

Vehicle Ramming

Security Awareness for Soft Targets and Crowded Places

Public safety and law enforcement agencies are increasingly being targeted by terrorists and other malicious actors. Vehicle ramming incidents and the use of vehicles as weapons have become a significant threat to public safety and security. The use of vehicles as weapons is a tactic used by terrorists and other malicious actors to cause mass casualties and destruction. This guide provides security awareness information for soft targets and crowded places to help prevent and respond to vehicle ramming incidents.

- Reported theft of large or heavy-duty vehicles.
- Observed difficulty in explaining the planned use of a rented vehicle.
- Paying attention to vehicle rental discussion and insistence on a particular type of vehicle.
- Inappropriate requests for a valid driver's license or identification.
- Observed identification of family members or friends of heavy-duty vehicle operators.
- Leaving a parking lot standing in the same area over multiple days with no explanation.
- Unexplained use of binoculars, cameras, and recording devices.

What Should People Do in Case of a Vehicle

- Run to the nearest safe area while moving away from the source of hazard.
- If unable to avoid being trapped, get down on the ground and cover your head.
- If trapped, stay as low as possible, direct away from the source of hazard.
- Call 9-1-1 and remain alert for potential secondary attacks.
- Render first aid when safe to do so.
- Maintain situational awareness while providing assistance to others.

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Mitigation Strategies and Protective Measures

In designing and applying measures to mitigate against the risk of vehicle ramming attacks, it is important to balance the security requirements with the operational and functional needs associated with the typical user of the facility or venue. As a result, a mitigation strategy cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach, and instead must be tailored to the specific physical constraints and functional demands of a given location.



Physical Security

- Post signage relating to emergency entry and exit points, first-aid stations, and shelter locations.
- Define the perimeter and areas that require access control for pedestrians and vehicles.
- Restrict all vehicular traffic through controlled and secure “pedestrian-only” areas, including separate ingress and egress routes for delivery vehicles away from events.
- Use remote parking and shuttle services to keep vehicles away from critical assets or mass gatherings.
- Establish clear standoff zones. Bollards, heavy planters, and barricades can be used to increase standoff distances between large crowds and vehicles. It is important to ensure that these architectural solutions are appropriately sized, adequately anchored, and purposely reinforced against impact loads.
- Evaluate the need for vehicle barriers, considering passive barriers (fixed bollards, fences, jersey barriers, etc.) and/or active barriers (retractable bollards, rising wedges, etc.).
- If appropriate, pre-position heavy vehicles to serve as physical barriers around the perimeter of densely populated locations.



Access, Planning, and Personnel

- Review personnel files of recently terminated employees to determine whether they pose a security risk.
- Evaluate vehicle traffic patterns near the venue and implement strategies to reduce vehicle speeds and improve pedestrian safety.
- Conduct a site assessment prior to holding an event that identifies vulnerabilities. For example, the driver of the vehicle may not necessarily follow traffic rules (e.g., one-way street), which must be taken into account when developing a strategy.
- Devise credential systems that indicate areas of access and purpose of activity on the premises.
- Monitor all vehicles approaching an entrance or gathering of people for signs of threatening or suspicious behavior (e.g., unexpected truck traffic, unusual high speed, vehicles riding particularly low).
- Design a monitoring, surveillance, and inspection program that is consistent with venue operations and associated security requirements. If surveillance cameras are used, train personnel to interpret video footage and identify potential security-related events.

Additional Resources

- Hometown Security Initiative: <https://www.dhs.gov/hometown-security>
- Active Shooter Preparedness Program: <https://www.dhs.gov/active-shooter-preparedness>
- “If You See Something, Say Something®”: <https://www.dhs.gov/see-something-say-something>
- Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative: <https://nsi.ncirc.gov/>

Protective Security Advisors (PSAs) proactively engage with government partners and the private sector to protect critical infrastructure. For more information or to contact your local PSA, e-mail NICC@hq.dhs.gov