

TERRORISM

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Hazard Profile

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. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) categorizes terrorism in the U.S. as one of two types:

- **Domestic Terrorism** – is terrorist activities that focus on facilities or populations without foreign direction.
- **International Terrorism** – is terrorist activities that are foreign-based and/or sponsored by organizations or groups outside the U.S.

The distinction between domestic or international terrorism refers not to where the terrorist act takes place but rather to the origin of the individuals or groups responsible for it. For example, the 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City was an act of domestic terrorism, but the attacks of September 2001 were international in nature.

International terrorism poses the greatest threat to our national security. Global trends indicate that the growing number of terrorist groups will become more networked and even harder to identify and track. Texas’ critical infrastructure, valuable resources, and geographic location create unique counterterrorism challenges.

Terrorists often use threats to create fear among the public, to convince citizens that 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, 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

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- 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.

Location

The form and locations of many natural hazards are identifiable and, even in some cases, predictable; however, there is no defined geographic boundary for terrorism. Based on previous events, it is presumed that critical facilities and services and large gatherings of people are at higher risk.

Extent

Terrorism cannot be forecast with any accuracy. There is, therefore, some potential for most, if not all, types of terrorist acts to occur anywhere and at any time. 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 of varying intensity. Terrorism Warning Threat Levels are described in Table 18-1.

Table 18-1. Terrorism Warning System Threat Levels¹

Color	Threat Level ²	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.

¹ United States Department of Homeland Security

² The current threat level may be found at: www.dhs.gov/files/programs/Copy_of_press_release_0046.shtm.

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Color	Threat Level ²	Governmental actions to be taken
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.

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.

Historical Occurrences

No data exists to show that a community in the Guadalupe River Basin has experienced a terrorist act. 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.

Probability of Future Occurrences

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. Given the lack of information on observed historical damages, frequency of

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occurrence, intensity and damage parameters, no estimate is available for the probability of a future occurrence of a terrorist event.

Impact and Vulnerability

Because there is no defined geographic hazard boundary, all people and property in the Guadalupe River Basin are potentially exposed to risk from damage from a terrorist event.

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.