

U.S. Department of Justice

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives



National Response Team

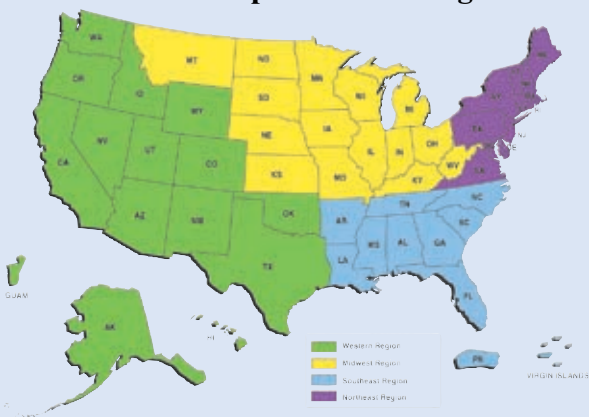




National Response Team (NRT)

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) brings definitive expertise and an array of state-of-the-art equipment to the investigation of major fire and explosives incidents. In 1978, ATF developed a national response capability to assist Federal, State, and local investigators in meeting the challenges faced at the scenes of significant fire and explosives incidents. This capability, the National Response Team (NRT), is comprised of four geographic regions to cover the United States. Each region can respond within 24 hours to assist Federal, State, and local law enforcement/fire service personnel in on-site investigations.

ATF National Response Team Regions



The NRT works alongside Federal, State, and local officers in reconstructing the scene, identifying the seat of the blast or the origin of the fire, conducting interviews, and sifting through debris to obtain evidence related to the explosion/fire.



ATF's partnership with Federal, State, and local officers is vital to the most effective scene-processing efforts. ATF strives to maintain a strong relationship with all Federal, State, and local officers.

The NRT maintains:

- Special agents in the following specializations: certified explosives specialists, certified fire investigators, forensic mappers and schematic artists, and canine handlers with an accelerant or explosives detection canine. All special agents are experienced explosives and fire investigators who have worked numerous fire/explosives scenes and have extensive training.
- Explosives enforcement officers, forensic chemists, and multidisciplinary engineers.



The NRT has a fleet of fully equipped response vehicles that are strategically located throughout the United States and allow the NRT to be self-contained for the forensic examination of explosives and fire scenes. These trucks contain computer, recording, and communication equipment; an extensive selection of tools for scene processing; first aid and personal protective equipment; and evidence collection materials.



Professions/Specializations

The NRT has several full-time members whose primary focus is to respond to NRT callouts throughout the country. These veteran investigators also provide training and assist with oversight of the NRT program.

All NRT members are certified in all levels of personal protective equipment, “Level A” inclusive.

Explosives Enforcement Officers (bomb technicians)

- Make device determinations and render expert courtroom testimony.
- Perform underwater explosives recoveries and render-safe procedures.
- Render-safe improvised explosive devices.
- Travel to foreign countries to conduct assessments of the countries’ capabilities in the investigation of explosives incidents.

Special Agent Certified Explosives Specialists

- Trained to identify, handle, and destroy explosives.
- Provide explosives technical support and assistance in explosives-related matters in the field.
- Conduct investigations into the cause of explosions and render expert testimony in court.



Special Agent Certified Fire Investigators

- Trained in fire origin and cause, computer fire modeling, and technical interpretation of fire-related information.



- Conduct fire investigations and render expert testimony in court.

Engineers and Scientists



Utilize engineering methods, analytical tools, and applied research to characterize fire, fire environments, and various conditions surrounding fire incidents.

Accelerant and Explosives Detection Canines

ATF's unique training methodology enables accelerant detection canines to find a variety of ignitable liquids that could be used to initiate a fire. It also trains explosives detection canines to locate improvised explosive devices, explosive residues, post-blast debris, firearms, ammunition, and spent shell casings.



Forensic Chemists

Forensic chemists use a wide variety of chemical and instrumental analyses to identify explosives, including gas chromatography/liquid chromatography/mass spectrometry, ion chromatography, capillary electrophoresis, Fourier transform infrared spectrometry, x-ray diffraction, and x-ray fluorescence.

Forensic chemists examine evidence collected at explosives and fire scenes to identify the explosives used, other bomb components, and flammable or combustible liquid residues that may have been used to accelerate the spread of the fire.

Each ATF laboratory has a mobile lab that can arrive on-scene to begin processing of forensic evidence.

ATF also has other key components...

- *Arson and Explosives Criminal Investigative Analysts (Profilers)*
- *Special Agent Polygraph Examiners*
- *Auditors*
- *United States Bomb Data Center*
- *The National Tracing Center*
- *Arson Explosives Enforcement Branch Analysts*
- *Intelligence Research Specialists*
- *Mobile Command Vehicles*



NRT Activations

NRT activations include such incidents as the World Trade Center bombing in 1993, the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, the Atlanta Olympic bombing in 1996, the Otherside Lounge in Atlanta in 1997, the abortion clinic bombing in Birmingham in 1998, and the terrorist attack on the Pentagon in 2001. Since its inception in 1978, the NRT has been activated more than 600 times.



National Special Security Events (NSSE)

The NRT has assisted with the response capability to numerous NSSE, including the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, the Republican and Democratic National Conventions, the G-8 Summits, the NATO 50th Anniversary 1999, the World Trade Organization Conference 1999, the Super Bowls, the Presidential Inaugurations, the Asian Bank Conference 2001, and the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City.

NRT Activation Procedures

The deployment of the NRT is free of charge. A Federal, State, or local law enforcement or fire service official can request the services of an NRT by contacting the nearest ATF field office for an initial assessment. The initial ATF assessment takes into consideration the target or victims, property damage, deaths and injuries, local ATF resources, and other factors. The NRT may also be activated if the incident is beyond the resources available in the



affected area. The Arson and Explosives Programs Division (AEPD) in ATF headquarters will use the assessment to determine the degree of response required. AEPD makes the ultimate decision regarding whether a response is appropriate.

IRT Response Team (IRT)

The deployment of ATF's resources is not limited to within U.S. boundaries. Through a 1991 agreement with the U.S. Department of State, Diplomatic Security Service (DSS), ATF provides investigative, advisory, and technical/forensic assistance and oversight at select fire and/or post-blast scene investigations occurring on United States property on foreign soil [where DSS has investigative responsibility], and those affecting foreign governments on foreign territory.

The IRT is selected from the cadre of NRT members and is comprised of ATF's most experienced fire and explosives investigators, technicians, and engineers; accelerant and explosives detection canines; explosives enforcement officers (bomb technicians); and forensic chemists; and is further supported by state-of-the-art forensic laboratory equipment, auditors, and intelligence resources.

The IRT has responded to requests for assistance from foreign countries, including Peru, Guatemala, Micronesia, Ecuador, Argentina, South Korea, Lithuania, El Salvador, Sri Lanka, Suriname and Grenada.

For more information about the NRT Program, contact the Chief, Arson and Explosives Enforcement Branch at (202) 927-7930.





**The ATF National Response Team
and Local Police/Fire Officials**

*“Joining forces
to protect the
public and
investigate
explosives and
fire incidents.”*