



TIPS FOR REPORTING SUSPICIOUS PERSONS, ACTIVITIES, VEHICLES, ETC. TO PREVENT TERRORISM

SDPD Crime Prevention
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PREFACE

The SDPD is committed to working in a problem-solving partnership with individuals, community groups, and businesses, as well as with schools, hospitals, religious groups, private organizations, and other government agencies to fight crime and improve the quality of life for the people of San Diego. Problem solving is a key component in the Department's philosophy of Neighborhood Policing, which focuses on community crime and disorder problems and recognizes the need for close relationships between the police and other elements in the City to identify and solve problems. However, Neighborhood Policing cannot succeed on the efforts of the police alone. All elements of the City have responsibilities to fulfill.

Twelve community responsibilities are defined in a paper entitled *Community Responsibilities for Making Neighborhood Policing Work in San Diego: A Resource Guide for Individuals, Community Groups, and Businesses*. They are:

- Voicing concerns about disorder problems
- Employing crime prevention measures
- Knowing about crime and disorder in your community
- Addressing and solving certain community problems
- Volunteering services to police and other community groups
- Commenting on SDPD personnel performance in Neighborhood Policing
- Reporting crimes and suspicious activities
- Reporting suspicious persons, activities, vehicles, etc. to prevent terrorism
- Reporting other problems and incidents
- Helping to convict and punish criminals
- Getting help with personal and family problems
- Exercising parental authority

The first six are discussed in that paper. The last six, including this one, are discussed in separate papers. They are published as part of the SDPD's continuing efforts to promote Neighborhood Policing. They provide information to help individuals, community groups, businesses, property owners, and others fulfill their responsibilities. All can be opened on the Community Resources and Responsibilities page of the SDPD website at www.sandiego.gov/police/services/prevention/community.

INTRODUCTION

First and foremost, continue to live your daily lives. Terrorism is only successful when it disrupts the lives of the people whose government is targeted. Prepare as you would for any emergency, such as an earthquake, by having a 3- to 5-day supply of water and canned or dried food, blankets, flashlights, matches, and other items that are part of any standard emergency kit. Have a plan for your family or business that includes places where family members or employees should go in various scenarios. Go to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's website, www.ready.gov, where you can search for more information about threats and planning.

Each terrorist attack in history has produced an information trail about the target, the acquisition of material to carry out the attack, i.e., explosives or other weapons, and the movement of money and people. Detecting these signs and reporting information about them to the proper agencies is the best way to prevent a terrorist act.

The Department of Homeland Security has a public awareness campaign entitled *If You See Something, Say Something*. Its purpose is to encourage the public to contact local authorities if they see suspicious activity. It emphasizes behavior rather than appearance in identifying suspicious activity. Factors such as race, ethnicity, national origin, or religious affiliation alone are not suspicious. For that reason, the public should report only suspicious behavior and situations, e.g., an unattended backpack in a public place or someone trying to break into a restricted area, rather than beliefs, thoughts, ideas, expressions, associations, or speech unrelated to terrorism or other criminal activity. Only reports that document behavior reasonably indicative of criminal activity related to terrorism will be shared with federal agencies.

For this you should be vigilant and aware of your surroundings and report anything that doesn't fit in or seems out of the ordinary. Be aware yet fair. Avoid stereotyping and profiling. Some examples of persons, activities, vehicles, etc. that could be considered suspicious are listed in this paper. Some are clearly emergencies. They should be reported immediately by calling **911**. Others may be considered as non-emergencies. They should be reported to the SDPD at **(619) 531-2000** or **(858) 484-3154**. It will notify and coordinate actions with the FBI and other government agencies. When a terrorist act appears imminent you should also notify any law enforcement or security personnel that are in the immediate area. If there is any doubt as to whether the situation is an emergency it is always better to be on the safe side and call **911**.

The ability of the SDPD and other law enforcement agencies to locate and arrest potential terrorists will depend on the thoroughness and accuracy of the report you submit. The following information checklist should be used for reporting both emergencies and non-emergencies:

- Type of activity
- Location: exact street address and nearest cross street
- Time of activity
- Weapons involved
- Vehicle information: activity, direction of travel, license plate, color, make/model, unusual characteristics (e.g., dents, bumper stickers, graphics, wheels, tinted windows, lifted/lowered), cargo type/covering, number of persons, etc.
- Suspect information: activity, direction of escape, race, gender, age, height, weight, weapon type, hair (color, length, style, facial), clothing color and type (hat, tie, coat, shirt, trousers), other characteristics (e.g., tattoos, scars/marks, complexion, missing teeth, scars, glasses), etc.

Remember the five “**W**”s when reporting suspicious activities.

- **What** is happening?
- **Who** is doing it?
- **Where** is it taking place?
- **When** did you observe it?
- **Why** is it suspicious?

EMERGENCIES. CALL 911

Emergencies include crimes that are in progress or about to happen, and ones that have resulted in serious personal injury, property damage, or property loss. They also include situations in which the suspect may still be at the scene and various kinds of suspicious activities. By calling **911** you will be linked to the appropriate police as well as fire fighting, medical, and ambulance services. You don't need money to call **911** from a pay phone.

When reporting an emergency be prepared to give an accurate description of what your emergency is and your location, especially if you are calling from a mobile cellular phone. Even if you have an E911-ready cell phone that provides location information based on a Global Positioning System (GPS) and your phone has been activated to work in that capacity, the emergency response will be faster if you provide your location. Otherwise the dispatcher can determine the street address and apartment or condo unit only if you are calling from a landline. Thus, if a landline is available it is always better to use it instead of a cell phone. If you are calling from a gated community or a controlled-access building, be sure to give the dispatcher the gate or door access code. Answer the dispatcher's questions about the emergency and don't hang up until you are told. With just the address, if the line is disconnected or you cannot speak, an officer will still be dispatched. The following are considered emergencies for reporting purposes.

Persons doing the following:

- Sketching, taking notes, drawing maps or diagrams, photographing, videotaping, or otherwise monitoring facilities not normally associated with tourist activity or other places that may be targets for terrorist attacks, e.g., key government facilities, airports, bridges, chemical plants, power plants, schools, religious institutions, shopping centers, etc.
- Collecting detailed information on facility entrances, exits, driveways, parking spaces, etc.
- Using binoculars, high-magnification lenses, or night-vision or thermal-imaging devices in observing a facility or activity that may be a target
- Attempting to obtain information about a person, place, operation, or event that may be a target
- Attempting to improperly acquire explosives, detonators, timers, weapons, ammunition, body armor, propane bottles or tanks, etc.
- Attempting to buy or rent large trucks or SUVs with cash or without appropriate licenses or vehicle-class endorsements while being unduly nervous or evasive about the use of the vehicle.
- Attempting to buy large amounts of high-nitrate fertilizers or other unusual chemicals
- Loading vehicles with weapons or explosives
- Attempting to improperly acquire official uniforms, passes, badges, IDs, license plates, vehicles, etc.
- Seeking treatment for chemical burns or missing hands/fingers
- Having untreated chemical burns or missing hands/fingers

Objects in the open, or in vehicles or buildings having the following characteristics may be bombs:

- Unattended bags, backpacks, boxes, etc. near places that may be targets
- Having antennas, batteries, timers, capped pipes, etc.
- Emitting a strong chemical odor

Vehicle fires may indicate a failed or misfired explosive device in the following situations:

- The vehicle is parked near a critical infrastructure facility, government building or office, transportation node, or in an area of high pedestrian traffic
- A vehicle occupant is seen fleeing the scene or behaving suspiciously before the fire occurs
- The fire is in the passenger compartment or trunk instead of the engine compartment
- Sparking, flashing, or popping sounds come from the vehicle
- Unusual odors come from the vehicle

Persons, not just adult males, with several of the following characteristics may be suicide bombers carrying bombs.

- Are nervous, sweating, or mumbling
- Are wearing loose or bulky clothing that is inappropriate for the current weather conditions
- Are wearing an inordinate amount of perfume, cologne, or other scents that may be used to mask chemical odors
- Do not look like they belong in the uniform or dress they are wearing, which may be a disguise to elude detection
- Are carrying or wearing heavy objects
- Holding a bag or package close to his or her body
- Are repeatedly patting upper body or adjusting clothing
- Keeping one or both hands in pockets or close to his or her body, possible holding a detonator switch
- Having visible wires or an explosive belt protruding from under his or her clothing
- Having bulges or padding around the midsection
- Appearing well-groomed but wear sloppy clothing
- Having a pale face from recently shaving a beard
- Not responding to direct salutations or authoritative commands
- Walking in a deliberate, stiff, or awkward manner
- Acting in an unusually vigilant manner
- Having a blank facial expression, or appearing extremely focused or in a trance
- Exhibiting unusually calm and detached behavior

Letters or packages that contain a bomb or a chemical, biological, or radiological (CBR) threat may have one or more of the following characteristics. Handle them with great care. Don't shake, bump, smell, or open them. Put the letter or package down carefully and leave the area. Do not open windows. Call **911** from a landline phone if one is available outside the area. Otherwise it is OK to use a cell phone or pager. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water if you touched the letter or package.

- Are unexpected or from someone you don't know
- Are addressed to someone now longer at your address
- Have no return address or one that does not appear legitimate
- Are bulky, lumpy, or lopsided in appearance
- Have wires or other unusual contents that are protruding or can be felt through the envelope or wrapping
- Are sealed with excessive amounts of tape or string
- Have restrictive markings such as "Personal" or "Confidential"
- Have excessive postage
- Emit a strange odor
- Are mailed from a foreign country
- Do not have a named addressee, e.g., are addressed to a title only
- Have incorrect title or misspelled words in the address
- Poor handwriting
- Have oily stains, discolorations, or crystallization on the wrapper

For additional information see the U.S. Postal Inspection Service *Guide to Mail Center Security* at <http://about.usps.com/publications/pub166.pdf>.

If a suspicious object is found outside, get away from it after reporting it. 300 yards is a minimum distance. Then take cover for protection against bomb fragments. Get on the ground if no cover is available. Maintain distance and cover, or leave the area after an explosion. Be alert and cautious in reentering the area to help victims. There may be another device nearby.

NON-EMERGENCIES. CALL SDPD AT (619) 531-2000 OR (858) 484-3154

Non-emergencies are crimes and suspicious activities are ones in which: (a) there is no serious personal injury, property damage, or property loss; (b) the suspect has left the scene or is not likely to return; and (c) an immediate response is not needed. Because the waiting times to talk to a dispatcher are long during the day, the best times to call are before 8:00 a.m. and after 8:00 p.m.

The following are considered non-emergencies for reporting purposes.

- Persons or activities that do not appear to belong in the workplace, neighborhood, business establishment, or near a key facility or event because of their demeanor, behavior, language, dress, activity, etc.
- Multiple sighting of the same suspicious persons, vehicles, or activities at the same location
- Rental of storage units for suspicious items or activities
- Deliveries of chemicals directly to self-storage units
- Unusual deliveries of chemicals to residences or rural addresses
- Street people not previously seen in the area, i.e., panhandlers, shoe shiners, food or flower vendors, newsagents, street sweepers, etc.

Persons doing the following:

- Sitting in a parked vehicle for an extended period of time
- Loitering in public places, e.g., bus stops and train stations
- Loitering near or wandering around a possible target
- Carrying on long conversations on pay or cellular phones near a possible target
- Wearing military or other uniforms that don't appear to belong in them
- Observing security measures or personnel, entry points, access controls, and perimeter barriers such as fences or walls, at a possible target
- Testing or probing security measures, e.g., by driving by a sensitive area, attempting to enter a sensitive area, inquiring about security measures, attempting to smuggle contraband through check points, asking for directions, claiming to be lost, etc.
- Attempting to enter a key facility without proper ID, prior notification and approval, etc.
- Being in a key facility without required visible ID
- Staring or quickly looking away from personnel or vehicles entering or leaving a key facility or parking area
- Carrying heavy bags or backpacks near a possible target
- Setting down bags or backpacks near a possible target and then walking away
- Behaving as if they may be planning a terrorist act, e.g., by mapping routes, timing traffic lights or traffic flow, playing out scenarios, monitoring key facilities or events, etc.
- Observing activities and movements of police personnel, e.g., in and out of a police station.
- Possessing or distributing literature that promotes jihad, racist activities, or terrorist/extremist agendas.
- Seeking donations for obscure charities. You can check on whether a charity is registered as a nonprofit with the IRS at www.irs.gov/app/pub-78.

Vehicles that:

- Are parked near a key facility for an unusual period of time
- Are commonly used for deliveries, e.g., trucks, vans, or U-Hauls, that are parked in locations not usually used for deliveries without prior authorization
- Are out of place in the environment, e.g., a tractor-trailer parked in a residential neighborhood, and may have out-of-state or temporary plates
- Are abandoned
- Are overloaded or sagging (rear-weighted)
- Are leaking a fluid
- Have odor or gasoline, propane, acids, or chemicals
- Have been modified to handle heavier than normal loads, additional storage space, or increased fuel capacity

- Have excessively darkened or tinted windows, or temporary window coverings to prevent viewing of the vehicle's interior
- Show signs of theft, e.g., damaged locks, missing windows, etc.
- Have license plates removed or altered
- Bear a temporary commercial placard affixed with tape or magnets, or a permanent placard that is unusual, unrecognizable, or has misspelled words
- Contain batteries, wiring, timers, other power supply or switching components, unmarked packages or unusual items such as PVC pipe, magnets, compressed gas cylinders, fire extinguishers, etc. in the passenger compartment
- Have large containers on seats or cargo space (bags, boxes, barrels, tanks)
- Have cargo concealed under a tarp or blanket
- Contain blueprints, maps, sketching materials, or surveillance equipment, e.g., binoculars, video cameras, high-magnification lenses, etc. in the passenger compartment

OTHER INDICATORS OF TERRORIST ACTIVITIES

Some examples of suspicious behaviors, activities to report, and other things you should do to help prevent terrorism can be found in the iWATCH section of the Los Angeles Police Department's website at www.lapdonline.org/iwatchla/content_basic_view/42535. There you can learn about potential indicators of terrorist activities in the following areas: bulk fuel distributors, construction sites, dive/boat stores, farm supply stores, financial institutions, general aviation airports, hobby shops, home improvement and large retail stores, hotels and motels, peroxide-based explosives, rental cars, rental properties, rental trucks, shopping malls and centers, and storage facilities.

To suggest what people should look for, the SDPD has published the following eight indicators of terrorist activities. Persons seen or suspected of doing the following should be reported by calling **911**.

- 1. Surveillance.** Terrorists may conduct surveillance to determine a target's strengths and weaknesses. Be aware of someone who appears to be monitoring security personnel or equipment, or gauging emergency response time. Suspicious activities could include using vision enhancing devices, acquiring floor plans or blueprints, and showing interest in security and access to facilities.
- 2. Elicitation.** A terrorist may try to gain information about the operations and security of a potential target, possibly an important place such as a power plant, stadium, or school. It could be gathered many ways by phone, email, in person, or even by gaining employment at the location.
- 3. Testing Security.** Someone may use different methods to test security, such as trespassing into a restricted area or leaving a bag unattended in a public place to see how long it takes for people or security to respond.
- 4. Funding.** Terrorists need to raise money for their operations and spend it in a way that doesn't draw attention. This could be done many ways through crimes such as drugs and counterfeit merchandise sales, burglary, or even funneling money from legitimate businesses or non-profit organizations. Be aware of unusually large transactions paid with cash or gift cards, or someone soliciting a donation for a charity you've never heard of.
- 5. Acquiring Supplies.** To conduct an attack, terrorists may need a variety of supplies, such as weapons, transportation, and communication systems. Suspicious activities could include a vehicle left in an unusual place; stockpiling fertilizers, weapons, even one-time use cell phones; acquiring or stealing uniforms; and forging personal identification or passports.
- 6. Impersonation.** Terrorists may impersonate law enforcement officers, firefighters, EMS or paramedic personnel, mail carriers, or company employees to gain information. Someone who seems suspicious in what they say or do on the job could be a red flag.
- 7. Rehearsal.** Terrorists often rehearse a planned attack, possibly several times, to make sure their operation runs smoothly. This may include measuring response time by emergency responders, and possibly using police radios.
- 8. Deployment.** This is when terrorists are putting their plans into place, getting into position, moving equipment and supplies, and launching an attack.

Another terrorist activity is domestic radicalization to violence. Canadian experts involved in national security say the following traits indicate that someone is becoming radicalized. Every jihadist who has come to the attention of authorities there has exhibited several, if not all, of these traits. People with these traits should be reported to the SDPD by calling its non-emergency number, **(619) 531-2000** or **(858) 484-3154**.

- They abruptly abandon friends and family members.
- In the increasingly rare occasions where they do see their family, they berate them for their supposedly impious behavior. This might include accusing their father of being an infidel for consuming alcohol or calling their sister a slut for not wearing the proper headwear.
- They stop participating in activities that used to occupy a lot of their time, such as sports or community associations.
- They believe they have found the true path to religious enlightenment, usually in the form of radical Sunnism, and anyone who doesn't follow it is of less worth.
- They often exhibit growing hatred and intolerance toward others who don't adhere to their beliefs. This includes rejecting fellow Muslims of different sects, as well as imams who repudiate violence.
- They refuse to engage with or debate ideas that counter their own.
- They turn their back on their life as it was before radicalization.
- Surfing of pornography and violent jihadi/anti-government websites takes up increasingly large chunks of their day.
- They develop obsessive patterns of behavior and pine for martyrdom and the apocalypse.

With growing violent extremist activities overseas, it is also important to report people who are being recruited to go overseas, as indicated by the following behavior, or have returned from fighting overseas.

- Show new interest in regional conflicts
- Express support for violent extremist organizations
- Spend more time on the Internet watching violent extremist videos and frequenting websites, forums, or chat rooms with violent extremist group propaganda
- Communicate with persons associated with violent extremist organizations in person or on social media
- Change appearance
- Withdraw from community, family, and friends
- Learn to use weapons
- Start to save money for travel overseas
- Make suspicious travel patterns, e.g., buying one-way plane tickets