

BRITISH COLUMBIA THREAT ADVISORY SYSTEM



Nationally, threat levels are assigned by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), in consultation with the Canadian Security and Intelligence Agency (CSIS). Threat levels may be assigned for the entire nation, or they may be set for a particular geographic area or infrastructure sector. Assigned threat levels will be reviewed at regular intervals to determine whether adjustments are warranted. In British Columbia (BC), RCMP “E” Division is responsible for providing threat advisories to provincial and local governments and to the residents of the province.

The BC Threat Advisory System (BCTAS) was designed to establish a standardized means to disseminate information regarding the risk of terrorist acts. Internal to the provincial government such information is disseminated through the Provincial Emergency Program (PEP) and Risk Management Branch (RMB). Although the BCTAS is binding on the provincial government, it is voluntary to other levels of government and the private sector.

This system provides warnings in the form of a set of graduated “threat levels” that increase as the risk of the threat increases. At each threat level, provincial ministries and agencies would implement a corresponding set of “protective measures” to further reduce vulnerability or increase response capability during a period of heightened alert.

There are four threat levels, each identified by a description. The greater the risk of a terrorist attack, the higher the threat level. The risk includes both the probability of an attack occurring and its potential gravity. While the BCTAS threat alert levels LOW, MEDIUM, HIGH and IMMEDIATE generally correspond to the related United States Department of Homeland Security alert conditions they have not been assigned a colour code.

United States Homeland Security Advisory System	British Columbia Threat Advisory System
SEVERE	IMMEDIATE
HIGH	HIGH
ELEVATED	MEDIUM
GUARDED	
LOW	LOW

Recognizing that much of the province is located within broadcast range of Washington State media, a comparative table of alert levels is provided.

Threat Levels and Associated Protective Measures

There is always a risk of a terrorist threat. Each threat level assigns a level of alert appropriate to the increasing risk of terrorist attacks. For each threat level there are suggested protective measures that the government and the public can take, recognizing that ministries and agencies are responsible for developing and implementing appropriate agency-specific protective measures:

LOW. This level is declared when there are vague and unconfirmed reports of an individual or group capable of performing acts of serious violence against BC residents or property but, to date, has confined its activities to countries other than Canada.

All levels of government should consider the following protective measures:

- refine and exercise prearranged protective measures;
- ensure personnel receive proper training on the BCTAS 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 emergency plan and assemble an emergency supply kit.

MEDIUM. Threat level MEDIUM is declared when there is a potential threat of a terrorist attack from an individual or group with the capability and the stated intent to commit acts of serious violence. Threat has not been assessed as credible and there is no intelligence/information which would indicate such an act is forthcoming.

In addition to the measures taken in the previous threat level, all levels of government should consider the following protective measures:

- check communications with designated emergency response or command locations;
- review and update emergency response procedures;
- provide the public with any information that would strengthen its ability to act appropriately;
- 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.

Members of the public, in addition to the actions taken for the previous threat level, can:

- update their emergency supply kit;
- review their household emergency 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;
- discuss steps to be taken during an emergency with apartment building managers;
- discuss the emergency plans of people with special need with friends, family or employers;
- be observant of any suspicious activity and report it to authorities;
- contact neighbours 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. A HIGH threat level is declared when there is a credible threat of terrorist attacks against people or property within British Columbia. While no specific target has been identified, intelligence confirms the individual or group possesses the capability and intends to carry out the threat – attack could occur anywhere.

In addition to the measures taken for the previous threat levels, all levels of government should consider the following protective measures:

- coordinate necessary security efforts with federal, provincial and local law enforcement agencies 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 levels, can:

- review preparedness measures (including evacuation and/or sheltering) for potential terrorist actions including chemical, biological, and radiological attacks;
- avoid high profile or symbolic locations; and
- exercise caution when traveling.

IMMINENT. A threat level IMMINENT reflects that an incident has occurred or there is an imminent threat of attack within the province of British Columbia, complete with specific times, locations and targets, which requires a response.

In addition to the protective measures implemented for the previous threat levels, all levels of governments should consider the following general measures:

- increase or redirect personnel to address critical emergency needs;
- assign emergency response personnel and pre-position 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 all actions previously taken 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/or 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.

Director
Provincial Emergency Program
British Columbia

March 2003