The Facts About "Dirty Bombs"

By ACSH Staff — June 17, 2005

Introduction

Of all the possible types of terrorist attacks, those involving radioactivity are among the most feared. One type of attack that involves radioactivity is the use of a radiological dispersal device (RDD) or dirty bomb. Misconceptions about dirty bombs may lead people to be more anxious than the facts justify and might even prompt some people to take inappropriate actions in the event of a dirty bomb explosion.

This report by the American Council on Science and Health summarizes the scientific facts about radiological dispersal devices what they are, how they might be made, the possible health and economic consequences of an attack, the actions that citizens should and should not take if a radiological attack occurs, and the types of policy changes that may need to be considered to facilitate prevention of radiological attacks and recovery from them. The principal source of information for this booklet was a technical manuscript entitled Radiological Terrorism, written by Dr. P. Andrew Karam of the Rochester Institute of Technology. Additional information sources are listed at the end of this report.

Click here for more info on co-author P. Andrew Karam and his work on radiation safety. 

Related Publications

A Citizen's Guide to Terrorism Preparedness and Response:  

New Yorker's Guide to Terrorism Preparedness and Response  

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