

## Demand for Window Film Spikes After Terror Alerts

When John Spradling had window film installed in his Oklahoma City real estate office, he did so with the hopes of saving on energy.

But when the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building was bombed six blocks from Spradling's office, the film protected him from more than a high electricity bill--it held together shards of glass that may have flown from the window, injuring or killing him. That day in 1995, 800 others in the area suffered injuries from glass, some of them sustained in buildings 18 blocks from the blast.

"I was facing a window that blew out," Spradling said. "There's no doubt in my mind the glass would have blown into my office."



Terrorist attacks including the Oklahoma City bombing and those of Sept. 11, 2001, have spawned increased sales of security window film--clear or tinted sheets made of polyester and sometimes metals--applied to windows to prevent breaking glass from explosions and burglaries. In the Washington area, companies are struggling to keep up with the high demand for installation, a demand that intensified after this weekend's terror alerts.

After the Oklahoma City bombing and the embassy bombings in Africa, the federal government began requiring the film installation on some federal buildings. But after September 11, mainstream commercial buildings also began buying.

Darrell Smith, executive director of the International Window Film Association, said that prior to the terrorist attacks, sales of security film accounted for 1 to 3 percent of all window film sales, which includes films used for tinting and blocking UV rays.

But today, security film accounts for as much as 15 percent of window film sales--a \$1 billion-a-year industry.

There are several types of window film--decorative film, security film and film that blocks sun and UV rays on buildings and cars. Security film applied to standard commercial plate glass causes it to act similarly to car window glass, which breaks into small pieces rather than dangerous sharp shards. It provides the highest level of protection, but the others may slightly reduce shattering.

Jeff Bradley, U.S. and international business manager for 3M, a security film manufacturer, said terrorists are using glass as a weapon.

"In the embassy bombings in Africa, there were two bombs--first was a small bomb that drew everyone to the window, then the second one went off and caused all of the damage because of the glass," Bradley said, noting that glass injuries are difficult to treat because the glass is hard to find.

And those injuries can be fatal. Following the 1996 terrorist bombing in Saudi Arabia, a Pentagon report found that 12 of the 19 airmen killed died as a result of glass-cut injuries.

Smith said consultants often will assess a building's risk to determine its needs and risk factors, including how likely a target the building is and proximity to parking lots.

"If the windows are near a parking lot, they may need stronger treatment because someone could put a car bomb there," Smith said, noting that cars and trucks can carry bombs weighing up to 1,000 pounds, whereas a person with a bomb strapped to the body could carry roughly 100 pounds.

Federal regulations--established in 1997 by the GSA--specify that glass can crack but must be retained by the frame when subjected to a blast equivalent to 500 pounds of TNT.

The film, which varies in thickness, costs from \$4 to \$10 a square foot to apply, depending on the size and accessibility to windows and whether the film is being attached to the glass or the frame. With the addition of a thin metal coating, security film can also save energy by reducing solar heat entering the building.

---

*The above text was excerpted from **The Washington Post**, August 3, 2004, by Lauren Bayne Anderson*

Excerpts  
taken from  
**The Washington Post**



*"Inquiries regarding security window film have increased dramatically since 9/11," notes Peter J. Davey, President, American Window Film, Inc. "I've been involved in the window film industry since 1975 and have seen steady growth over the years. Currently, commercial sales of 3M Scotchshield™ Safety & Security Film have risen at a pace much faster than I have ever experienced."*

*Jim Maloof, American Window Film, Inc.'s Vice President of Sales, recognizes the upsurge in sales as the product of increased education. "The commercial sector is learning how vulnerable occupants are inside structures that contain a significant amount of glass surface. Building owners and facilities managers are discovering that 3M Window Films not only help save lives, they conserve energy, provide UV protection, reduce glare, improve overall appearance and provide a return on investment through energy cost savings."*



**3M** Scotchshield™ Ultra  
Safety & Security Film  
**American Window Film, Inc.**  
**800-274-TINT**  
[www.americanwindowfilm.com](http://www.americanwindowfilm.com)  
**3M** Authorized Dealer/Applicator  
Building Safety Solutions Dept.