



A FEDERAL EMPLOYEE'S EMERGENCY GUIDE

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT



*Working
for
America*



Dear Federal Employee,

More than ever, the work of Federal employees is critical to the well-being and security of our Nation. However, Federal employees face unprecedented uncertainty. Individuals who are unwilling to impact the world through constructive efforts have instead stated their intention to harm freedom-loving civilians.

While terrorists are determined in their hatred, they cannot match the strength, ingenuity, or systems of our democratic Government. Just as they typically rely on rudimentary methods to attack unprotected and unsuspecting individuals, we must increase our vigilance to deal effectively with man-made or natural threats.

The intent of this guide is to provide a general document that educates Federal employees on the repercussions of various attack scenarios (or unintentional accidents) and to identify the steps that employees can take before and during an attack to mitigate the repercussions of an event. While the scope of this guide is to provide general information, resources (with website addresses) have been included which offer more comprehensive information on preparing for emergency events.

While your agency is responsible for designing an occupant emergency plan for dealing with emergency events and for communicating those plans to you, YOU play an important role in the safety of your teammates and workplace. It is important for you to ask questions about the procedures that have been put in place at your agency. Keep in mind, it is very likely that numerous steps have already been taken to secure your building that are not subject to open discussion. Trust your manager—this information may be held more “tightly” to better protect you from individuals who may seek to cause harm.

Finally, be sure to talk to your manager about any suggestions you may have which could better secure your safety.



Kay Coles James
Director
Office of Personnel Management



THE ROLE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO PROTECT CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES

The Federal Emergency Dismissal Protocol calls for the General Services Administration (GSA), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to consult and decide on the operating status of the Federal Government and Federal buildings during an emergency. These agencies have on-going access to critical information provided by Department of Homeland Security (DHS), law enforcement and other related agencies that inform respective decision making. Your agency is a part of the network that would immediately receive confirmed reports on any situations.

In a natural or man-made event (such as a terror incident), FEMA, GSA and OPM will convene their principals for a review of the situation and make decisions for each of their respective areas of responsibility.

Your agency's access to confirmed reports in the event of an emergency will help provide your management with guidance appropriate to ensure your safety.

Immediate notification of changes to the operating status of the Federal Government will be relayed to key Federal and local authorities. Following this notification, the news media, the Federal Executive Board and other outlets across the National Capital Region and the Nation will be alerted to the change in operational status. The operating status of the Federal Government is always available on the web site of the Office of Personnel Management—www.opm.gov.

IN THIS TEMPLE
IN THE HEARTS OF THE PEOPLE
WHOM HE SAVED THE UNION
MEMORY OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN
IS ENSHRINED FOREVER



REQUIREMENTS FOR INDIVIDUAL AGENCIES

Safety Equipment Provided by the Federal Government

There have been questions about whether safety equipment such as escape hoods and protective suits are necessary to protect against a chemical or biological attack. It is the responsibility of each agency to determine the risks faced by its employees, develop a comprehensive strategy and assess the benefits provided by any protective equipment. These decisions will be based largely on the time it takes for an agency to evacuate the building, and other information gained through a threat assessment. Employees should check with their agency's security/safety personnel to learn the status of any protective equipment provided by their agency.

Agency Occupant Emergency Plans (OEP)

Federal agencies that operate in buildings managed by the U.S. General Services Administration are required to establish an Occupant Emergency Plan (OEP). The OEP is a short-term emergency response program that establishes procedures for safeguarding lives and property. An Occupant Emergency Program Guide to assist in the development an OEP is available at www.gsa.gov

Each Federal building has unique factors that may affect the security measures that should be taken to protect employees. Some of those factors are the location of the building, proximity to other prominent landmarks or buildings, building design features, and the mission of the agencies housed within. For this

reason, it is inadvisable to make one Government-wide protocol which all agencies must follow. Instead, security measures and evacuation procedures must be tailored to meet the unique features of each facility.

Meeting Special Needs

It is the responsibility of each agency to provide a safe working environment for all employees, including those employees with special needs. Managers who oversee individuals with special needs should be proactive to ensure they have the same level of protection as all other employees. Within every agency's Occupant Emergency Plan (OEP), should be a component which addresses the concerns of employees who may need assistance during an emergency. Managers should be aware of these procedures and conscientious in communicating this information to employees with special needs. Further, managers should be proactive in asking employees with special needs about the questions and concerns these people may have about emergency procedures.

One practical step every manager should take to protect individuals with disabilities is to establish a "buddy" system for disabled employees. The buddy system should be fully integrated into the agency OEP. Information on setting up a buddy system can be found at <http://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/fa-154.pdf>. For additional information on meeting the needs of disabled employees, contact the National Organization of the Disabled (www.nod.org).



REQUIREMENTS FOR INDIVIDUAL AGENCIES

The primary basis by which security measures are determined is through a facility threat assessment. As a part of its routine efforts, the Federal Protective Service (FPS) conducts recurring threat assessments for GSA-controlled property.* Federal agencies in buildings not managed by GSA should contact the FBI or local police for emergency preparedness and or threat assessments.

Employees should be encouraged to familiarize themselves with the procedures that have been put into place at their agency, as well as the means of notification that an agency will use to inform and instruct employees.

As part of every agency's OEP, employee volunteers are used to assist in the effective evacuation and other duties during an emergency. During evacuation drills, employees should make a mental note of identifying garments (arm bands, caps, etc.) worn by floor team leaders, monitors and other volunteers. In the event of an actual emergency, it will be reassuring to know the individuals who are in place to assist with the evacuation.

Guidance on Telework or Other Flexibilities

Agencies must have plans in place that allow the business of government to continue during emergency situations. Designated Continuity of Operations (COOP) facilities may not have all the staff needed to support important missions and cannot accommodate enough key staff to facilitate maximum government operations. Not all key staff may be designated to report to COOP sites. Telework is a virtual resource solution and provides access to resources that may not be available otherwise.

Telework supports agency leadership in accomplishing the mission. Recent OPM guidance on emergency planning has emphasized the role of telework. Agencies have the flexibility to use teleworkers in emergency situations but it won't happen spontaneously. A viable on-going telework program is the foundation that must be in place. With 21st century technology, agencies can conduct agency financial and other transactions with appropriate security and

authentication mechanisms away from Federal buildings. With the appropriate remote administration of essential support systems e.g., the provision of help-desk support, teleworkers can help ensure the continuity of business operations.

To facilitate the use of telework during emergencies, certain steps are necessary. Agencies must:

- Develop a cadre of regularly scheduled “core” teleworkers
- Permit teleworkers to experience working off-site and learn to communicate electronically with colleagues and clients by doing it regularly.
- Permit supervisors and managers to experience managing employees without face to face contact.

With telework in place during emergencies, experienced teleworkers won't need to master new computer programs, and, managers will learn to supervise a “virtual workforce” by doing it under normal conditions.

To make telework a viable option during emergencies, agency work must be organized to facilitate electronic communication and eliminate paper-based processes whenever possible, e.g., automating reports and procedures as much as possible. Employees need to experience functioning in a “virtual office” and they need to be linked via computer and telephone from home or alternative work sites. Managers need to be comfortable supervising people they don't see regularly.

Agency policy should be reviewed for clear distinctions between core and situational telework. Telework agreements can be tailored to the two categories:

- Core telework—regular and recurring at least 1 day a week
- Situational telework—occasional and non-routine

Situational status can sell telework to hesitant managers and employees. Several options can help encourage reluctant managers to use telework in their planning and preparation for emergencies:

- Formalizing situational telework arrangements,
- Setting a specific length of time for the trial period,
- Moving to core telework if both parties like the arrangement; it's a no-risk, everybody-wins approach.

REQUIREMENTS FOR INDIVIDUAL AGENCIES

- Building emergency response contingencies into employees' telework agreements,
- Including agency telework coordinators in disaster planning and exercises,
- Helping agency decision makers understand that telework is an important agency tool, not just a "nice to have" flexibility for employees

Designation of emergency personnel

Agencies should designate emergency employees who are critical to agency operations in dismissal or closure situations. Each agency head has the discretion to identify and designate those employees that he or she judges to be necessary to continue agency operations in any given emergency situation. There are no standard definitions or categories in this regard, and agency heads (or their designees, as applicable) are free to make such determinations based on the agency's unique mission requirements and/or circumstances. The designation of emergency employees may vary according to the particular nature of an exigency. Such designations should be part of an agency's emergency response/continuity of operations plans and should be communicated (preferably well in advance) to emergency employees, so that they can be prepared to support and sustain agency operations in an emergency.

In addition, agencies may wish to identify a cadre of "mission-critical" emergency employees who are expected to remain in contact with their agencies at all times during any closure situation and may be called to work during emergencies dealing with national security, extended emergencies, or other unique situations. Agencies must identify the emergency situations in which "mission-critical" emergency employees will be expected to report for work and whether such employees must report for work at their regular worksites or alternative worksites.

Shelter in Place Protocols

It is possible that some types of emergency events may make evacuation of a Federal building dangerous. In this situation, an agency may decide to Shelter-In-Place (SIP). SIP is a protective action taken where a facility's occupants take refuge inside an area of the building with no or few windows. In general, a facility will SIP when one of the following emergencies occurs outside the building: severe weather (tornado, hail, etc.), civil unrest, gunman/sniper, or a biological, chemical or radiological threat.

Management will decide whether to SIP Up (proceed to a higher level), SIP Down (proceed to a lower level), or SIP In (proceed to an interior area) within the facility after conducting a threat analysis of the situation based on the type of threat and its location. During a SIP event, occupants should pay close attention to announcements made on the facility's public address system.

The U.S. General Services Administration (<http://www.gsa.gov>) provides guidance for agencies to setup an Occupant Emergency Plan (OEP), which would include SIP procedures. Once developed, the OEP should periodically be exercised to maintain training proficiency and to identify adjustments to the plan. The most important thing is to know beforehand what to do if advised to SIP.

For additional information on SIP, contact:

American Red Cross

<http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/shelterinplace.html>

Department of Health and Human Services,
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/planning/shelteringfacts.asp>

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

http://www.ready.gov/stay_or_go.html#stay



GENERAL INFORMATION ON WHAT EMPLOYEES CAN DO

Know Your Agency's Safety Plan

Employees should familiarize themselves with the procedures that have been put into place at their agency, as well as the means of notification that an agency will use to inform and instruct employees.

As part of every agency's OEP, employee volunteers are used to assist in effective evacuation and other duties during an emergency. During evacuation drills, employees should make a mental note of identifying garments (arm bands, caps, etc.) worn by floor team leaders, monitors and other volunteers. In the event of an actual emergency, it will be reassuring to know the individuals who are in place to assist with the evacuation.

As an employee, you may have questions about what is being done to protect your safety. Be sure to ask your manager to explain the agency procedures that are in place. In addition, pass any suggestions for improved building security to your manager. Your manager may need to contact his or her supervisor about your questions and suggestions. Be sure to follow up so that your concerns are fully addressed.

Stay Aware of Your Surroundings

Be on the look out for, and report, any suspicious activity. Observations and awareness of the surroundings may prevent incidents from occurring and/or give responders valuable information if an event does occur.

Volunteer to Help

There are many important duties that must be performed during an emergency. Every agency is required to have a plan in place to deal with serious events that may affect the safety of employees. These plans usually call for employees to volunteer to assist with evacuations, etc.

Whether it is serving as a floor manager, stairwell monitor, or keeping track of fellow employees during a crisis, volunteers are critical to protecting fellow employees. You can take additional steps to learn CPR and first aid to assist others during emergencies. It takes courage—the people who fill these positions are heroes-in-waiting. Please consider volunteering for this important service.

Create a Personal Safety Kit

There are some items which employees may wish to assemble in a personal safety kit that is stored at their work space. These could be used in the event of an attack or other emergency. Items

that may be appropriate for these kits include—additional dosages of any medication that an employee requires, bottled water, long-sleeved shirt or jacket, and emergency contact numbers. You may also think about adding such small items as snack food, an extra pair of glasses or other “comfort” items you think are necessary.

The Department of Homeland Security has published a guide, *Preparing Makes Sense. Get Ready Now*, which is an excellent resource for employees. It can be found at the web site address, www.ready.gov.

BIOLOGICAL THREATS

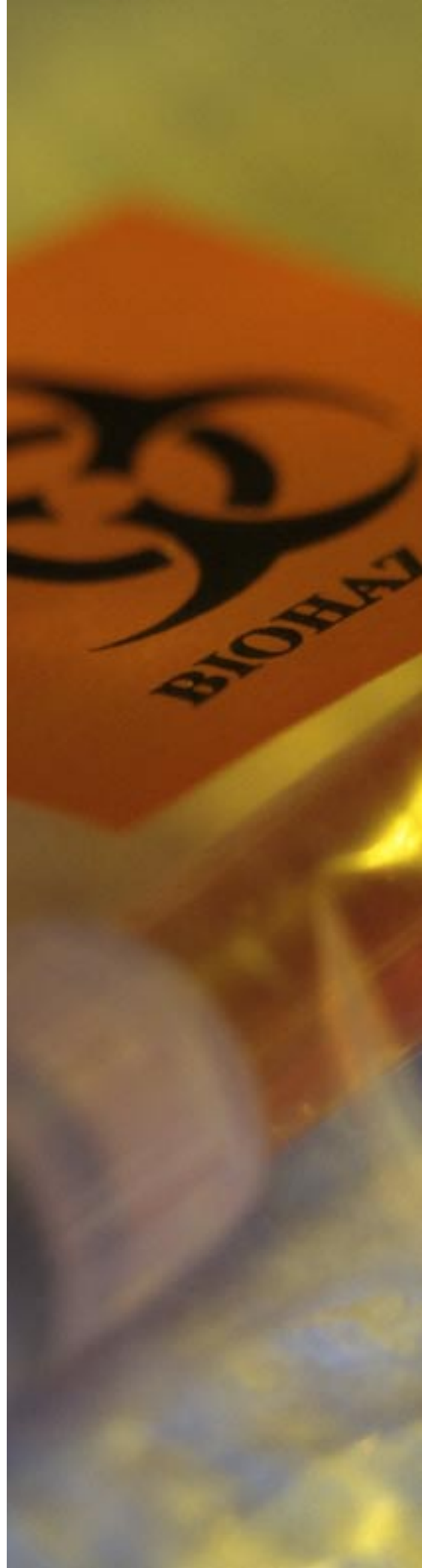
A biological attack is the deliberate release of germs or related substances. To affect individuals adversely, these substances must usually be inhaled, be ingested, or enter through cuts in the skin. Some biological agents such as smallpox can be spread from person to person while others like anthrax do not cause contagious diseases.

Different than a conventional explosive or attack, biological attacks may not be immediately evident. Some of the normal indicators of this type of attack would be an increase in the number of illnesses reported by local health care workers or a large number of dead or sick animals throughout your area. These attacks are normally discovered by emergency response personnel in reaction to the indicators listed above.

What Should You Do?

In the event that you witness a suspicious attack using an unknown substance, there are a number of things you can do to protect yourself and your family. First, leave the immediate area as quickly as possible and protect yourself by finding something to place over your nose and mouth. Any layered material like a t-shirt, handkerchief, or towel may help prevent particles of the substance from entering your respiratory system. If you have a long-sleeved shirt or jacket, they would be useful in covering exposed skin. They may also prevent bacteria from entering cuts you may have. If you are indoors and the suspected attack takes place outdoors, remain inside unless told otherwise by authorities. Report the attack to emergency personnel.

You can also take precautionary measures such as keeping shots up-to-date and making sure you practice good personal hygiene. A healthy body will be able to better fight any potential contamination by biological agents. In the event that anyone around you becomes ill, do not automatically assume that it is from the suspected attack as many of the symptoms from these attacks resemble common illnesses. Seek the medical advice of your physician.





CHEMICAL THREATS

Chemical attacks differ from biological attacks in that a toxic gas or liquid is used to contaminate people or the environment. The prevalent symptoms you would experience from a chemical attack are tightness in the chest, difficulty breathing, blurred vision, stinging of the eyes, or loss of coordination.

It is worth noting that the public routinely accepts the risks posed by accidental release of chemicals. The response to an emergency event involving chemicals, however, is the same regardless of whether the emergency is a result of intentional or unintentional actions.

What Should You Do?

If you witness a suspected chemical attack outdoors, move away from the area as quickly as possible. If you cannot leave the area, try to get inside, away from direct exposure and follow your instructions to shelter-in-place. If you are inside and an attack occurs in your building, try to leave the area if possible. If not, move to a safe location in the building and shelter-in-place.

If you suffer any of the symptoms mentioned above try to remove any clothing you can and wash your body with water or soap and water if available. Do not scrub the area, as this may wash the chemical into the skin. Seek medical assistance as soon as possible. If you see someone experiencing these symptoms, keep them away from others as much as possible, and try to keep them comfortable.

While extensive decontamination requiring disrobing is a possibility, this will normally only occur if you become a casualty of the agent or are evacuated and require medical treatment in a “clean” medical facility. This procedure may be required to prevent the spread of contamination.

NUCLEAR EXPLOSIONS AND RADIOLOGICAL CONTAMINATION

A nuclear blast consists of tremendous thermal (heat), light, and blast energy. The blast can spread radioactive waste capable of contaminating the air and surrounding landscape. While this type of attack is less likely than a biological or chemical attack, the remote possibility of its occurrence means you should be prepared.

What Should You Do?

If a nuclear explosion occurs, immediately drop and stay down until any blast wave passes over you and it is safe to get up. Debris can often cause injuries from a nuclear explosion so it is often safer to remain down until debris stops falling. Do not look at the blast.

When it is safe to do so, seek shelter inside a building or basement. Since dirt or earth is one of the best forms of protection from radiation, put as much shelter between you and the potential contamination as possible. If it is safe to leave without going in the direction from which the blast came, you should decide whether to leave the area to minimize the amount of time you spend exposed to radiological contamination. You should always try to place as much shielding and distance between yourself and the contamination as possible and limit the amount of your exposure by leaving laterally or upwind from the area when it is safe to do so.

Dirty Bombs

Dirty bombs are regular explosives that have been combined with either radiation causing material or chemical weapons. While most news reports talk about radiological dirty bombs, chemical agents may be used as well. Blasts from these types of weapons normally look more like a regular explosion, and the contamination spread is not often immediately noticeable. While this type of attack normally spreads contamination over a more localized area, you should be prepared to follow many of the same procedures as listed above.

After experiencing any of these types of attacks, tune to your local channels for information and instructions. Emergency responders are trained and equipped to evaluate and react to threats rising from these incidents. After a nuclear blast, you may be unable to get a signal from radio or television stations for a period of time. This is expected; so be persistent.

While radioactive, biological, and chemical weapons do pose a threat, they are attacks that you, and your family or fellow employees can survive if you keep a cool head and follow the instructions given by your local responders.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following publications are excellent resources for employees and managers to study to gain a more in-depth understanding about the potential risks and steps that can be taken to mitigate the damage from an attack.

■ **Are You Ready? A Guide for Citizen Preparedness**

(www.fema.gov/areyouready)

Federal Emergency Management Agency

■ **Occupant Emergency Program Guide**

(www.gsa.gov/attachments/GSA_PUBLICATIONS/extpub/GSA_OEP_Guide_6.doc)

General Services Administration

■ **Preparing Makes Sense. Get Ready Now**

(http://www.ready.gov/readygov_brochurev2.pdf)

Department of Homeland Security

■ **Manager's Handbook on Handling Traumatic Events**

Office of Personnel Management

(www.opm.gov/emergency/)

■ **Federal Manager's/Decision Maker's Emergency Guide**

(www.opm.gov/emergency/)

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Other agencies

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