

ESP FOCUS

Public Environments

WHEN THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS IN PUBLIC PLACES



Since childhood we have been taught how to “**Stop, Drop and Roll**” for fires and to “**Drop, Cover and Hold**” for earthquakes. Also we may have been taught other emergency steps for various natural disasters in our community. Our concentration, until

now, has been on what to do in the places where we spend most of our time: at home, school, and work.

The era of terrorism presents us two new challenges. One challenge is that large, crowded public places may be specifically targeted for attacks. Terrorism experts tell us that certain types of targets—airports, religious facilities, shopping malls, amusement parks and sporting events—may be singled out. This is because many people could be hurt at once and because those locations symbolize American culture. Over the two years since the World Trade Center attacks, many of these targets have been strengthened.

Our other challenge is that terrorists rely on shock and surprise. Remember, they want to create the most possible publicity for their social, political or religious causes. They hope that people will forget everything they know about how to react in an emergency and panic instead. So it is wise for us to think how we will transfer what we have learned over the years to emergencies that occur suddenly in crowded, public locations.

Terrorists want to disrupt our daily lives. Let's not give them that satisfaction. Continue to live your life, but be alert and aware of your surroundings.

TAKE ACTION

On the other side of this sheet, you will find some suggestions for taking the “terror” out of a terrorism attack in a public place. We are each equipped with powerful tools against terrorism: our eyes, our ears, and our knowledge of life-saving behavior in an emergency.

LEARN MORE

Knowledge is power. The more you understand about the behavior of crowds in emergencies, the better you can protect yourself and family from danger.

CHECK THESE WEBSITES

www.dhs.gov (United States Department of Homeland Security)

www.redcross.org (American Red Cross)

www.cert-la.com/education/Terrorism.htm (Community Emergency Response Team)



N O V E M B E R

www.espfocus.org

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

The focus of these suggestions is to draw on all the common sense and life-saving tips we have learned over the years about how to respond to earthquakes and other natural events.

WHEREVER YOU ARE, STOP, LOOK, THINK AND ACT

STOP

When you realize something dangerous is happening, resist the urge to panic and run. Wait a moment to get your bearings and to understand what is going on.

LOOK

Look around you. Where is the source of the problem? What is your most immediate source of danger: broken glass, fire, other people running without thinking, smoke? Where are your safest exits? Are you actually hurt or just really frightened? Are there people around you who need help?

THINK

Remember all the things you have learned about safe behavior in emergencies.

- If there is debris falling, **drop** down; **take cover** under something sturdy, and **hold on** to something with one hand while protecting your head and neck with the other.
- If there is smoke, stay near the floor.
- If you need to evacuate, look for marked exits and don't use elevators.

You know these things; call on them when you need them. Pay attention to what is happening. Make a quick plan to protect yourself and move away from the danger.

ACT

All this may take only seconds; but it could save your life and the lives of others. By pausing first to stop, look and think, you can act with a clear goal in mind. Your decisive action and calmness may help others to overcome anxiety and also act appropriately.

SPECIAL TIPS:

If you are at a shopping mall:

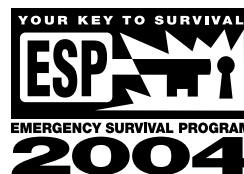
- Look out for broken glass from store fronts. If you are inside a store, take cover until things settle down, and then assess what has happened. If you smell something odd, cover your nose and mouth with a cloth. Most malls have well-trained security forces and they have plans in place for most emergencies, including terrorist attacks. They will probably use a public address system to give you specific, life-saving instructions. Most also have emergency lighting that will come on, even if it takes a few minutes. **If you need to evacuate, use only marked exits, avoid elevators, and follow the instructions of security officials.** Carry small children so that they can't be overtaken by the movement of a crowd.

If you are at a sports arena, theater, or religious facility:

- If there's an earthquake, explosion, or even a shooting, get down between the rows of seats, and drop, cover and hold until things settle down. If you smell something strange, cover your nose and mouth with a cloth. If you smell smoke or see fire, listen for warnings or instructions over the public address system before choosing a direction to evacuate. Carry small children so that they can't be overtaken by the movement of a crowd. Be careful of bottlenecks at exit points.

If you are at an airport:

- American airports have been the focus of special security planning by government officials for years. Very well-trained security officials have detailed plans for all kinds of emergencies, and will give travelers and airport employees specific instructions. Follow their directions, and use all the power of your mind to avoid panic and encourage others to act appropriately. Never leave your luggage or personal items unattended. If you see something that seems suspicious, tell a security officer.



This focus sheet is produced as part of the Emergency Survival Program (ESP). ESP is an awareness campaign designed to increase home, neighborhood, business and school emergency preparedness. ESP was developed by the County of Los Angeles. The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) and representatives from Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Mono, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, and Ventura counties, Southern California Edison, the Southern California Earthquake Center and the American Red Cross assist in the development of campaign materials and coordination of the campaign.