



Introduction — Terrorism

Terrorism is the use of force or violence against persons or property, in violation of the criminal laws of the United States for purposes of intimidation, coercion or ransom. Terrorist acts can range from a bombing, to an attack with biological or chemical agents.

Americans used to think that terrorism could not affect them if they did not travel overseas. However, events in recent years have brought the threat of terrorism closer to home. The World Trade Center bombing in 1993 revealed America's vulnerability to terrorism, but the bombing of the Alfred Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in 1995 brought terrorism to America's heartland.

Terrorist incidents are investigated by the U.S. Department of Justice's Terrorism and Violent Crime section. The Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Central Intelligence Agency are also involved in the fight against terrorism. In the event of a terrorist attack, community and federal agencies respond to the disaster, assessing the situation and assisting as they would with any other type of disaster.

This chapter presents some information provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) about terrorism and offers some advice for how community leaders can prepare for and respond to terrorism.

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