

Dirty Bomb

Community Connector Message

Health and Safety Information for the First Hours

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What is happening?

- This is an urgent health message from the Multnomah County Health Department. Please pay careful attention to this message to protect your health and that of others.
- Public officials believe that a bomb containing radioactive material, sometimes called a “dirty bomb,” has been exploded in the *xxx area*.
- Keep in mind that a dirty bomb is NOT a nuclear bomb. Most of the injuries from a dirty bomb, such as burns or bleeding, are from the blast itself.
- Some people who were in the immediate area of the blast may experience minor radiation sickness, which can start within minutes and last for several days. This typically includes nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.
- If you are not very close to the blast, you are not in any immediate danger.
- Local, state, and federal officials, including HHS, FBI, and Homeland Security, are working together. Updated announcements will be made as soon as officials know more.
- In addition, public officials are starting to close off the area, find and treat anyone with injuries, and help people in the area decontaminate themselves.
- Stay informed and follow officials’ instructions to stay as safe as possible.
- We have challenges ahead and are working to find out more about this explosion. By staying informed and following instructions from health officials, you can protect yourself, your family, and the community against this public health threat.
- This message contains additional information that can help protect your health and the health of others.

What is a dirty bomb?

- A dirty bomb is a device that uses conventional explosives, such as dynamite, to spread radioactive material in the form of powder or pellets.
- A dirty bomb is *not* a nuclear bomb. It does not produce the tremendous force and destruction of a nuclear blast. It spreads limited amounts of radioactive material in the surrounding area.
- The primary dangers from a dirty bomb are the injuries associated with the explosion itself, such as burns or bleeding.
- Some people in the immediate area of the blast may have minor radiation sickness, which can start within minutes and last for several days. Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. People with radiation sickness may also have some skin damage that can start to show within a few hours after exposure and can include swelling, itching, and redness.
- The level of radiation in a dirty bomb is unlikely to be enough to cause severe radiation sickness.
- Radiation sickness is treated by managing the symptoms, providing supportive care, and preventing infections. A variety of drugs can be used to treat radiation sickness.

What to do if you are in the immediate area of the blast and have been severely injured

- If you or family members have life-threatening injuries associated with the explosion, such as severe burns or bleeding, call 911 or your local hospital at xxx-xxx-xxxx and ask for instructions. You may have been exposed to radiation so specific precautions may be needed. *[Policy decision needed: Assumption is made that treatment centers may not be established in the first hours after an explosion. Should people seek medical care in a hospital? What are the options given public health concerns about spreading radiation?]*

What to do if you are in the immediate area of the blast but have not been injured or you have minor injuries

- Stay indoors. Do not leave shelter for care of minor injuries, such as cuts or scrapes.
- Stay away from explosion debris and radioactive debris in the area.
- Call your doctor or local public health department right away at xxx-xxx-xxxx if you feel sick. Describe your symptoms or your injuries.
- Being where the dirty bomb exploded does not mean that you had contact with radiation. However, if you are concerned about contact with radiation or are sick, follow the steps below to help protect yourself and others.

Decontamination Instructions:

- Following these steps will eliminate a large portion of radioactive material that may be on you.
 1. Do not touch other people. Touching others can spread radiation.
 2. Remove your outer layer of clothing including shoes or boots.
 3. Do not remove the clothes over your head. If necessary, cut clothes off.
 4. If possible, put the clothes in a plastic bag and seal it. Be sure to keep cuts and abrasions

covered when handling contaminated items to avoid getting radioactive material in the cuts.

5. Put the sealed plastic bag where others will not touch it. Keep it until authorities tell you

what to do with it.

6. Take a shower or wash yourself the best you can with soap and lukewarm water.

How can I help protect myself indoors?

- ***Go to the lowest level*** of the building. Find a room with as few windows and doors as possible.
- ***Reduce air flow from outside to inside.*** Close vents, air conditioning, fireplace dampers, and anything else that exposes the room to outside air.
- ***Eat only sealed, stored food and water.*** Do not eat or drink anything that may have been exposed to radiation or radioactive debris.
- ***Turn to the radio, television, or Internet news for updated health and safety announcements.*** Emergency workers will inform you when it is safe to go outside or evacuate to another location.

What to do if you are concerned about the blast but do not live near xxx area

- It is natural to be concerned or afraid at a time like this. Remember that a dirty bomb is NOT a nuclear bomb. Most of the health risks are due to the explosion itself, not to long-term radiation exposure.
- Until authorities learn more about the situation, stay away from the immediate area of the blast.
- Don't drive unless absolutely necessary to keep the roads clear for emergency workers.
- Avoid public transportation, such as buses, subways, or taxis. If radioactive material was involved, people who have had contact with the radiation may also contaminate cars or the public transportation system.
- Stay informed by turning to the radio, television, or Internet news for updated health and safety announcements.

What is being done and how to get more information

- Federal, state, and local officials are working together to find and treat people who need help.
- Local authorities will monitor levels of radiation and determine what should be done to protect public health. Public officials will share updated information as soon as they learn more.
- Go to [insert local media information here] to hear the latest information from local officials.

- For more information on dirty bombs, go to the HHS Web site at www.hhs.gov, or the CDC Web site at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/radiation/dirtybombs.asp>, or call the CDC Hotline at 1-800-CDC-INFO.