

International Symposium on Tunnel Safety and Security
Greenbelt, Maryland, November 16, 2004

I am here to convey law enforcement's perspective and concerns when responding to critical incidents and emergencies in tunnels. Although I represent one West Coast transit agency's police department, first-responders face the same public-safety concerns when effecting rescues and investigating crimes and accidents in transportation tunnels everywhere.

Ground transportation has been the target of 40% of all terrorist acts worldwide. In the U.S. alone, there are 337 highway and 211 transit tunnels. That does not include the tunnels that are used by railroads to move passengers and freight. In this post-9/11 era, tunnel owners and operators must be prepared for any disaster that could occur within the bores of their tunnels and tubes.

A brief overview of my agency, the Bay Area Rapid Transit District: BART is a regional public mass-transit system that spans four California counties: Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, and San Mateo. Of the 43 transit stations, 15 are subway and 13 are at-grade. BART operates heavy-rail, high-speed trains only. Its average daily ridership is 321,000. The BART Police Department is the transit system's sole law-enforcement entity. Fire service and medical and hazmat response are provided by allied agencies in the cities and counties that BART serves.

BART's tunnels are all twin bore and have lighting, drainage, and ventilation, which create safety and security concerns and challenges. Two of BART's tunnels are over three miles long. The Berkeley Hills Tunnel was drilled into a mountain that separates Oakland and Orinda. It is 3.2 miles long and has 14 cross-passage doors that are 1,000 feet apart. The tunnel is 700 feet from the Hayward Fault,

BART's Transbay Tube, which connects San Francisco and Oakland, is the transit system's icon and its greatest target. The Transbay Tube was voted one of the top-ten public-works projects of the 20th century. It is 3.6 miles long and lies 132 feet below the surface of San Francisco Bay. Half of all BART riders cross the Transbay Tube, which carries more people from Oakland to San Francisco and back than the Bay Bridge. The Transbay Tube consists of twin bores that are separated by a gallery. There are 57 cross-passage doors. Any unauthorized entry or threat that requires the BART police to search the Transbay Tube, gallery between the bores, and vent structures in Oakland and San Francisco.

To ensure that nothing is missed in searching the two bores and gallery, officers posted in each tunnel and the gallery must start from one end and, while staying abreast of each other and maintaining constant voice communication, proceed toward the opposite end. The search must be conducted in one direction only,

which means posting officers at the opposite end. Before such a search can even begin, specialized teams of properly equipped officers in protective suits must be assembled and briefed. A delay of up to two hours would occur, and that does not include the time for the actual search.

My message to tunnel operators is that once first-responders – law enforcement or military, fire service, hazmat teams, medical personnel, or all of the aforementioned – are deployed to a tunnel emergency, they will need an indefinite window of time. Tunnel operators must have contingency plans to deal with all critical incidents, including fires, bomb threats and other criminal acts, any unknown blast, accidents, power failure, floods, and earthquakes, that will result in short- and long-term shutdowns.

If you have tunnels that restrict who and what enters and exits the bores, be sure to have controls in place that monitor and record that activity 24/7. For most persons who are not homeowners, personal vehicles are their most valuable possessions. A vigilant owner would not leave his/her unattended vehicle vulnerable to break-in or theft. Neither should tunnel owners. Protect your tunnels with alarms and sensors that detect not only unauthorized entries, but also any changes in environmental conditions that could jeopardize your property and its users, including employees. It is imperative that tunnel operators have contingency plans for every natural, accidental, or intentional act that could damage or close their tunnels.

Would every public-safety agency that is called to an emergency in your tunnel send first-responders who are currently trained and properly equipped to handle any problem and in a timely manner? If not, it should be your priority to facilitate orientation, familiarization, and continuous training, including table-top exercises and live drills, to all first-responders. That includes police SWAT teams and canines trained in explosives detection and rescue. Every region has an Army National Guard Civil Support Team and, since 9/11, FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force. They should be included in your list of first-responder agencies and have immediate access to maps and specifications of your tunnels.

Please call me if my agency or I can be of any assistance to you. BART police SWAT team members have trained Tacoma police officers and Pierce County, Washington sheriff's deputies on responding to hostage situations and suspects barricaded in transit vehicles. Command officers and I have served on peer-review teams from Sacramento to Broward County to Bangkok. Working together, we will ensure that our transportation tunnels are as safe and secure as possible. I can be reached at (510) 464-7022 or ggee@bart.gov.

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