



Administrative Procedure: Emergency Evacuation Bomb Threat

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Introduction

While no conclusive solution can be offered to eliminate the problem of bomb threats which is a fact of life in our society today, it can be minimized. Each possible target will have its own unique problem areas.

To formulate a contingency plan the following points should be reviewed:

- Who makes a bomb threat and for what reason?
- How can a bomb threat be initially assessed as to its possible credibility?
- What are the major considerations in the preparation of contingency plans?
- When and how should searches and evacuations be carried out following the receipt of a threat?
- What preventative measures can be taken to minimize the receipt of threats?

Who makes a Bomb Threat and for what Reason?

You or I, a friend, a business associate, a relative, a disgruntled employee, a prankster, anyone can make a bomb threat. There is definitely no pattern, but there is a reason. It is generally accepted that the two most reasonable explanations are:

1. The caller has definite knowledge that a device has been or will be placed and wants to minimize personal injury and property damage. (A person who places a device with the determination to kill or cause damage will likely never forewarn, for this would negate the desired result.)
2. The caller wants to create an atmosphere of anxiety and panic which will, in turn, possibly result in a disruption of normal activities in the location that the device has purportedly been placed. (Disruption can result, but where leadership and planning exist, there will be less probability for panic.)

How can a Bomb Threat be Initially Assessed as to its Possible Credibility?

Bomb threats may normally be categorized as either a Specific or a Non-Specific threat following an analysis of information received. This categorization could be of value in determining the extent to which contingency plans should be implemented.

Specific Threat

Although the least common, the Specific Threat is the more credible. In this case, the perpetrator will provide more detailed information which could include statements describing the device, why it was placed, its exact or approximate location, the time of activation, etc.

Non-Specific Threat

In this instance, an individual will make a simple statement to the effect that a device has been placed. Generally very little, if any, additional detail is conveyed before the threat is terminated.

Once again, the latter is the more common but neither can be immediately discredited without investigation.

What are the major considerations in the Preparation of Contingency Plans?

Once management has identified the problem, detailed but uncomplicated plans must be formulated to cover each possible emergency situation. The type and complexity of the plan will be primarily governed by:

- The Organizational Function
- The Size In Area & Number of Personnel
- The Location
- The Available Resources

No plan, regardless of how functional it would appear to be, can be effective until clear cut levels of authority have first been established and recognized. It is also of vital importance that alternate authorities be designated at every level to assume the necessary responsibilities in the absence of the primarily tasked person. When this chain is established, each should be impressed with the importance of handling assignments in an authoritative manner without delay or display of emotion. Professionalism on the part of those in control during an emergency situation will tend to eliminate or minimize the risk of panic and will instill confidence in those subjected to abnormal procedures and physical relocation.

Planning Considerations

- Determine levels of authority.
- Determine manpower requirements and availability.
- Determine alternate backup support.
- Obtain emergency contact numbers.
- Preplan with local authorities (police and fire departments).
- Designate a control centre and alternate.
- Determine lines of communication.
- Investigate legal liabilities.
- Plan for relocation of operations and personnel.
- Establish bomb threat procedures for switchboard operators/receptionists.
- Prepare bomb threat telephone procedures (see Appendix A).
- Investigate possibility of recording and tracing threatening telephone calls.
- Ensure availability of building and surrounding area plans.
- Prepare search procedures.
- Prepare evacuation procedures.
- Coordinate planning with fellow tenants and neighbours.
- Compare with plans of other organizations and amend as necessary.
- Ensure all employees are conversant with emergency plan procedures.
- Publicize organizational preparedness.
- Review and update emergency procedures periodically for maximum effectiveness.
- Where possible, exercise procedures for practice and evaluation.
- Ensure employees are aware of dangers of touching or moving suspect devices.

When and How should a Search and Evacuation be Conducted?

The subjects of search and evacuation are very closely allied. The decision to conduct a search or an evacuation or both must be made by the authority so designated (or the alternate) in the initial plan. The decisions of how, when and in which order, can only be made after analysis of the known facts surrounding the incident or as the incident develops and additional information becomes available. It is equally important that decisions to discontinue or terminate a search or to order re-entry to previously evacuated premises be made and issued by the responsible authority who originally ordered the institution of emergency procedures.

The choices available to the responsible authority follow.

Search

A covert search of the entire premises, or designated areas, by management/supervisory personnel.

An overt search of the entire premises, or designated areas, by trained search teams.

Each of the above will have advantages and disadvantages as related to speed of search, thoroughness, productivity and morale and must be weighed against the potential risk. The most unlikely decision, not listed, would be to ignore the requirement completely.

Evacuation

There will be complete evacuation of premises in each instance. Police will automatically be called.

When evacuation occurs, those evacuated should be relocated to a safe area no less than 300 meters distance where it is considered that injury from projected objects or falling glass would be minimal.

Evacuation Considerations

- Provide an evacuation plan.

- Publish names of those authorized to order evacuation and re-entry.
- Establish an evacuation signal.
- Publish and make employees aware of evacuation plans.
- Ensure employees are aware of evacuation routes and alternates.
- Provide for evacuation priorities.
- Designate and train evacuation control teams.
- Establish safe evacuation 'holding areas'.
- Provide for control and well-being of evacuated persons.
- Provide for communication requirements.
- Provide for continuous security during evacuation.
- Determine procedures for utilities shut-down and reactivation.
- Establish a return to work procedure.

Note: Published evacuation plans should include an instruction to ensure that all building occupants remove personal belongings (ie. purses, briefcases, lunch bags, etc.) when they evacuate their working area. This will eliminate the necessity of search teams checking many unknown items which might be considered suspect.

Covert Search of Premises

It should first be realized that those best qualified to carry out the most thorough search of any given area, are those familiar with that area – the employees or occupants. These persons would have a more complete knowledge and a better understanding of 'what belongs' or what might be 'foreign' to a location at any given time. Law enforcement authorities do not have the necessary intimate knowledge of the sight and sounds of all premises within their area of jurisdiction and, although prepared to assist employees, would be less likely to recognize what could be a suspect package unless it was an undisguised device and this is not generally the rule. Management should make use of the expertise at hand in the interests of speed and thoroughness of searches.

General priorities for searching can be established and are generally recognized to follow a sequence:

- Outside area.
- Building entrances.
- Public areas within buildings (ie. foyer, hallways, washrooms, reception rooms).
- Stairways and elevators.
- Cleaning material closets, if not secure. These are areas in most buildings which are accessible to the 'bomber'. They are also the areas which evacuated persons must pass through or be in close proximity to during an evacuation. The initial

search of these areas will ensure greater safety during the movement of personnel. Once a systematic search of the public areas has been conducted, the search may carry on through the remaining areas not generally accessible to the public.

Interior Rooms

Without planning, control and communication, only a cursory search can be conducted. A control centre must be established where the designated building authority(ies) are located and able to communicate with individual searchers or search teams. In this way, searched areas can be recorded as cleared and the control authority will be cognizant of progress, problems and the location of his/her searchers.

A search, once external and public areas have been cleared, should also be conducted beginning at the lowest levels (basement or sub-basement) and continuing upwards floor by floor, until even the roof, as applicable, has been declared free of suspect objects. As a floor or room has been cleared, it should be distinctively marked (tape/chalk) to indicate to other searchers that time need not be spent in covering an area already completed and declared free.

Room Searches

The first action on entering a room to be searched, should be to stand quietly (preferably with eyes shut) and listen to identify unusual background noise(s) and their source(s). The room can then be divided into areas of responsibility (one or two person teams) and a visual sweep, starting at floor level and working upwards to waist level, eye level and above can then be carried out.

Once the visual search requirements have been satisfied, these levels should then be physically searched in the same order, paying particular attention to every possible location for the concealment of switch (initiating) mechanisms as well as for devices. No rugs, furniture, drapes, hanging pictures or other objects should be disturbed without first investigating the possibility that this movement could act as a means of device initiation. At ceiling level, false ceilings and lighting fixtures, heating and air conditioning vents, should also be inspected.

Should a device or suspect device be discovered:

- Do NOT touch it.
- Do NOT assume it to be the only one.

- DO notify the control centre immediately, for the initiation of appropriate procedures.

In the event of discovery of a suspected device and subsequent request for the attendance of disposal specialists, the designated authority, along with the person making the discovery, should make themselves immediately available to the specialists for the purpose of providing a detailed briefing (ie. description of device, exact location, proximity of utilities – gas lines, water lines, electrical panels) and all other pertinent points which could be of value in an initial assessment of the situation prior to physical approach.

Search Considerations

- Pre-determine search sequence and procedures.
- Train search teams.
- Designate control centre(s) and controller(s).
- Provide for medical assistance.
- Provide for fire fighting and rescue assistance.
- Determine communications equipment and procedures.
- Establish 'cleared area' reporting and marking.
- Familiarize personnel with requirements of opening doors and windows to minimize blast effects.
- Emphasize DO NOT TOUCH suspect items.

Telephone Threats

Statistics prove that the majority of threats are received by telephone. In addition to determining the possibilities of call tracing and call recording (previously mentioned), all personnel should be instructed in procedures to follow when a telephoned threat is received.

- Obtain as much information as possible.
- Record as much information as possible.
- Keep the caller talking as long as possible.
- Question the caller if possible on his/her motives, type of device, location, etc.
- Record times.
- Listen for background noises during the conversation.
- Record accents, voice characteristics.
- Be polite and maintain calm.
- Use a checklist (see Appendix A).

On receipt of a telephoned threat, the recipient should concentrate on recording the exact wording of the message and the time of receipt. Other items on the checklist can be filled in, circled or checked during the call if time permits, or immediately upon its termination.

What Preventative Measures can be taken to Minimize the Receipt of Threats?

By instituting good security and 'housekeeping' measures, it is conceivable that the frequency and seriousness of threat and bomb placement incidents can be lessened.

- Determine likely locations for device placement.
- Develop an inspection procedure for incoming packages.
- Control access to critical areas.
- Provide for key control.
- Ensure emergency exits are unobstructed.
- Inspect first aid and fire fighting equipment.
- Review surveillance operations.
- Review document safeguard procedures.
- Ensure adequate protective lighting for exterior and interior.

It is conceivable that the frequency and seriousness of threat and bomb placement incidents can be lessened.

- Provide for auxiliary lighting.
- Ensure good housekeeping practices are maintained.
- Consider the use of electrical or photographic surveillance.
- Post signs indicating electronic/photographic surveillance.
- Where possible, restrict control of entry.
- Plan for the unexpected.

Release of Information for the Media

Management should designate a spokesperson to provide the media with accurate information concerning all circumstances surrounding an incident. It is suggested that a developed relationship with the media will tend to deny the publicity which is often

sought by the perpetrator and eliminate additional threats which could be generated as a result of publicity.

Appendix A

BOMB THREAT - TELEPHONE PROCEDURES

When A Bomb Threat Is Received:

- 1) Listen carefully to what the caller has to say and jot it down.

- 2) Make note of the line number and do NOT hang up!
- 3) Try to keep the caller talking by asking questions such as:

What time will the bomb explode?
Where is it?
What does it look like?
Where are you calling from?
What is your name?

- 4) Identifying characteristics of the caller:

Sex: _ Estimated Age:

Voice/Manner (Loud, Soft, Muffled, Calm, Emotion, Vulgar):

Quality (Nasal, Lisp, Good, Etc.):

Accent: French _ English _ Other

Speech: Fast _ Slow _ Other

Background Noises:

Voice Was Familiar - Specify:

Caller Was Familiar With Area:

- 5) Exact Wording Of Threat:

- 6) Time Of Call:

- 7) Any Other Details:

Appendix B

BOMB THREAT - OFFICE STAFF PROCEDURES

In The Event Of An Immediate Bomb Threat:

The Principal Or Designate Will

- 1) Order an evacuation of the school immediately. The Principal or Designate will announce the following message over the PA, "Everyone please leave the building in an orderly manner. Repeat. Everyone please leave the building in an orderly manner."
- 2) Notify the police department through line 911. The police will set into action the steps required to deal with the threat, including calls to all the proper authorities.
- 3) Determine the need to search or deny access to evacuation routes should the caller designate the area in which the bomb has been placed.
- 4) Oversee the evacuation of all students and staff from the building:

Elevators will NOT be used.

Each teacher should ensure that everyone has left the class, and follow the last student out.

Each teacher will lock the door of the classroom UNLESS he/she suspects that a bomb or suspicious package is in the room. In the latter case, the room door will be left unlocked.

Exit routes in areas designated by the caller should be avoided, if possible.

Once students have reached the designated area of safety, the teacher responsible for them at that time of evacuation will check attendance.

- 5) Assist the police in the search of the building.
- 6) Contact the Superintendent of Education with the information of the bomb threat, followed up by a report to be submitted within the week.

Secretaries Will

- 1) Lock up the work areas.

- 2) Assist the Daycare staff with the evacuation of the children, if applicable.
- 3) Assist the Principal or Designate, upon request.