

3. The Expanded Terrorist Threat

3.1 Terrorist WMD Incidents Require Different Responses

In non-terrorist incidents, local and state governments are typically expected to respond first. In terrorist incidents with warning, the Federal Government may deploy resources ahead of time. However, most terrorist WMD incidents will unfold such that local and state agencies respond first. Given the fact that highway facilities could be the primary or secondary target of a terrorist incident, or that highways will quickly be used for response purposes, state DOT personnel may well be first or early responders. Therefore, state DOT responders need to be aware of the characteristics of a terrorist WMD incident and the need to handle that incident somewhat differently than for a natural disaster. Table 3 below reflects some possible changes in response to a WMD incident vis-à-vis other types of disasters.

Table 3: Characteristics of a Terrorist WMD Incident and Possible Changes in Response

Possible Characteristics of Terrorist WMD Incident	Possible Change in Response
Caused by people on purpose	Law enforcement and national security agencies will play a larger role in a terrorist incident. Coordination and understanding of respective agency roles will be critical. DOT personnel will need to understand the different relationships inherent during or after a terrorist WMD incident.
Will always be treated as crime scenes	Law enforcement agencies will want to control and preserve certain elements of the crime scene, which may affect response by other agencies. DOT personnel need to understand how to effectively work with law enforcement agencies so both the DOT and law enforcement agencies can perform their respective roles and responsibilities.
May not be immediately recognizable as terrorist incidents	If an incident occurs on or near a highway, DOT personnel may be first or early responders. Therefore, those who may be first or early responders need basic training in identifying possible signs and consequences of terrorist incidents for early recognition. Once having recognized the marks of a WMD incident, they need to take appropriate actions including the consideration of their own safety.

Possible Characteristics of Terrorist WMD Incident	Possible Change in Response
May not be single incidents	Responders need to consider the possibility of additional terrorist incidents as they respond to an earlier incident(s). Different incidents could have multi-dimensional characteristics and consequences. As DOT personnel may be first or early responders, they need to be trained to consider the risks of secondary terrorist incidents.
Place responders at higher risk due to WMD characteristics and possible planned secondary incidents	In general, responders will need to be better trained and equipped to address the higher risk posed by a terrorist incident. It is possible that responders themselves may be targets of incidents, as terrorists will attack responders to further slow and confuse response efforts.
May result in widespread contamination of critical equipment and facilities	Geographic areas may need to be quickly closed to all but designated emergency response personnel. Some resources may become unavailable for use if contaminated. Having procedures and equipment in place for decontamination becomes more important. Medical treatment and facilities could be overwhelmed quickly. If a highway or related facility becomes contaminated, some DOT personnel will need to know how to operate in that contaminated environment or, at a minimum, know how to direct contractors, e.g., so debris removal can occur.
May have delayed or long-lasting effect	Response resources may be required far beyond those originally anticipated, especially where a WMD is used that leaves few distinguishing marks initially. DOT response resources need to be available but may also need to be protected as the consequences spread.
May expand geometrically in scope	Same as above.
May cause strong public reaction	Addressing public concerns is critical. Panic and uncontrolled flight are possible, and controls may need to be quickly put into effect. A comprehensive public information strategy is necessary. Where highways are concerned, state DOT personnel will be expected to provide information, e.g., through variable message signs, to motorists evacuating an area.

The table above indicates that many existing state DOT emergency operations plans and procedures for highway response do not fully capture the different nature of a