#) (EMR-ISAC) reviewed current information regarding [PETN](#) and substantiated that it is a highly explosive, colorless organic compound, and white crystalline solid currently used as the primary ingredient in detonating fuses or as a component in plastic explosives. “It is the explosive of choice because it is stable and safe to store and handle, but it requires a primary explosive to detonate it,” said an explosives expert.

Counterterrorism specialists are concerned about PETN, because it is one of the most common explosives used repeatedly by terrorists and relatively easy to obtain on the black market. Furthermore, detonating cords and blasting caps regularly used for quarrying and industrial explosions contain PETN. Those intending to do harm can acquire these by illicit means and scrape the insides to obtain amounts of the compound. The specialists affirmed: “It is unusual to find PETN being home-made.”

Considering the possibility of packages containing PETN arriving anywhere in the United States from domestic or foreign sources, the EMR-ISAC found additional information about the explosive at [ask.com](#), [Encyclopedia Britannica](#), and the [University of Minnesota](#).

2010 Risk Lexicon

(Source: Department of Homeland Security)

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) recently released its [2010 Risk Lexicon](#) (PDF, 910 KB), developed by the DHS Risk Steering Committee. The purpose of this document is to establish and make available a comprehensive list of terms and meanings relevant to the practice of homeland security risk management and analysis. It is the second edition and includes fifty new terms and definitions and updated definitions for twenty-three original terms from the 2008 edition.

The [Emergency Management and Response—Information Sharing and Analysis Center](#) (EMR-ISAC) identified the following additional [objectives](#) of the 2010 issue:

- Promulgate a common language to ease and improve communications for DHS and its partners.
- Facilitate the free exchange of structured and unstructured data essential to interoperability among risk practitioners.
- Garner credibility and grow relationships by providing consistency and clear understanding with regard to the usage of terms by the DHS risk community.

The EMR-ISAC acknowledges that the DHS Risk Lexicon imparts an official set of harmonized risk-related terms and definitions to create a single language for risk management and analysis.

Suspicious Packages

(Sources: New York Times and NC Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response)

The [Emergency Management and Response—Information Sharing and Analysis Center](#) (EMR-ISAC) observed in the [New York Times](#) that two explosive packages with Chicago addresses were found in air freight on U.S. bound planes last week. This incident again raises the safety issue of parcels sent to the work sites and homes of American citizens.

For the benefit of Emergency Services Sector departments and agencies, the EMR-ISAC lists the following [North Carolina Suspicious Substance Response Guidelines](#) for questionable packages or substances arriving at the duty stations or homes of first responders:

- Do not shake or empty the contents of a suspicious package or envelope.
- Do not carry a suspicious package or envelope.
- Do not show a suspicious package or substance to others or allow other to examine.
- Do not sniff, touch, taste, or look closely at the suspicious package or substance.
- Place the suspicious package or envelope on a stable surface.
- Alert others in the area about the suspicious package or envelope.
- Wash hands with soap and water to prevent spreading potentially infectious material to face or skin.
- Leave the area of a suspicious package, close any doors, and prevent others from entering.
- Call 9-1-1 and describe the situation.
- Create a list of persons who may have been exposed to the package or substance.
- Isolate in a safe area any individuals who may have been exposed until cleared to leave by a proper authority.

The NC Guidelines document has additional information regarding threat assessments, post assessment actions, and response. More helpful information about suspicious packages can be seen at the [Department of Homeland Security Response Checklist](#) (PDF, 512 KB) and at the [Department of Homeland Security Suspicious Package Indicators](#) (PDF, 381 KB).

Preparedness and Response to a Mass Casualty Event

(Source: Department of Health and Human Services)

According to the Executive Summary of the [Interim Planning Guidance for Preparedness and Response to a Mass Casualty Event Resulting from Terrorist Use of Explosives](#) (PDF, 1.2 MB), explosive devices are the most common weapons used by terrorists. “The damage inflicted by these explosions can produce instantaneous havoc, resulting in numerous patients with complex, technically challenging injuries not commonly seen after natural disasters.” Additionally, prehospital care could be difficult to coordinate, because many individuals may self-evacuate after a terrorist attack causing a large influx or surge of potential patients.

The [Emergency Management and Response—Information Sharing and Analysis Center](#) (EMR-ISAC) confirmed that the purpose of this interim guidance is to provide information and insight to assist public policy and health system leaders in preparing for and responding to a mass casualty event caused by terrorist use of explosives. This document provides practical information to promote comprehensive mass casualty care for a mass casualty incident and focuses on two areas:

1. Leadership in preparing for and responding to a mass casualty event.
2. Effective care of patients in the prehospital and hospital environments during a mass casualty event.

This guidance recognizes the favorable influence that leadership can have on the success or failure of preparing for and responding to a terrorist bombing. The EMR-ISAC noted it outlines important leadership strategies for effectively preparing for and managing a mass casualty incident caused by terrorist use of explosives. Applying the strategies may enable the chief officers and directors of the Emergency Medical Services to confront challenges and barriers in communication, organization and response, standards of care, and surge capacity of receiving hospitals.

DISCLAIMER OF ENDORSEMENT

The U.S. Fire Administration/EMR-ISAC does not endorse the organizations sponsoring linked web sites, and does not endorse the views they express or the products/services they offer.

FAIR USE NOTICE

This INFOGRAM may contain copyrighted material that was not specifically authorized by the copyright owner. EMR-ISAC personnel believe this constitutes "fair use" of copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the U.S. Copyright Law. If you wish to use copyrighted material contained within this document for your own purposes that go beyond "fair use," you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.

REPORTING NOTICE

The National Infrastructure Coordinating Center (NICC) within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Infrastructure Protection is the central point for notifications regarding infrastructure threats, disruptions, intrusions, and suspicious activities. Emergency Services Sector personnel are requested to report any incidents or attacks involving their infrastructures using at least the first and second points of contact seen below:

- 1) NICC - Voice: 202-282-9201, Fax: 703-487-3570, E-Mail: nicc@dhs.gov
- 2) Your local FBI office - Web: www.fbi.gov/contact/fo/fo.htm
- 3) EMR-ISAC - Voice: 301-447-1325, E-Mail: emr-isac@dhs.gov, fax: 301-447- 1034,
Web: www.usfa.dhs.gov/emr-isac, Mail: E-108, 16825 South Seton Avenue, Emmitsburg, MD 21727