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U.S. Department
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Administration



Standard Protocols for Managing Security Incidents Involving Surface Transit Vehicles



Office of Research, Demonstration and Innovation
Office of Safety and Security

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Introduction

In light of recent events involving anthrax-tainted mail, and repeated suicide bomb attacks on buses in the Middle-East, it is important that Transit Operators and Bus Dispatch/Control Center personnel be vigilant in preparing for, and understanding how, terrorists might attack their system. Transit vehicles are ideal targets for explosives. Although some types of transit vehicles are less optimal targets for chemical or biological attack, in light of the broad scope of the general threat to transit, it is vital that appropriate response procedures be in place to adequately respond to such incidents and minimize their effects.

Scope

These protocols are mainly focused on the transit vehicle operator. However, the information provided also may apply to Transit Operations in general, including maintenance and service personnel, yard supervisors, and management.

These protocols are divided into three areas:

Part One (Prevention) involves the inspection of transit vehicles, as part of a routine maintenance measure, to prevent the placement of an explosive device or hazardous substance.

Part Two (Unknown Substances and Suspicious Packages) lists circumstances, when inspecting an empty vehicle or operating a bus or light rail vehicle (LRV) with patrons that may constitute a terrorist attack involving either an explosive device or a chemical or biological weapon. It is understood that while in operation, the transit operator may not be able to clearly see the events unfolding behind him/her several rail cars down the line. When a questionable event occurs, the transit operator should find a safe location, and pull over (in the case of buses) or stop the train (in the case of LRVs). The operator may then evaluate the situation to determine if there is a potential threat to life or health on the vehicle. Based on the criteria presented in Part Two, if the operator determines that the questionable event is indeed a threat, he/she will notify Operations Control/Dispatch and proceed with actions, as instructed in Part Three.

Part Three (Response), involves components of isolate, evacuate, get help and illustrates measures to be taken when responding to a verified or highly suspicious event.

Although these protocols provide great detail in regard to recognizing a possible terrorist incident, attacks are generally unpredictable. Therefore, operators are called upon to be vigilant and observant of any unusual or suspicious activity. In the end, an operator's instinct and experience may be the best measure in identifying an attack before it occurs. Operators should feel free to contact Operations Control/Bus Dispatch any time they feel there is a potential threat.

PART I Prevention

Good Housekeeping is a major component of prevention:

Conduct a vehicle inspection (sweep):

- At the beginning and end of each line and/or trip
- When servicing or performing maintenance on a transit vehicle
- When asked to conduct a vehicle inspection by a supervisor

The following areas (whenever feasible) should receive the greatest attention:

- Inspect the interior of the vehicle: floors, seats, under seats and interior compartments for unknown objects or tampering.
- Inspect the interior lights to make sure they are operational and have not been tampered with.
- Inspect under the vehicle for items taped or attached to frame.

- Inspect the exterior of the vehicle for unusual scratches or marks made by tools; signs of tampering; unusually clean or dirty compartments; or items attached using magnets or duct tape.
- Inspect the engine compartment, and other areas, for foreign objects or false compartment in the air filter area; cold oil filter; additional wires from battery component; unusually clean components and devices.
- On buses, inspect the fuel and air tanks for inconsistent and missing connections.
- On LRVs, inspect skirt panels and couplers.
- If you find an unattended item while conducting the sweep, follow the suspicious package checklist below to determine if the package is potentially dangerous.

If an unknown substance or a suspicious package is found during an inspection sweep, immediately notify a supervisor and proceed to the list provided in Part Two.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Upon discovery of any package or substance that is producing a suspicious cloud, mist or vapor, and/or is making the person conducting the inspection ill, immediately evacuate the vehicle as instructed in (PART III) below.

Even if you do not yet feel sick, you may be highly contaminated. If you suspect you have been contaminated with a hazardous substance, try not to contaminate others. If already outside, remain there (1000 feet upwind from the vehicle) until emergency personnel can evaluate you. If in a workshop area with emergency showers, stand under the running water until emergency personnel can evaluate you.

PART II Unknown Substances and Suspicious Packages

IMPORTANT NOTE:

If TWO (2) or more patrons suddenly become ill, collapse, or complain of dizziness, immediately pull over and evacuate the transit vehicle, as instructed in (PART III) below.

Visual examination to determine if protective action is necessary:

Evaluate each questionable situation to determine whether an unknown substance or suspicious package is actually something harmless. It may be harmful if any of the following questions can be answered with a YES.

- Is there an unexplained odor or are human illness symptoms present?
- Is it a solid or powder; granules much finer than sand (and the material is a consistency or a size that could be easily inhaled)?
- Was a specific threat made or a possible dissemination device found that coincides with the discovery of the unknown substance? Or both?
- Is there colored residue, dead foliage, dead insects and/or animal life in the vicinity?
- Are there unusual wires or batteries visible which may indicate an explosive?
- Are tanks, bottles or bags visible, which may indicate that a chemical is present?
- Is a message attached to the article?
- Is there a suspicious cloud, mist, gas or vapor?
- Is anything seeping from the article? Is it oily?
- Is the unattended article in an out-of-the-way place?
- Was anyone observed abandoning the article and quickly leaving the scene?
- Are people in the area showing signs of sickness or distress?
- Did you observe (or has a rider complained of) a patron acting or behaving in a suspicious manner? (e.g. patron in a long coat, with bulges, on a hot summer day; rider deliberately attempting to ignite a substance or package)

If the operator or maintenance worker can answer “yes” to any of the above, immediately contact Operations Control or Bus Dispatch, and proceed with directions as instructed in (Part III) below.

The above list is not all-inclusive. It is possible that many different scenarios could occur in the event of a terrorist attack. Ultimately, the operator’s instinct and common sense may be the factors that determine if a situation warrants immediate attention. As with all criminal activity, the operator should feel free to contact Operations Control/Bus Dispatch any time he/she feels there is a potential threat.

PART III Response

Follow the procedure of isolate, evacuate, and get help.

Isolate:

The operator should instruct customers to step away and/or distance themselves from the potentially contaminated area, suspicious substance or suspicious package. Although not always practical, when attempting to react as quickly as possible, the transit vehicle operator should attempt to find a safe location in which to pull over (as in buses) or stop the vehicle, (as in LRVs). If given the choice between stopping in front of a shopping mall or a city park, for example, the least populated area should ideally be the best choice. However, this decision should be made as quickly as possible to limit potential harm to passengers.

Evacuate:

Remain calm and await further instructions from Operations Control/Bus Dispatch. Evacuations should only be considered when the operator feels his/her life or the lives of his/her passengers is threatened. If instructed to evacuate by Operations Control/Bus Dispatch, follow the following procedures:

- Find a safe location and notify Operations Control/Bus Dispatch of your location
- Stop your vehicle in a safe location
- Shut off the HVAC
- Evacuate your vehicle making sure that your passengers take their possessions with them
- Close the doors to the vehicle to prevent re-entry
- Have your passengers move at least 1000 ft. from the coach (preferably upwind)

Get Help:

- Do not attempt to re-enter the vehicle
- Do not use the radio or phone from any closer than 1000 feet away (if it is a suspected bomb or explosive device)
- Try to collect names and phone numbers of all passengers
- Await further instructions from Operations Control/Bus Dispatch or Incident Command
- Provide as much information regarding the incident as possible to Operations Control/Bus Dispatch and Emergency Responders



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