SECURITY: MAKING AMERICA SAFER

Background/Overview

On the morning of April 19, 1995, Timothy McVeigh parked a moving truck carrying 4,800 pounds of explosives on the north side of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, exited the truck, and ran to his getaway car. At 9:02 a.m., the bomb exploded, killing 168 men, women, and children. Today, this scenario would not have been possible due to security protocols in place at all federally owned or leased facilities. Unfortunately, prior to 1995, these security standards did not exist. This all changed after the Oklahoma City bombing.

Securing Federal Facilities

To prevent additional attacks against the government and its facilities, on April 20, 1995, President Clinton directed the Department of Justice (DOJ) to assess the vulnerability of federal facilities and recommend minimum security standards. The U.S. Marshal Service (USMS) was chosen to spearhead this study due to their expertise with handling court security. With a deadline of just 60 days to submit a report of their findings, the USMS created a Standards Committee and Profile Committee for assistance. The Standards Committee, composed of security specialists and representatives from the General Services Administration (GSA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), U.S. Secret Service, Social Security Administration, State Department and the Department of Defense, was charged with identifying, evaluating, and proposing security standards. Members of the Profile Committee, made up of USMS and GSA security specialists, were responsible for conducting inspections at federal facilities to see what security measures were in place and how to upgrade those facilities with the proposed security standards.

In June 1995, the U.S. Department of Justice published Vulnerability Assessment of Federal Facilities, which outlined the findings of the Standards and Profile Committees. The recommendations included changes to security in four main areas.

- Perimeter Security – To prevent unauthorized vehicles from parking too close to the building, as in the case of the Oklahoma City bombing, control of where employees and visitors park, adequate lighting, closed circuit television monitoring and the addition of physical barriers need to be implemented.
- Entry Security – The way people and packages enter the building needs to be controlled. This may include the addition of x-ray screening of mail and packages and use of magnetometers at public entrances.
- Interior Security – An emergency plan needs to be in place for all occupants in the building in case of a threat and employees and visitors need to be easily identified. The location of day care centers needs to be evaluated based on threat factors.
• Security Planning – Planning for security standards needs to be on-going and include intelligence sharing, security awareness training and tenant assignment, based on security needs. Due to the enormous amount of injuries caused by glass shards, the installation of security window film for shatter protection is also recommended for all facilities.

Not all federal buildings require the same type of security standards; therefore, in the report, five security levels were developed based on staffing size, types of agencies, and public access. A Level 1 facility (military recruiting office housed alone) requires the least amount of security standards, with a Level 5 demanding the most, such as the Pentagon.(1)

On October 19, 1995, President Clinton issued Executive Order 12977, creating the Interagency Security Committee (ISC) to continue the work that was started with the Vulnerability Assessment of Federal Facilities study and its mission to protect the safety of all federal facilities and its tenants. Immediately, the task of this committee was to address security concerns and implement the new standards recommended to existing and future federal facilities. The committee consists of security specialists and executives from 53 federal agencies and departments.(2)

**Regulation of Ammonium Nitrate**

Besides concern over the lack of security at federal facilities, the easy access to ammonium nitrate, one of the components used in the bomb, was troubling. To combat this issue, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) partnered with The Fertilizer Institute (TFI) and other agriculture industry members and launched the “Be Aware for America” program in 1997. The voluntary program encourages any suppliers of ammonium nitrate to report suspicious activities or theft of the chemical to the ATF. The program expanded in 1998 to “Be Secure for America” and included tips on securing ammonium nitrate storage facilities. In 2004, “America’s Security Begins with You” was implemented and includes a web-based security vulnerability assessment tool that can be used to determine the security of a facility. The latest program also recommends keeping records of customers for a period of two years.(3)

In 2007, an interim final rule establishing the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards (CFATS) was issued by the Department of Homeland Security. This rule allows the Secretary of Homeland Security to determine which facilities, based on risk factors, need to adhere to regulatory security requirements. This rule does not include the regulation of the sale or transfer of ammonium nitrate, which is addressed in the Secure Handling of Ammonium Nitrate law.

The Secure Handling of Ammonium Nitrate (Section 563 of P.L. 110-161), enacted by Congress in 2007, authorized the Department of Homeland Security to regulate the sale and transfer of ammonium nitrate. However, the rules for these regulations have yet to be approved; therefore, the Department of Homeland Security currently has no statutory authority to regulate the sale and transfer of ammonium nitrate.(4)

**Protecting People First Foundation**

In the Department of Justice’s Vulnerability Assessment of Federal Facilities report, the installation of security window glass was recommended in federal facilities due to the amount of injuries and possible deaths caused by flying glass. This issue gained momentum beginning in 1999, when Eric Cote and Ken D’Ambrosio started a communications firm and their first client was Guardian Bastille, a distributor and installer of security window film.
While researching the subject of flying glass safety, Cote and D’Ambrosio selected a photograph that would instantly make people realize the importance of installing security film. That Pulitzer-prize winning photograph was of Oklahoma City firefighter Chris Fields holding one-year old Baylee Almon, who was killed in the bombing. In an effort to help their client, Guardian Bastelle, and make America safer, Cote and D’Ambrosio came up with an idea to start the Protecting People First Foundation. The mission of this foundation would be to create a national dialogue about the hazards of flying glass. Financial support from the protective glazing industry, insurance companies and unions representing federal employees was sought to fund the foundation.

Cote and D’Ambrosio decided that they would only embark on their crusade, if they had the approval and involvement of Aren Almon-Kok, mother of Baylee Almon, and firefighter Chris Fields. Aren gave her full support and agreed to become a spokesperson for the foundation to help honor Baylee’s memory and protect future lives. She wanted the picture of her daughter to be seen as a symbol of safety, rather than one of tragedy.

On March 22, 2000, Aren announced the creation of the Protecting People First Foundation on The Today Show in front of millions. After she made numerous appearances in the media and testified before Congress, federal officials began to take steps to install protective glazing on windows in child care facilities in federal buildings. Additionally, in response to the recommendations in the Vulnerability Assessment of Federal Facilities study and Aren’s campaign, the windows in the Pentagon underwent a major renovation. These changes are credited with helping save many lives during the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack.(5)

Objectives

• Students will learn what security measures were implemented after the Oklahoma City bombing.
• Students will discuss the security measures in place in 1995 and compare that to what they observe today in schools, airports, sporting events, buildings and other venues.
• Students will debate the issue of security versus liberty.

Procedure

• Share the security measures that were implemented in federal facilities after the Oklahoma City bombing, as well as the new awareness programs and regulations put in place for ammonium nitrate.
• Ask students to share any security measures they may encounter in their daily lives, such as metal detectors and school resource officers. Discuss why some schools or areas in the community may have more security precautions in place and if that is fair.
• Discuss the topic of security versus liberty. Have students debate the right of the government to impose laws that are created in the name of security versus individual rights.

Suggested Activities

• Research security measures, such as the USA PATRIOT Act, changes in air travel, metal detectors and placing officers in schools that were implemented after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack and the school shooting in Columbine. Create a blog where students can voice their opinions on the fairness of these measures, whether they infringe on personal liberties, and if they really create a safer environment.
• Create an online poll where students can vote on their top concern regarding security at school or in their community. Share the results and encourage students to post their thoughts on how to solve some of the issues.