

Akron police on alert for New Years following German truck attack

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AKRON, Ohio - The recent terror attack in Berlin that killed 12 people and injured another 48 after a truck drove right into a crowd of people, has many people asking, could that happen here?

News 5 talked police about what they are doing here in Northeast Ohio to make sure you and your family are safe in our city.

For downtown Akron's New Year's Eve First Night event, police say they're more than prepared, a good thing as experts say if not secure, the area could be vulnerable to that type of attack.

"People don't stand up to vehicles, and the only way to protect these things is to keep the vehicles away," said Rob Reiter, a national expert on security measures for cities and businesses, giving a shout out to cities everywhere for this time of year.

"People have to remember that safety and security go hand in hand, and it's not always cheap, but it's always cheaper than the alternative," he said.

He explained truck plunges have always been around, but are becoming an easier tool for terrorists to use.

"Oh it can get lots worse, it's been worse before... attacks with vehicles are well known, they're a proven tactic, they're fast, easy and cheap," said Reiter.

In Reno, just 2 months ago, a truck plowed through a crowd, injuring five people. And even here, in the Ohio State University incident, it was a car that was used to plunge into the crowd on campus.

"The reason you're seeing these is they're ridiculously effective, especially in places where people are unprepared," Reiter explained.

Here in Cleveland, he pointed out that public square has its own vulnerabilities.

"I see that you can drive a bus through the middle of Public Square in Cleveland, so I'd call that less protected."

So for an event like Akron's annual first night, where more than 15 thousand people are expected to attend, Reiter says extra precaution is necessary.

"If you do safety, you're also doing security, and if you're doing security, you're also doing safety, it's a two for one."

So are they ready?

"Just yesterday our intelligence officer and myself met with the FBI and talking

about and working on potential threats in the area," explained Chief James Nice of the Akron Police Department.

He said they've been prepared for a while, having practice this summer with the Cavs celebration.

"We're very experienced at it and we think we always have a good plan."

Now Cleveland is opting out of having a New Year's celebration again for the second year in a row. Police said they will just patrol as normal, adding a few extra officers out on duty, but nothing special.