

# NATIONAL HOMELAND SECURITY THREAT LEVEL



# GUIDELINES

*Recommended Actions for  
Individuals, Families,  
Communities, Schools,  
Businesses and Government*





# **NATIONAL HOMELAND SECURITY Threat Level Guidelines**

## **User's Guide**

**The Homeland Security Threat Level Guidelines are designed to provide a comprehensive and effective means to disseminate information regarding the risk of terrorist acts to authorities, the people of the United States, State of Alabama and Tuscaloosa County.**

**The Homeland Security Advisory System has drawn controversy and criticism, yet no one is yet to come up with a better system. The current guidelines have been refined since they were first released by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. They now better reflect the recommended actions to be taken by individuals, families, communities, schools, business and government.**

**The guidelines consist of warnings and instructions in the form of a set of graduated *Threat Conditions* that increase or decrease as the risk of the threat rises or lowers. At each condition, a corresponding set of recommended actions to further reduce vulnerability or increase response capability during a period of heightened alert.**

**The system is intended to create a common vocabulary, context and structure for an ongoing discussion about the nature of the threats confronting us, and the appropriate protective measures that should be taken in response. It seeks to inform and facilitate decisions.**

**From lowest to highest the Threat Conditions correspond to various colors. They are:**

**Low=Green Guarded=Blue Elevated=Yellow High=Orange Severe=Red**

**The higher the Threat Condition, the greater the risk of terrorist attack. Risk is a function of the probability of an attack corresponding to the potential gravity of its effects. The**

**National Threat Level is assigned by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The system is based on a calculated assessment of risk, based on the quality of the threat information. This quality is based on (but not limited to) the credibility and degree of corroboration of the threat information. The assigned Threat Condition will be evaluated at regular intervals to determine if the level should be adjusted to better define the threat locally. Remember, assignment of a specific threat level does not mean there will or will not be a terrorist attack. The levels are only an indicator of risk.**

**In addition to the actions recommended in this pamphlet, individuals, businesses and organizations should incorporate standard safety plans and procedures. At home, have a safe place to go to shelter-in-place, a supply of non-perishable foods for self-sufficiency for 72-hours, a gallon of water per person/per day, a flashlight and a battery-powered radio. At work, develop a safety plan.**

---

# **Homeland Security Advisory System Guidelines**

**Below are the recommendations for responding to the various levels of terrorist threats. These are not requirements but are suggestions for Homeland Security.**

Risk of Attack	Action for Individuals, Families and Neighborhoods	Action for Businesses	Action for Schools
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>LOW</b> (Normal operating condition, no threats detected)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a disaster plan</li> <li>• Create a disaster kit</li> <li>• Make a plan for your pets if you need to evacuate</li> <li>• Explore volunteer opportunities and volunteer organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a written Emergency Response Plan to address all hazards and natural disasters</li> <li>• Develop an emergency communications</li> <li>• Develop a plan to relocate facilities if needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a written Emergency Response Plan to address all hazards and natural disasters to secure safety of students and faculty.</li> <li>• Create an emergency communications plan containing family contact numbers for students.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>GUARDED</b> (Received threats that do not warrant actions beyond normal liaison notifications. Agencies operate on normal day-to-day conditions.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow actions at lower level</li> <li>• Be alert to suspicious activity and report it</li> <li>• Store disaster supplies and replace outdated items</li> <li>• Develop an emergency communications plan with family and friends</li> <li>• Provide volunteer services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow actions at lower level</li> <li>• Be alert to suspicious activity and report it</li> <li>• Establish a dialogue with community leaders and organizations, emergency management, government agencies and utilities about disaster preparedness</li> <li>• Ensure emergency communications plan is updated and equipment is purchased</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow actions at lower level</li> <li>• Be alert to suspicious activity and report it</li> <li>• Conduct safety training and emergency drills following the school's written Emergency Response Plan</li> <li>• Ensure the emergency communication plan is updated</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ELEVATED</b> (Intelligence or an articulated threat indicates a potential for a terrorist incident. However, there is no credible threat.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow actions at lower levels</li> <li>• Be alert to suspicious activity and report it</li> <li>• Store disaster supplies and replace outdated items</li> <li>• Develop and emergency communications plan with family and friends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow actions at lower levels</li> <li>• Control parking, consider erecting barriers</li> <li>• Contact private security firm for security risk assessment and to determine availability of support</li> <li>• Be aware of suspicious packages</li> <li>• Identify visitors and their destination</li> <li>• Increase security for public events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow actions at lower levels</li> <li>• Ensure that all emergency supplies are stocked and ready</li> <li>• Routinely inspect interior and exterior of building</li> <li>• Be aware of suspicious packages</li> <li>• Identify visitors and their destination</li> <li>• Increase security at public events</li> </ul>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>HIGH</b> (A threat assessment indicates a potential threat is credible.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow actions at lower levels</li> <li>• Increase alertness to any suspicious activity and report it</li> <li>• Review your disaster plan</li> <li>• Exercise extra caution when traveling</li> <li>• Develop alternate routes to work or school</li> <li>• Continue volunteering</li> <li>• Be alert at public events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow actions at lower levels</li> <li>• Control entry to parking lot, consider erecting barriers</li> <li>• Restrict parking near building</li> <li>• Conduct random interior and exterior building checks</li> <li>• Limit visitors to essential functions only</li> <li>• Contact vendors and suppliers and identify their employees</li> <li>• Limit building entry points</li> <li>• Exercise extra caution when traveling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow actions at lower levels</li> <li>• Discuss school's written Emergency Response Plan with faculty and staff</li> <li>• Be prepared to alter or cancel school day and public activities</li> <li>• Provide security for traveling groups</li> <li>• Control entry to parking lot, consider erecting buildings</li> <li>• Restrict parking near building</li> <li>• Conduct random interior and exterior building checks</li> <li>• Limit visitors to essential functions</li> <li>• Increase security at public events</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SEVERE</b> (An incident has occurred or is imminent)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow actions at lower levels</li> <li>• Cancel any travel</li> <li>• Contact employer to determine operational status</li> <li>• Consider canceling attendance at public events</li> <li>• Monitor broadcast media for updated information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow actions at lower levels</li> <li>• Consider need for closing</li> <li>• Consider reducing work force to essential employees only</li> <li>• Be ready to work from an alternate site if evacuated</li> <li>• Monitor broadcast media for updated information</li> <li>• Increase 24/7 facility security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow actions at lower levels</li> <li>• Activate school Emergency Response Plan</li> <li>• Close school if recommended by authorities</li> <li>• Check all IDs and provide escorts for those entering building</li> <li>• Be prepared to evacuate</li> <li>• Ensure Emergency Alert Radio is operational</li> <li>• Monitor broadcast media</li> </ul>

# Government Response

Risk of Attack	Action
<b>LOW</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Develop and maintain Emergency Operations Plans and Standard Operating Procedures</b></li> <li>• <b>Conduct training and exercises</b></li> <li>• <b>Ensure communications capabilities and interoperability</b></li> </ul>
<b>GUARDED</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Follow actions at lower level</b></li> <li>• <b>Review physical security for all facilities</b></li> <li>• <b>Restrict unauthorized entry to sensitive areas</b></li> <li>• <b>Ensure all employees wear visible picture identification</b></li> <li>• <b>Be alert to suspicious activity and report it</b></li> </ul>
<b>ELEVATED</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Follow actions at lower levels</b></li> <li>• <b>Remind all personnel to be suspicious and inquisitive and maintain heightened awareness of people, vehicles and activities</b></li> <li>• <b>Increase spot checks of specific high-risk targets/facilities. Check for suspicious or unattended packages.</b></li> <li>• <b>Do not leave emergency response or other government vehicles unattended. If it is necessary to leave the vehicle, lock it and check the vehicle and its chassis underside before opening doors and starting engines.</b></li> <li>• <b>Move vehicles and objects (trashcans etc.) away from buildings.</b></li> <li>• <b>Lock and regularly inspect all buildings, rooms and storage areas not in use.</b></li> <li>• <b>Randomly inspect interior and exterior of buildings</b></li> <li>• <b>Inspect suspicious packages</b></li> </ul>
<b>HIGH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Follow actions at lower levels</b></li> <li>• <b>Limit access points to critical infrastructure and facilities to absolute minimum and strictly control entry procedures.</b></li> <li>• <b>Restrict parking near government buildings.</b></li> <li>• <b>Increase security patrols.</b></li> <li>• <b>Erect barriers and obstacles to control traffic flow at key facilities.</b></li> <li>• <b>Limit access of vendors and suppliers.</b></li> <li>• <b>Limit access to only a main entrance. Check all visitors' purpose, intent and identification. Ensure that contractors have valid work orders and employees are legitimate. Escort all visitors to sensitive facilities.</b></li> <li>• <b>Keep critical response vehicles in a secure area.</b></li> </ul>
<b>SEVERE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Follow actions at lower levels</b></li> <li>• <b>Keep all vehicles away from buildings</b></li> <li>• <b>Consider closing all government facilities to the public and/or reducing workforce to only critical personnel</b></li> <li>• <b>Search all briefcases, packages etc.</b></li> <li>• <b>Increase security patrols</b></li> </ul>

**The world has changed since September 11, 2001. We remain a Nation at risk to terrorist attacks and will remain at risk for the foreseeable future. At all Threat Conditions, we must remain vigilant, prepared, and ready to deter terrorist attacks.**

**For further information, download a copy of *Terrorism: Preparing for the Unexpected* at <http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/keepsafe/terrorism.pdf>.**

---