

MEDIA RELEASE

Date

Contact:

Althea Milechman, Public Affairs Office, 503-988-6805, 503-969-7239

Public Health Warns of Dirty Bomb

Public Health officials in Multnomah County believe that a bomb containing radioactive material, sometimes called a “dirty bomb,” has been exploded in the *xxx area*.

A dirty bomb is a device that uses conventional explosives, such as dynamite, to spread radioactive material in the form of powder or pellets.

The public should know that 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.

Persons in the immediate area of the blast who are seriously injured with burns or bleeding should call 911 or XXX and ask for instructions.

[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?]

Persons in the immediate area who are not injured or have minor injuries should:

- 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.

Persons in the immediate area should:

- **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.

For those persons who do not live near xxx area

- 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.

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.