

Bomb-making awareness course guides trainees

BY MASON HINES
DISPATCH RECORD

Lampasas County is undergoing rapid growth, and with that comes an increasing need to protect its citizens.

The Lampasas County Sheriff's Office and Lampasas Fire Department have teamed up with the federal Bomb-Making Materials Awareness Program to educate first responders and business vendors on potential signs of nefarious activities.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency Office of Bombing Prevention, and BMAP Section Chief Charles Leas spoke about how the program works with law enforcement agencies.

"The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's Office for Bombing Prevention works with state and local partners in Texas, and around the country, to increase awareness of bomb-making materials and the threats they pose to the community," Leas said. "By working together, we can help reduce the threat of bombings in the state."

Training was presented Tuesday by Scott Conger, a bombing prevention specialist within the CISA. He teaches the BMAP community liaison course, which details varying methods of bomb-making, as well as how household items can be used for these intentions as well.

Conger travels across the United States delivering this training for first

responders, including one in Georgia that Lampasas County Sheriff Jess Ramos attended last summer, which prompted Ramos to bring the training here.

Conger said he was pleased to hold the training in Lampasas.

"This is my favorite course, out of the 200 or so I've done," he said. "I'm in Lampasas, my hometown, helping us identify ways to prevent these acts."

The training session began with videos designed to show how citizens can be vigilant in reporting suspicious activities and how doing so could prevent deadly events from occurring. These videos also highlighted how suspicious activity can happen at large retail outlets that carry large quantities of potentially hazardous materials.

"Seeing the signs someone could be planning something is one of the most important aspects," Conger said.

Conger demonstrated some suspicious purchases that could be a sign of disaster to come. He noted the development of Operation Flashpoint, a program designed to provide positive outreach to employees working a point of sale and giving them the training necessary to recognize those materials.

"I walked into a Home Depot once, bought a short length of metal pipe and walked out with no questions asked," Conger said. "I went and talked with the manager. Now



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Common household items like paint thinner or drain cleaner can be hazardous if used inappropriately. Training offered Tuesday in Lampasas is designed to help retailers identify potentially suspicious purchases.

we're doing training there next month."

Trainees also were given a booklet to help them recognize materials that could be hazardous. It employs the acronym SIMPC-E. SIMPC-E stands for Switch, Initiator, Main charge, Power source, Container and Enhancements. By having an idea of what could be used to facilitate the triggering of the

bomb, perhaps bought in conjunction with odd materials, retailers could help prevent a deadly plot.

Conger explained the ways terrorists groups are able to get around certain procedures, outlined through publications like "The Book of Terror," published in England, which directly references Homeland's Security's BMAP program.

"We're having a hard

time staying ahead, especially with books like this being published," Conger said. "We have to be careful with tipping our hand to the other side."

He said people are adept at using reference materials to find new bomb ideas.

"IEDs are only limited by the imagination," Conger said. "You can get everything on the internet now."