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#365 Justice Department Issues Recommendations for Upgrading Security

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JUSTICE DEPARTMENT ISSUES RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UPGRADING  
FEDERAL BUILDING SECURITY

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The Justice Department today made public a study of the vulnerability of federal office buildings to acts of terrorism and other forms of violence, prepared at the direction of the President after the April 19 bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building.

The study proposes new minimum security standards for federal buildings, and recommends that each federal facility be upgraded to meet those standards to the extent feasible.

"We owe it to our federal workers, and to the citizens who visit federal offices every day, to take these sensible steps to protect their safety," said Deputy Attorney General Jamie Gorelick.

The survey concluded that typical federal facilities lack some of the elements needed to meet the new minimum security standards, recommended in light of the changed environment of heightened risk. The study noted that when many of the buildings were constructed, the potential risk of terrorist and similar violence was not as great as it is today, and that tight security was often seen as inconsistent with making the facility easily accessible to serve the public. In the last two months alone, 200 federal buildings have received bomb threats.

Approximately one million federal civilian employees work in space leased or owned by the government's General Services Administration, three-quarters of them in the locations included in the two-month review.

As part of the Justice Department study, a standards committee developed 52 security standards dealing with such items as perimeter parking, lighting, physical barriers and closed circuit television monitoring. Standards were also recommended for security at entrances and exits, employee and visitor identification, and the operation of day care centers. Federal sites were divided into five security levels ranging from a Level 1 with minimum security needs (typically, leased space with ten or fewer employees, such as a military recruiting office or a small

post office), to a Level 5 (a building such as the Pentagon or CIA headquarters with a large number of employees and a critical national security mission). The destroyed Alfred Murrah Federal Building was a Level 4 building, as is the main Justice Department building in Washington, D.C.

For higher-security level buildings, the report calls for such things as controls over facility parking, perimeter monitoring by closed-circuit television, intrusion-detection systems, x-ray screening of mail, the installation of shatter-proof glass on exterior windows, and a set-back from the street for new buildings.

The report also recommends reemphasizing the General Service Administration's primary responsibility for implementing federal facility security, upgrading of the Federal Protective Service, and creation of an Interagency Security Committee.

The report estimates that the minimum security features recommended for a typical Level 4 building would add about \$2.5 million to the cost of new construction -- approximately 3.3% of the total construction costs. Retrofitting an existing building could cost up to \$3 million, if it had no security features already in place -- a highly unlikely situation.

Because each building's security requirements differ, the report recommended that security issues first be addressed by building-level security committees, and that the resulting building-by-building evaluations be assessed by GSA for appropriate implementation.

The United States Marshals Service and GSA were assisted in the preparation of the assessment by the FBI, the Secret Service, the Department of Defense, the Department of State, the Social Security Administration and the Administrative Office of U.S. Courts.  
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