

# HOMELAND SECURITY ADVISORY SYSTEM

The Homeland Security Advisory System was designed to provide a comprehensive means to disseminate information regarding the risk of terrorist acts to federal, state, and local authorities and to the American people. This system provides warnings in the form of a set of graduated “Threat Conditions” that increase as the risk of the threat increases. At each threat condition, federal departments and agencies would implement a corresponding set of “Protective Measures” to further reduce vulnerability or increase response capability during a period of heightened alert.

Although the Homeland Security Advisory System is binding on the executive branch, it is voluntary to other levels of government and the private sector. There are five threat conditions, each identified by a description and corresponding color.

The greater the risk of a terrorist attack, the higher the threat condition. Risk includes both the probability of an attack occurring and its potential gravity.

The Attorney General, in consultation with the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security, assigns the threat conditions. These threat conditions may be assigned for the entire nation, or they may be set for a particular geographic area or industrial sector. Assigned threat conditions will be reviewed at regular intervals to determine whether adjustments are warranted.

## Threat Conditions and Associated Protective Measures

There is always a risk of a terrorist threat. Each threat condition assigns a level of alert appropriate to the increasing risk of terrorist attacks. Beneath each threat condition are some suggested protective measures that the government and the public can take, recognizing that the heads of federal departments and agencies are responsible for developing and implementing appropriate agency-specific Protective Measures:



### Low Condition (Green)

This condition is declared when there is a low risk of terrorist attacks. Federal departments and agencies will consider the following protective measures:

- Refine and exercise prearranged protective measures;
- Ensure personnel receive proper training on the Homeland Security Advisory System and specific prearranged department or agency protective measures; and
- Institute a process to assure that all facilities and regulated sectors are regularly assessed for vulnerabilities to terrorist attacks, and all reasonable measures are taken to mitigate these vulnerabilities.

#### Members of the public:

- ☐ Can develop a household disaster plan and assemble a disaster supply kit. (See “Emergency Planning and Disaster Supplies Kit” brochures).



### Guarded Condition (Blue)

This condition is declared when there is a general risk of terrorist attacks. In addition to the measures taken in the previous threat condition, federal departments and agencies will consider the following protective measures:

- Check communications with designated emergency response or command locations;

- Review and update emergency response procedures; and
- Provide the public with any information that would strengthen its ability to act appropriately.

#### Members of the public:

In addition to the actions taken for the previous threat condition, can:

- ☐ Update their disaster supply kit;
- ☐ Review their household disaster plan;
- ☐ Hold a household meeting to discuss what members would do and how they would communicate in the event of an incident;
- ☐ Develop a more detailed household communication plan;
- ☐ Apartment residents should discuss with building managers steps to be taken during an emergency; and
- ☐ People with special needs should discuss their emergency plans with friends, family or employers.



### Elevated Condition (Yellow)

An Elevated Condition is declared when there is a significant risk of terrorist attacks. In addition to the measures taken in the previous threat conditions, federal departments and agencies will consider the following protective measures:

- Increase surveillance of critical locations;
- Coordinate emergency plans with nearby jurisdictions as appropriate;
- Assess whether the precise characteristics of the threat require the further refinement of prearranged protective measures; and
- Implement, as appropriate, contingency and emergency response plans.

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## Members of the public:

In addition to the actions taken for the previous threat conditions, can:

- Be observant of any suspicious activity and report it to authorities;
- Contact neighbors to discuss their plans and needs;
- Check with school officials to determine their plans for an emergency and procedures to reunite children with parents and caregivers; and
- Update the household communication plan.



## High Condition (Orange)

**A** High Condition is declared when there is a high risk of terrorist attacks. In addition to the measures taken in the previous threat conditions, federal departments and agencies will consider the following protective measures:

- Coordinate necessary security efforts with federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, National Guard or other security and armed forces;
- Take additional precautions at public events, possibly considering alternative venues or even cancellation;
- Prepare to execute contingency procedures, such as moving to an alternate site or dispersing the workforce; and
- Restrict access to a threatened facility to essential personnel only.

## Members of the public:

In addition to the actions taken for the previous threat conditions, can:

- Review preparedness measures (including evacuation and sheltering) for potential terrorist

actions including chemical, biological, and radiological attacks;

- Avoid high profile or symbolic locations; and
- Exercise caution when traveling.



## Severe Condition (Red)

**A** Severe Condition reflects a severe risk of terrorist attacks. Under most circumstances, the protective measures for a Severe Condition are not intended to be sustained for substantial periods of time. In addition to the protective measures in the previous threat conditions, federal departments and agencies also will consider the following general measures:

- Increase or redirect personnel to address critical emergency needs;
- Assign emergency response personnel and preposition and mobilize specially trained teams or resources;
- Monitor, redirect, or constrain transportation systems; and
- Close public and government facilities not critical for continuity of essential operations, especially public safety.

## Members of the public:

In addition to the actions taken for the previous threat conditions, can:

- Avoid public gathering places such as sports arenas, holiday gatherings, or other high risk locations;
- Follow official instructions about restrictions to normal activities;
- Contact employer to determine status of work;
- Listen to the radio and TV for possible advisories or warnings; and
- Prepare to take protective actions such as sheltering-in-place or evacuation if instructed to do so by public officials.

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