

Paris Attacks: A Grim Reminder that Terrorists Can Strike Anywhere



I'd dreamed of visiting Paris, the City of Light, for years. And this past May, I was finally able to make that dream come true. Given all I'd read about this city and the many pictures I'd seen of it, I'd steeled myself to be disappointed. After all, how could Paris possibly live up to my lofty expectations'

I was thrilled to learn how very wrong I was. Paris lived up to and easily surpassed all of my expectations. Quite simply, I fell head over heels in love with it.

So last night, watching breaking news reports of the coordinated terrorist attacks that occurred in this wonderful, beautiful city, I was heartbroken.

As I write, the death toll stands at 129, with another 352 injured'99 of them critical.

The attacks at the soccer stadium and concert hall were not so shocking given that public venues where large groups gather are logical targets. But the attacks at the restaurants are truly frightening, which I suppose is the point. The underlying message: You're not safe, anywhere.

Why am I writing about this tragedy on a site devoted to workplace safety in Canada' Because the risk of terrorist attacks is something that every employer'at a minimum'should consider and, if necessary, prepare for in its emergency response planning.

Yes, certain employers may be at more risk of attack by terrorists, such as government organizations, utilities, high-profile international corporations, companies engaged in potentially controversial work, arenas and similar facilities, etc.

But even if your specific workplace isn't vulnerable, consider who your neighbours are. For example, if you're located next to a large power plant, any attack on that plant will likely impact your workplace.

However, as the Paris attacks show, we shouldn't assume we understand the

'logic' or thinking of terrorist organizations or individuals.

If after conducting a risk assessment, you believe your workplace could directly or indirectly be impacted by terrorism, include possible terrorist attacks in your emergency planning and ensure that you train workers accordingly.

For example, here's a safety talk on terrorism you can give workers. And use this form to gather key information should someone call in a bomb threat to your company.

In addition, if your company has employees working abroad in cities or countries where terrorism is a risk, take appropriate steps to ensure their safety, too.