**Scope**

What to do when confronted with:

* Air attacks
* Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs or bombs)
* Depleted Uranium munitions
* Hand grenades
* Landmines and Unexploded Ordnance (UXO)
* Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs)
* Shootings
* Weapon finds

**Air attack**

*Risk of an air attack*

**Assess the threat of air attack:**

* Is an air attack likely?
* If there is an air attack, is it likely to be aimed at you?
* What are the likely targets of an air attack? Are any of them near you?
* If there is an air attack, what kind is it likely to be?
* In view of all the above, what security measures should you put in place? What kind of shelter do you need? If the risk of air attack is high, should you even be present in the area?

*During an air attack*

**Out in the open**

* Drop instantly to the ground. Lie completely flat.
* If it is possible to roll or crawl into a ditch, into a building or behind a wall without raising your profile, do so. Otherwise, remain still. Most blast and shrapnel fly upwards from the site of the explosion in a cone shape, so your best defence is to stay as low as possible. In this way it is often possible to survive explosions that are very close by.
* Observe what is happening.
* Do not move until you are confident that the attack has finished. Beware: it may appear to have finished when in fact a second wave of attacks may be about to start. You may therefore have to wait a long time before you can be reasonably confident that no more attacks are coming.

**In a building**

Drop to the ground and move away from windows. Many injuries and deaths are caused by shattering glass. If it is safe to do so, move into the pre-designated shelter, without raising your profile.

**In a vehicle**

* Stop, get out and run for cover as far away from the vehicle as possible. Do not try to return to the vehicle and drive away, until you are sure the shelling/bombing has stopped. If you do not have time to stop the vehicle and run, make a U-turn and zig-zag rather than drive in a straight line.
* If the threat of an air attack exists, your ears may be your best warning mechanism. Therefore, you should drive with at least one window down and without music in the vehicle.

**Helicopter attacks**

A helicopter attack is fundamentally different from an attack by an airplane because the helicopter pilot is better able to see you. If you see a helicopter, continue driving or walking as you were before. Any change in behaviour could be seen as an aggressive move and may prompt an attack. Above all else, do not wave at the helicopter or attempt to establish contact.

The exception to this is if the helicopter is clearly about to attack you. In such cases, follow the procedures for if it was an airplane. Get out of your vehicle, run away and/or attempt to find a safe cover.

**Bombs & Explosions**

Bombs or Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) have become an increasingly significant threat. IEDs can come in any shape and form, from letters to car bombs, and their destructive power is equally varied, from minor injury to major structural damage and mass casualties.

The most common type of IEDs are:

* Roadside IEDs – usually remotely detonated bombs designed to take out convoys of vehicles.
* VBIED – Vehicle-Borne IED or ‘car bomb’, where a vehicle is packed with explosives to cause massive damage.
* BBIED – Body-Borne IED or ‘suicide bomber’.
* Package-type IED – letter or parcel bomb designed to kill or maim the person who is opening it.

IEDs are usually targeted at specific locations (government buildings, military bases, etc.) and high-profile individuals, but in some contexts they are deliberately detonated in public places in order to create mass casualties, widespread destruction and terror.

**Minimising the risk**

In environments where IED incidents occur, there remains a significant risk of getting caught up in these attacks. Follow this basic guidance:

* Try to understand the particular nature of the IED threats that exist in your area; where they tend to occur, what type of delivery method is used, who the target is and what the impact has been.
* Identify and avoid high-risk locations such as restaurants, bars, diplomatic areas, or any places that are known to be frequented by people who could be likely targets.
* When travelling, keep your distance from military vehicles. Slow down and let them get well ahead of you.

If there is a risk that humanitarian agencies may be the direct target of an IED attack, then you should:

* Be alert, even suspicious, and report the unusual. Bomb attacks are usually well planned, which requires a lengthy period of surveillance of a target. For example, you may notice the same vehicle parked for extended periods of time near a particular location.
* Adopt a low profile and try to vary your routes and routines.
* Strengthen your site security measures, according to the specific threat. For example, a car bomb threat may require you to prevent vehicles from coming within a certain distance of any location regularly used by staff, vehicle searches may need to be conducted by guards, and staff may be required to check their own vehicles for bombs. All of these measures require specialist advice and training.
* Update and rehearse your contingency plans.

**Surviving an incident**

If you are in the vicinity when an explosion occurs, and having survived the blast itself, you should be alert to additional risks that may arise in the immediate aftermath. For example, the initial explosion may be followed by a second bomb meant to cause additional casualties among the police, emergency services and the gathering crowd.

Also, following an explosion there will be a great deal of confusion, and the resulting panic and fear may cause people to react aggressively towards those around them; security forces, fearing that they are under attack, may open fire randomly at civilians, or survivors and onlookers may become angry and focus their aggression against you. Therefore, it is important to move away from the area as quickly as possible.

Try to keep in mind the following basic guidance, according to your position at the time.

If you are on foot when an explosion occurs:

* Drop instantly to the ground and lie flat, as most blast debris and shrapnel flies upwards from the explosion.
* Wait for the effects of the blast to subside and, if possible, move to better shelter – a ditch, a building or behind a wall.
* Observe the reactions of the people around you to determine what is happening.
* After the explosion, quickly leave the area as soon as you feel it is safe to move.
* Report the incident to your base.

If you are in a vehicle when an explosion occurs:

* If you are able to, or if you feel that you might be the target, drive away as fast as is safely possible.
* If the route is blocked, stop the vehicle, get out quickly and lie flat on the ground, away from the vehicle.
* Once you are at a safe distance, stop and report the incident to your base.

If you are in a building when an explosion occurs:

* Drop to the floor, move away from windows and take cover under a table.
* Wait for the effects of the blast to subside, and if it is safe to do so move into an inner room or a corridor that is better protected than other rooms.
* Stay away from windows and resist the temptation to look out.
* Evacuate the building when it is judged safe to do so or when requested by the authorities.

**Responding to a bomb threat**

A bomb threat may arise as a result of a telephone call or a written message, or by the discovery of a suspicious package. If you are alerted to a possible bomb threat, it’s important to treat it seriously, even if you suspect it might be a hoax. Although very few bomb threats turn out to be real, it is vital that you don’t make any assumptions. You must act immediately; there have been cases where slow reactions have resulted in additional deaths and injuries. On discovery of a bomb threat, you must do the following:

* Alert others. Report it immediately to your line manager
* Do not wait for confirmation; evacuate the building and move to a safe distance, which will be hard to judge as it depends on the size of the bomb. For example, it is recommended that you are at least 100 metres away from a small parcel size bomb, 400 metres away from a car bomb and more than one kilometre away from a truck bomb.
* If you find a suspicious-looking item, do not interfere with it; move away and call for specialist assistance.
* Do not use radios or cell phones in the immediate vicinity of the device.
* Once out of the building, call the police or appropriate authorities.
* Do not re-enter the building until instructed by your line manager or authorities that all is clear.

**Depleted Uranium munitions**

In recent conflicts, such as in Iraq and Kosovo, depleted uranium (DU) munitions have been used. These are armour-piercing devices usually fired from tanks, aircraft or helicopters. The most commonly used DU munitions are called penetrators and have the size and shape of a large cigar. They do not explode on impact - instead they ignite and burn through the armour. In the process, a very fine uranium-oxide dust is dispersed. Most of this dust will settle within 50 metres of the point of impact. Therefore, the immediate vicinity of armoured vehicles and other targets could have high concentrations of uranium-oxide dust. But it is also possible that the dust will be carried further by the wind.

**Avoiding Depleted Uranium Munitions**

Potentially depleted uranium has both chemical and radiological toxicity with the two important target organs being the kidneys and the lungs. As yet, little is known with certainty about effects of inhaling, ingesting or other exposure to DU dust. There have been claims of a significant increase in certain types of cancers and other health problems, but these have not been conclusively verified by experts.

The best advice is therefore to keep away from any military target that might possibly have been hit by DU munitions. Do not explore burnt-out tanks or vehicles. Do not pick up shrapnel, spent rounds or other debris (such as military equipment).

**Hand grenades**

A hand grenade is a small, hand-thrown bomb. It explodes either immediately or after a few seconds. The blast from hand grenades tends to travel upwards and outwards, in shape of an inverted cone.

If a grenade is thrown near you, the following procedure reduces the risk of harm in many circumstances. You should make a rapid judgement to decide the best course of action.

* Shout ‘grenade’ and throw yourself flat on the ground or into a ditch immediately, or dive behind some form of cover. Do not run for cover!
* The crucial action is to drop to the ground, since the blast and shrapnel from grenades typically rise in a cone shape. For this reason it is sometimes possible to escape injury by lying flat, even if you are near the grenade.
* If there is time, lie with your head furthest from the grenade, and your legs crossed, pointing towards the grenade. It is also useful to cover your ears.
* Others should drop instantly to the ground in the same way as soon as they hear someone shout “Grenade!”
* If the grenade fails to detonate within 30 seconds, crawl away on your stomach until you are in a safe area, with solid cover between you and the grenade.

**After the explosion**

* Ensure no-one approaches the grenade.
* When you are confident that there is no further immediate threat, give first aid to those who need it. Bear in mind that in some circumstances a grenade may be followed by other violence, in which case you should leave the area quickly.
* Call for medical help
* Report the incident to your manager.
* Report the incident to the appropriate authorities.

**Landmines & UXOs**

Landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXOs) in conflict and post-conflict environments are widespread and extremely dangerous. The social and humanitarian effects of these weapons are far-reaching, as they remain long after the conflict has ceased or the fighting has moved elsewhere.

Landmines traditionally have been used as part of a battlefield strategy to defend military positions and key socio-economic targets (e.g., water and power supplies). Their principal aim is to delay the enemy’s movements, deny them access to certain areas, and in some cases force them through a certain route. Nowadays landmines are used more indiscriminately, in ways that leave no record or knowledge of the areas affected.

Landmines are frequently scattered or laid in civilian areas to dislocate communities and disrupt economic activities, targeting agricultural land, water supplies, religious buildings and village paths. In areas where fighting has occurred there will be various types of unexploded or abandoned military ordnance. Ordnance that either has been fired but failed to detonate, or has been left to deteriorate, is very unstable and could explode at any time.

**Types of devices**

There are essentially two types of landmines:

* **Anti-personnel mines.** Small in size, these are designed to injure or kill, or put a vehicle out of action. They are detonated by direct pressure or through a tripwire. Anti-personnel mines are categorised as either blast or fragmentation mines. Blast mines are designed to explode when a predetermined pressure (as little as 3kg) is applied to the device. The explosive blast of the mine is what causes injuries or death. Fragmentation mines are detonated when a thin wire or filament is tripped or broken, or when pressure is applied to the mine. On detonation these mines scatter small metal fragments and it is these fragments that cause injuries or death. Most anti-personnel mines are buried in the ground, but the ‘bounding’ fragmentation mine, once triggered, is thrown up to about waist height and then explodes, sending fragments in all directions. Some other fragmentation mines are directional and are placed above ground, even in trees. Used primarily as an ambush weapon, these are usually set off by a tripwire or fired by hand using a command wire. On detonation, a close pattern of metal fragments is directed at the target.
* **Anti-tank mines.** Larger in size and harbouring more explosive power, anti-tank mines are designed to disable heavy armoured vehicles, but will destroy normal vehicles. Although typically requiring a heavy weight (in excess of 100kg) in order to be activated, over time they can become unstable and more easily triggered. Anti-tank mines are usually laid underground on main vehicle routes. As they are more easily identified than anti-personnel mines they are often fitted with other devices to prevent them being removed or disarmed.

Other devices include:

* **Unexploded ordnance (UXO)**

This relates to any munitions, ranging from aircraft bombs to bullets, that have been discharged but have not exploded, or have not been discharged but still remain live. Although generally visible, they can be partly or even wholly buried. UXOs can be extremely unstable, particularly over time, and can explode simply when touched.

* **Booby traps**

These are familiar, harmless objects transformed into explosive devices, often to deadly effect. A booby trap can be attached to more or less anything – for example, a door, a toy, a piece of clothing or a well or water pump. When disturbed or used, these everyday items trigger an explosive device.

**Minimising the risk**

If you are operating in an area where landmines or unexploded ordnance may be present, you should adhere to the following basic guidance:

* Gather information from a wide range of sources (other organisations, de-mining organisations, authorities, hospitals, etc.) on the likely presence of landmines and UXOs in the area.
* Consult the local population on the location of known mines, but take their advice with caution. Misconceptions about the safety or otherwise of specific areas are common. If you are in any doubt, turn back.
* Contact local de-mining organisations, if present, for specific mines awareness information regarding the types of devices you will find in your area of operation, where mines are located, how to identify mined areas, and who to contact should you find yourself or others in a minefield.
* Never travel in high-risk areas unless absolutely necessary. Always avoid old military positions or abandoned buildings: they are almost certain to have been mined.
* Keep to well-used roads or tracks. Never drive vehicles off a road or track. The military often clear roads and tracks of mines, but rarely the verges, so avoid these as well as lay-bys and other roadside parking places.
* If walking in an unknown area, keep in single file following the same path as the lead person. If practical, maintain at least ten metres between each person, as this would limit casualties in the event of an explosion.
* Local methods of marking known or suspected mined areas will vary from place to place. Familiarise yourself with the official minefield markers used in your locality. They may be warning triangles, signs, painted stones or other less visible markers. Be aware that over time these could have fallen down or become overgrown if not maintained.
* Do not approach, touch or attempt to move any suspicious object. Mines and unexploded ordnance come in all shapes and sizes. If you notice a mine, mark the location clearly and inform the authorities and/or a mine clearance agency.

**Recognising mined areas**

Mine warfare is based upon the principle of unsuspecting victims activating concealed devices. This of course means that you will not see the mine until it is too late. However, there may be signs or clues as to the presence of mines. Indicators may include:

* Evidence of previous fighting – e.g., battlefield relics such as bunkers, barbed wire, ammunition dumps, helmets, destroyed military vehicles, abandoned weapons, etc.
* Traces of previous explosions, such as small round craters and freshly disturbed ground.
* Animal remains, scraps of footwear or similar signs that something or someone has fallen victim to a mine.
* Abandoned buildings and vehicles, or overgrown and uncultivated fields.
* Out-of-place colours or shapes. Be suspicious of exposed circular rims and metallic or plastic surfaces. But remember that mines can be any shape and made of any material, including wood.
* Bushes, branches or objects that seem out of place.
* Taut, partly buried or tangled thin-gauge wire or filament (similar to fishing line). Never pull on exposed wires.

**If you enter a mined area**

You are most likely to realise you have entered a mined area when you spot a mine or when one explodes. Whether you are in a vehicle or on foot you must do the following:

* Stop moving. Warn everyone in the vicinity to do likewise. Mines are seldom laid on their own, so assume that others are in the area.
* Assume that you are inside the minefield rather than approaching its edge: who knows how many mines you may have stepped over or driven past to reach your present location?
* Never act impulsively. Mine incidents often cause panic, so calm yourself and your colleagues. Assess the situation carefully before acting.
* If you have radios, call for help. However, be aware that using radios in very close proximity to certain kinds of modern mines can trigger the device to explode.
* Even if you have no means of alerting others, you should stay still and wait for help. Standing still and waiting to be rescued offers the best chance of leaving the minefield safely.
* Only as an absolute last resort, when you are positive that no assistance will come, should you attempt to extract yourself from a mined area. In such cases the best option may be to attempt to travel back the way you came, so try to identify the safe ground over which you have travelled. In some cases this may be obvious – a well-used track, for instance – but in others it can be impossible.
* If you are in a vehicle, exit it from the back, either through the rear door or by climbing over the roof. Step only on your vehicle tracks, and walk carefully and slowly in single file, with sufficient space between people, to the last known safe point.
* If you are on foot, try to identify the route you took to your present location. This may be possible in some terrains, but realistically it will be very difficult. Begin to retrace your steps very slowly, examining the ground carefully as you proceed. Warn others behind of any obstacles or route changes. Do not bunch together: move in single file with a safe distance between each person.

**If someone is injured by a mine**

Dealing with a situation where someone has been injured by a mine is extremely difficult. Often the people are more concerned for the casualty than their own safety. Unfortunately it is common for people to be killed or injured while attempting to rescue people from a minefield. If you are faced with a mine casualty in your vicinity it is vital that you adhere to the following guidance:

* Do not rush to help, even if the person is screaming for help. The initial explosion may have exposed or destabilised other devices, or the victim’s body may be concealing untriggered mines.
* Assess the situation before taking any action. Panic and instinctive attempts to help the casualty could result in further injuries and a situation that is even more difficult to bring under control.
* Reassure them. If he or she is conscious, they will be in shock and may try to move or crawl away. Warn them to stay still.
* Assess the casualty’s injuries. Do not approach them: base your assessment on what you can see from where you are standing.
* If you have radios, call for assistance. If not, stay still and wait for help if there is a reasonable chance of someone passing by. If you must try and get assistance, identify the last safe ground over which you travelled. Move yourself and other colleagues to a safe area by slowly retracing your steps. Send someone for assistance and wait for it to arrive.
* Only attempt a rescue yourself as an absolute last resort, and even then only if the casualty is alive, needs urgent medical care and no other assistance is available. This must be a common-sense judgement. If you do need to attempt to rescue the casualty, then initially you should try to throw them a rope and drag them out. Do not attempt to go in and retrieve them yourself. The desire to help someone in trouble is powerful, but approaching a mine casualty is very risky and may result in you being injured or killed, and the casualty suffering further, and possibly fatal, injuries.

**RPGs – Rocket Propelled Grenades and Shelling**

Shells are usually large-calibre projectiles fired by artillery and combat vehicles (including tanks), and warships (usually in the shape of a cylinder with a pointed nose, but some specialized types are quite different).

**During**

* If you are inside an office, house, or another building lie flat on the ground and crawl to a ‘safe area,’ ideally an enclosed space which gives at least 2 walls between you and the outside, away from windows.
* If you are outside drop instantly to the ground and lie completely flat. If it is possible to roll or crawl into a ditch, into a building or behind a wall without raising your profile. This may give you some protection. Otherwise, remain still.
* If in a vehicle, decide whether or not you can drive away from the threat. If not possible then leave the vehicle on the opposite side from where the shooting is coming from, lie flat on the ground and crawl into a ditch or behind a rock, etc. if possible. Remember a vehicle only provides limited protection as doors and windows in particular will most likely not be able to absorb the high energy of a bullet and stop its flight. If surrounded by shooting, get out of the vehicle and move away from it fast and low. Take cover on the ground first and if possible crawl to a ditch or rocks or somewhere you can protect yourself
* As soon as it is safe to do so, report the incident and your location to your manager

**Immediately after**

If you are in a safe area, check that all staff members are accounted for. If anyone is missing, do not leave that safe area. Rather try with any communications means available to you to locate them. Call local contacts for advice on the situation, e.g. where it is coming from, what the target is thought to be.

**After**

* Assess any injuries to people, and damage to XXX property or vehicles and implement appropriate contingency plans (injury, medevac etc)
* When it is safe to do so, report incident to your manager and XXX
* Senior managers / security focal point to give clear instructions to those outside of XXX bases about their next actions.

**Shootings**

While aid workers should avoid locations where there is ongoing gunfire, when working in areas of conflict and insecurity the threat of being caught in sudden crossfire is always present. Crossfire is small-arms fire used indiscriminately by any individual or between combatants. Although not directly targeted at you, your very presence puts you at risk of being shot. In some situations, you or your vehicle may be deliberately shot at because of who or what you represent. Although rare, these targeted shootings may be designed to intimidate and harass the humanitarian community, rather than the targeted individual.

**Minimising the risk**

When operating in an area where there is a risk of crossfire or of being shot at, minimise risk by adhering to the following basic guidance:

* Be alert at all times, particularly around potential targets such as checkpoints and military positions. Keep clear of military convoys: pull aside, let them pass and keep a safe distance from them.
* Enquire about known areas of fighting or previous shootings and, if possible, avoid these areas or any others that are likely to be affected.
* Continually survey your surroundings, and be aware of where you could go for cover if you were fired on.
* Practise with your staff what to do in the event of being suddenly fired on. Routine drills will help staff to react appropriately and immediately.
* Consider improving your site-protection measures, such as window reinforcement and blast walls.

**Surviving an incident**

The confusion created when suddenly coming under fire can often make it difficult to establish who is shooting, which direction the shooting is coming from, and whether or not you are the target. How you react when shooting occurs will be influenced by your level of awareness at the time, how close you are to the shooting, and what cover is available.

***If you are on foot:***

* Seek immediate cover. Drop quickly and lie face down on the ground.
* If you think you are the target, move quickly to a place that is out of sight of your attacker.
* If you assess that the shooting is not aimed at you, lie flat and remain still if it is safe to do so.
* Do not panic or run. Stay calm and try to determine the direction of fire. In built-up areas this will be difficult because of sound echoing off buildings.
* Observe the reaction of the people around you and try to determine what is happening.
* If there is a lull in firing, attempt to improve your cover. Look for a ditch, wall or building nearby. Quickly crawl or move crouched low until you reach cover.
* Decide whether it is possible and safer to move away from the area, or whether to wait for the shooting to cease. Make sure the firing has stopped for some time before leaving your cover.

***If you are in a building:***

* Keep clear of windows and doors. Resist the urge to look out.
* Do not go out on to balconies or exposed roofs, or into courtyards.
* If the shooting is heavy, lie down. If possible, crawl behind a blast wall or seek protected areas such as a bathroom, basement or under the staircase.
* Wait until the shooting has ceased before leaving your cover to seek information on the situation.

***If you are in a vehicle:***

* If the road in front of you is clear, drive quickly but safely away from the area.
* If the shooting is in front of you, stop and go back. Reverse slowly to indicate your peaceful intent. Turn around and drive to a safe area.
* If you are coming under direct fire, you will need to stop the vehicle, get out and seek cover away from the vehicle, lying flat on the ground. Crouching behind the vehicle will not protect you.
* If you assess that the intention of the roadblock/shooting may be to kill or injure you or your passengers:
  + Drive fairly fast if physically possible. This may include ramming an obstacle in order to knock it out of the way. Do not drive so fast that you may lose control. Do not zig-zag, since you are likely to roll the vehicle. Once through the roadblock/shooting, keep driving at a safe speed, and send an immediate incident report as soon as you can. Your passengers should lie down throughout, or keep as low a profile as possible.
* Observe the reactions of the people and vehicles around you. Try to determine what is happening.
* If there is a lull in the firing, attempt to improve your cover. Look for a ditch, wall or building nearby. Quickly crawl or move crouched low until you reach cover.
* Make sure the firing has ceased and that it’s safe to return to the vehicle before doing so.

***After the shooting***

* Report the incident to your manager

**Weapon finds**

If you discover a weapon, or you are offered the chance to handle one, **do not touch it**. All kinds of firearms, guns, landmines, grenades, IEDs etc. can fire or explode if not correctly handled by a trained person.

There is also a risk of being trapped into adverse publicity: if you are photographed holding a gun, even if you were only holding it for a few seconds out of curiosity, you and your organisation could suffer damaging exposure in the press.

Any weapons finds should be reported to the police or other appropriate authority.