

Robert Burke

Counter-
Terrorism
for
Emergency
Responder



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Preface

Terrorism is the latest buzzword in the news media, within the federal government, and throughout the emergency response community across the U.S. Terrorism has become a fact of life in certain countries around the world, like Northern Ireland, England, Israel, and Japan. It is, however, no longer a problem that just happens somewhere else. Bombings at the World Trade Center, the Oklahoma City Federal Building, the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, and in many other locations throughout the U.S., have brought the idea of terrorism home. It does not just happen in other countries around the world — it *can* also happen here. It is not just foreign countries and factions that sponsor terrorism, but domestic groups as well, including militia, anti-government, anti-abortion, and animal rights organizations, to mention a few. While bombings have been the terrorist weapon of choice in the past, chemical and biological agents will likely be the weapons of choice in the future. Biological agents in particular are cheap and easy to make without detection. They have often been referred to as the “poor man’s atom bomb.” A very small amount of a chemical or biological agent has the potential to kill thousands of people if disseminated in an effective manner, and there may be little we can do to prevent its rapid spread. The outcome of a terrorist attack may well depend on how thoroughly emergency responders at all levels plan and train to deal with terrorist events.

The underlying mission of this book is to present the idea to emergency responders that chemical, biological, nuclear, explosive, and incendiary agents are hazardous materials. Responding to hazardous materials releases is not unlike responding to acts of terrorism. In fact, a terrorist response is a combination of a mass casualty incident, technical rescue incident, hazardous materials incident, and crime scene rolled into one. Many warfare/terrorist agents are common industrial chemicals and explosives. Acts of terrorism *are* hazardous materials incidents. To quote Chicago Fire Department Captain and hazardous materials team member Gene Ryan, chemical and biological terrorist agents are “hazmats with an attitude.” Responders will still need to exercise recognition and identification procedures, enforce scene security, establish isolation zones and perimeters, wear proper protective equipment, and implement decontamination procedures. When dealing

with acts of terrorism, there are new recognition and identification tools, advanced equipment technologies, and additional players involved on the scene of an incident. However, it is still a hazardous materials response at the local level. If emergency responders are prepared to deal with releases of hazardous materials, they can also deal effectively with chemical and biological agents. What will be required is additional planning, procedures, equipment, and training.

Sadly, however, some emergency response organizations and individual personnel are not ready to deal with “ordinary” hazardous materials, let alone chemical and biological agents. Response personnel in some cases will take the same passive attitude they did with hazardous materials in the beginning. A turning point occurred when the Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act (EPCRA) was passed by Congress in 1986. This legislation led to training competencies and response procedures for hazardous materials incidents. Some response organizations still said “it can’t happen here” and did not prepare.

Chances are that chemical and biological agent attacks, bombings, nuclear devices, and incendiary device threats will not happen in every community across the country; however, no one knows where the attack may occur. The numbers of attacks, when and if they occur, are likely to be small. But the potential loss of life and disruption of lifestyle as we now know it is too great to put our heads in the sand and pretend it cannot happen to us. We must all prepare for the worst and hope for the best.

Every person in this country who responds to emergencies, whether he or she is a fire, EMS, police, or other emergency professional, should be aware of the basic tools needed to recognize and safely respond to acts of terrorism. This book is written to provide concise information for emergency responders who might be called upon to confront explosive, chemical, nuclear, biological, or incendiary acts of terrorism. Specific procedures are necessary to properly respond to acts of terrorism.

Terrorism is another type of hazardous materials incident — with some special circumstances. How well prepared are you to deal with terrorism?

About The Author

Robert A. Burke, born in Beatrice, Nebraska, and raised in Lincoln, Nebraska and Dundee, Illinois, earned an A.A. in Fire Protection Technology from Catonsville Community College, and a B.S. in Fire Science from the University of Maryland. He has also completed graduate work in Public Administration at the University of Baltimore. He is also a graduate of numerous classes at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

Mr. Burke has over 20 years' experience in emergency services as a career and volunteer firefighter, and has served as an Assistant Fire Chief for the Verdigris Fire Protection District in Claremore, Oklahoma; Deputy State Fire Marshal in the State of Nebraska; a private fire protection and hazardous materials consultant; and Exercise and Training Officer for the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program (CSEPP) at the Maryland Emergency Management Agency. Mr. Burke is currently the Fire Marshal for the University of Maryland Baltimore Campus.

He is an adjunct instructor at the National Fire Academy, where he teaches Emergency Response to Terrorism: Basic Concepts and other hazardous materials courses. He is also a hazardous materials instructor for the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute. Mr. Burke is a contributing editor for *Firehouse* magazine and has had numerous articles published in *Firehouse*, *Fire Chief*, and *Fire Engineering* magazines. He has developed several training programs, including "Advanced Hazardous Materials for Emergency Responders," a unique Modular Awareness Program for police, fire, EMS, and public works personnel, and the 1996 *North American Emergency Response Guide Book*. He has conducted training classes for Louisiana State University Firemen's Training School in Baton Rouge; the New York State Academy of Fire Science in Montour Falls; the Michigan State Police Academy in East Lansing; the Delaware County Emergency Services Training Center outside Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; the Pennsylvania State Fire Academy in Lewistown; the Motorola Corporation in Buffalo, New York; the Massachusetts Regional Hazardous Materials Team outside Boston; the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland; and the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute. Mr. Burke is also the author of the book *Hazardous Materials Chemistry for Emergency Responders* published by CRC/Lewis Publishers in

1997. He has given presentations at the Firehouse Expo in Baltimore; the International Hazardous Materials Spills Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana; the Illinois State Association of Fire Protection Districts in Springfield, Illinois; Region III EPA Conference in Norfolk, Virginia; HazMat 2000 in Las Vegas, Nevada; and various other state and local functions.

In 1997, Mr. Burke was commissioned as a Kentucky Colonel by the Governor of Kentucky, the highest honor given by the state, for his Train-The-Trainer program about the *1996 North American Emergency Response Guidebook*. Using the program he developed, he trained over 100 instructors in two courses held in Louisville and Lexington, Kentucky. The Governor of Maryland awarded Mr. Burke a "Governor's Citation" in 1997 for his work with the Chemical Stockpile Preparedness Program (CSEPP) in Maryland. Once again, in 1998 Mr. Burke received a "Governor's Citation" for fire prevention work at the University of Maryland, improving life-safety for the staff, students, and faculty.

Acknowledgments

Not long ago while I was teaching at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland, I happened to run into Jan Kuczma — an old friend and respected mentor, who is the Chief of the Technical Programs Branch at the Academy. He has been there since its inception. Over the years, he has provided me with guidance, friendship, and fatherly advice, getting me over many “bumps” in my personal life and career. He doesn’t always say a lot, but he is a good listener, always equipped with wisdom, and gets right to the point. This time, he said he had the opportunity to “view” my first book, *Hazardous Materials Chemistry for Emergency Responders*. His advice was to be sure and follow up with another book, perhaps one dealing with terrorism. Frankly, I had thought of the idea prior to that, but had not been motivated to act any further. By this time, I had pretty much abandoned the thought. Well, once again, Jan lit the fire that motivated me to take action on a book concerning terrorism. This is the finished project. Its content shouldn’t reflect on Jan in any way, shape, or form, but once again, without Jan’s guidance, it very likely would not have happened. For that reason and all of the other help and friendship over the years in my times of need, Jan, I thank you. This book is respectfully dedicated to Jan Kuczma, one of the most caring and genuine persons I have ever had the pleasure to know. He cares about people, he cares about the National Fire Academy and its programs, and is one of the best friends the American fire service has at the Emmitsburg facility.

Dedication

TO AMANDA, MY FIRST GRANDCHILD

It seems like only yesterday that I held you in my arms at the hospital nursery just after you were born, much to the envy of both of your grandmothers! Now you have blossomed into a beautiful young lady. You always pull at my heartstrings no matter what your age. You know just how to smile and twist my arm just a little, to allow me the very special pleasure of spoiling you. While I dearly love all eight of my grandchildren, there will always be a special place in my heart because you were the first, and because you are my little princess. This book is affectionately dedicated to you. It is my prayer that neither you or any other child anywhere in the world will have to experience the horrors of terrorism.

Table of Contents

1 Introduction: It's Just Another Hazardous Materials Incident!

2 History of Terrorism

3 Chemical Terrorist Agents

Nerve Agents

Blister Agents or Vesicants

Blood Agents (Cyanogens)

Choking Agents (Lung-Damaging Agents)

Riot Control Agents (Irritant Agents)

Vomiting Agents

Miscellaneous Chemical Agents

4 Biological Terrorist Agents

Bacterial Agents

Viruses

Toxins

5 Explosive Terrorism

ATF Bomb Threat Checklist

Characteristics of Explosions

Definitions

Types of Explosives

Types of Chemical Explosions

Two Phases of Explosions

Categories of Explosions

Yield vs. Order

Improvised Explosive Devices

Letter and Package Bombs

Explosives Under ATF Jurisdiction

6 Nuclear Terrorism

Definition of Radioactive Material
History of Radiation
Atomic Structure
Nuclear Fission
Types of Radiation
Measurements of Radioactivity
Biological Effects of Nuclear Explosions
Effects of Nuclear Explosions

7 Incendiary Terrorism

What is Arson?
The Firefighter's Role
History of Incendiary Terrorist Incidents
Types of Incendiary Devices
Chemistry of Fire and Fire Behavior
Clues to Arson and Terrorism
Fire Causes

8 Monitoring and Detection Equipment for Terrorist Agents

pH
Monitoring for Oxygen Levels
Monitoring for Flammable Atmospheres
Monitoring Toxic Atmospheres
Gas Chromatography/Mass Spectrometry
Colorimetric Sampling Tubes
Chemical Agent Detectors
Direct-Read Instruments
Test Kits
Test Strips
Agent Characteristics for Monitoring
Biological Agent Detectors
Radiation Detection Equipment
Air Monitoring During Terrorist Incidents

9 Personnel Protective Equipment (PPE) and Decontamination for Terrorist Agents

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Respiratory Protection
- Body Protection
- PPE Required for Protection from Specific Agents
- Decontamination
- Skin Decontamination Solutions and Agents
- Equipment Decontamination Solutions and Agents
- Decontamination Corridor Set-Up

10 Tactics for Terrorism: “The Rules Have Changed”

- Approaching the Scene
- Establishing Scene Control
- Identifying the Hazards
- Public Protection Options
- Managing the Incident
- Incident Operations
- Triage, Treatment, and Transport
 - On-Scene Triage
 - Treatment
 - Transportation
- Preparing the Hospitals
- Fighting Fires Involving Chemical Agents
- Investigating the Crime
- Termination of the Incident
- Developing a Plan
- Resources
 - Department of Energy Nuclear Emergency Search Team (NEST)
 - FEMA’s Urban Search & Rescue (US&R) Program
 - Medical Strike Force Teams
 - FBI Explosives Unit — Bomb Data Center
 - U.S. Army Soldier Systems Command (SBCCOM)
 - U.S. Coast Guard Strike Force
 - National Guard Rapid Assessment and Initial Detection Teams (RAID)
 - Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR)

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