



## Deadly package bombs rattle Austin real estate community

Police are investigating potential link between explosions, and agents out visiting properties should be on high alert

BY [GILL SOUTH](#) ★

MAR 13

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**MENU** Citizens and members of the real estate community in Austin, Texas, are on high alert this week as police continue to investigate three parcel bomb explosions over the last 11 days in Austin, Texas, as possible serial hate crimes.

A deadly explosion that killed a 39-year-old man in early March has now been linked to two more that occurred Monday, one that killed a teenage boy opening a package and also injured a woman who was living at the same address, and another that left an elderly woman who picked up a package in front of her home in critical condition, according to [news reports](#).

The explosions have all taken place in the East Austin area five to 12 miles apart, and the latter two occurred as the city hosts its annual media and music festival South by Southwest, [which attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors](#).

parcels they weren't expecting and to call 911 if anything looks suspicious. He [said today on local Austin news station KXAN](#) that even picking up a package could set off an expertly-made bomb. Speaking to Inman Tuesday, Julie Nelson, an Austin-based Realtor with eXp Realty and an agent trainer, said she'd received a number of calls about the incidents.



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austin\_police Chief Manley advising everyone in Austin to be cautious if they receive a package 📦 and weren't expecting one. If you see something suspicious please dial 9-1-1 so we can send officers out to assist you.

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"If I was going to show a property in the middle of the day and there was a package on the front porch, I would think twice about touching it," Nelson is advising agents. "If it was a vacant home, I



**Chief Brian Manley**  
@chief\_manley

 If you receive a package that you are not expecting or looks suspicious, DO NOT open it, call 911 immediately. RT- Help us spread this message.  [twitter.com/chief\\_manley/s...](https://twitter.com/chief_manley/s...)

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Nelson was perplexed about the attacker's motive. "When people do things like this, what is the purpose?" she said. "To completely get the entire community off center?"

East Austin native and Keller Williams agent James Cole, who took a few classes at Austin Community College with the first parcel bomb victim, Anthony Stephan House, wasn't taking any risks in the neighborhoods where he lives and works.

"One of the bombs that went off yesterday was really close to a project I have been working on," he told Inman. "I know all those neighbors. I'm not messing with any packages that don't belong to me."

Police are investigating the possibility that the explosions could be hate crimes.

"We have had two victims that were African-American, and the victim of this latest incident was a 75-year-old Hispanic female," police chief Manley said during a news conference.

According to Cole, some have speculated that the crimes could be related to tension in gentrifying parts of the city where there is a growing white contingent moving into what were mainly African-American neighborhoods.

"I just can't make that call yet because the Northeast is where the first [explosion] happened and I wouldn't call that a gentrification area," Cole said. "The second one [Springdale Hills] there's a lot going on. I'm in that neighborhood flipping houses."

Cole elaborated that the Springdale Hills suburb has appreciated dramatically over the years; he's seeing younger families in their 30s buying homes in the \$300,000s, living alongside homes occupied by people in their 80s and 90s who bought when they were worth \$30,000 or \$40,000.

In these up-and-coming parts of Austin, Cole is often out door-knocking and educating elderly residents on what they can expect to sell their homes for in light of the increased presence of investors offering homeowners low cash offers. He's monitoring the parcel bomb news closely, but he didn't think the news of the crimes would deter clients from house hunting in East Austin neighborhoods.

"It can happen anywhere, these are random acts," he said.



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