

DIRTY BOMB FACT SHEET

What is a dirty bomb?

A dirty bomb combines explosives, such as dynamite, with radioactive materials in the form of a powder or pellets. Most of the radioactive materials are found in highly secured areas such as nuclear power plants and in nuclear weapons sites. Since it is difficult to obtain these materials, most dirty bombs are created from low-level radioactive sources, which are found in hospitals, on construction sites, and at food irradiation plants.

How can a dirty bomb be dangerous?

It depends on the level of radioactive source used. If it were a low-level radioactive source, the primary danger would be the blast itself. It is hard to determine how much radiation is present, if the radiation source is unknown.

What should I do if I think I have been exposed following an explosion?

Since, radiation cannot be seen, smelled, felt or tasted by humans, it is hard to determine at the scene of explosion whether or not radioactive materials were used. If a blast has occurred and you are not too severely injured, you should leave the area quickly on foot, go inside the nearest building, remove your clothes quickly and wash your entire body with soap and water. If your eyes are burning or vision is blurred, rinse your eyes with plain water for 10 to 15 minutes. If you wear contact lenses, remove them before rinsing. Place your contaminated clothes and contact lenses into a plastic bag and seal. Place the bag into a second plastic bag and seal. Keep tuned to television and radio stations to receive information updates on what is happening and what to do. **Call 911 for medical attention right away and removal of the contaminated items. Do not drive yourself to the hospital as you may become very ill on your way.**

Where can I get more information on a dirty bomb?

www.bt.cdc.gov/radiation
www.dshs.state.tx.us

Source of information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)