

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 and other threats to and/or against 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.

Threat conditions are assigned by the Attorney General in consultation with the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security. 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. Members of the public can:

- Develop a household disaster plan and assemble a disaster supply (72 hour) kit.
- Develop a year's supply of water, food, sanitary need, medical needs and fuel where possible.

Guarded Condition (Blue)

This condition is declared when there is a general risk of terrorist attacks. Members of the public, in addition to the actions taken for the previous threat condition, can:

- Update their disaster supply (72 hour) 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. Members of the public, in addition to the actions taken for the previous threat condition, 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 care givers; and
- Update the household communication plan.

High Condition (Orange)

A High Condition is declared when there is a high risk of terrorist attacks. 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 or nuclear 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. 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.