

2023

Bomb Threat & Response Procedures



Becton School
Together We Can

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on how to deal with Telephone Bomb Threat Calls, Suspect Packages and 'White Powder' incidents.

It is important to encourage staff members to protect themselves, customers and visitors through vigilance and good housekeeping.

Test these plans regularly, and evaluate the response.

Plan for

- Evacuation
- Search
- Recovery

TELEPHONE BOMB THREAT CALL

Should you receive a bomb threat call:

1. Listen....

- Stay calm and listen carefully to what you are being told, don't interrupt, Pay attention to the words used.
- Listen for any accent in the voice (real or faked).
- Listen for any background noises.
- Think – do they sound like children or hoaxers?
- Think – do they sound intoxicated?
- Make a note if any Password or Code word given.

2. Ask...

- Where has the bomb been put?
- What time is it due to go off?
- What does it look like?
- Why are they doing this?
- **DO NOT ASK THE CALLER FOR A CODEWORD IF ONE IS NOT GIVEN.**

3. What to do next...

- It is good working practice for members of staff who deal with external telephone calls to have a knowledge and availability of the 'Bomb Threat' checklist. (see appendix 1)
- Dial 1471 (if facility available and no automatic number display) to see if you can get their number – then take the receiver off the telephone so that it cannot be used further until the Police have completed their enquiries.
- The recipient of the call should immediately inform the Executive Headteacher or Head of School. The Executive Headteacher should assess the threat (if the caller was a giggling child, you may assume it is a hoax and adopt the 'do nothing' approach. If there is the slightest doubt you should consider your policy and procedures on search and evacuation)
- Making telephone Bomb Calls is a criminal offence. The Police must be notified of the circumstances.

- In the event a suspicious device is located on or near the premises personnel **MUST NOT** use a mobile phone or any form radio communication to transmit any information.

Personal Safety:

- **Communications:** before transmitting by radio or mobile phone move away:
 - Hand held radio - 15 metres
 - Radio fitted in vehicles - 50 metres
 - Mobile phones switch off or retreat 15 metres
 - Do not take photographs in particular by means of a mobile phone

Please be aware, all the above points could activate a real device when used.

PROCEDURES ON SUSPICIOUS ITEMS BEING FOUND

When dealing with a call to a potential suspicious package then consider the 5 C's

Confirm - that the package is suspicious

Clear- the area

Cordon- put a cordon in place at an appropriate distance

Control - control entry into the cordon

Check - the area for secondary devices and that the cordon is in place correctly

The Bomb in the Building

Terrorists in particular have a long history of leaving hand-carried devices and holdalls in public places or places to which access is simple. A device of this size can kill or maim anyone close to the seat of the blast, inflict injury on people and damage to stock in the immediate vicinity, and cause damage to glazing or cladding.

The Bomb outside the Building

The hand-carried bomb may also be a feature of terrorist attacks in the street or other public places like station concourses. More frequent in recent years, we have become accustomed to Vehicle Improved Explosive Devices (VIED), and particularly the lorry packed with homemade explosive.

Who Should Search?

The main qualification for a searcher is familiarity with the place he or she is searching.

The police will not normally search premises following receipt of a bomb threat. They are not familiar with the premises and layout, and will not be aware of what should be there and what is out of place.

Search Sectors

The first step in preparing a search plan (see Appendix 2) is to divide the building into sectors. If the business is organised into departments it will be convenient for these to be search sectors. Corridors and toilets must be included in the search plans.

Each sector must be of size for one or two searchers to tour within 15 minutes.

Initiating a Search

- Sending a message to the search teams over a public address system. It should be coded to avoid unnecessary disruption and alarm;
- Use of personal radios/pager (remember the 15 metre rule as previously explained)
- A telephone 'cascade' system: the Executive Headteacher or Head of School rings two or three members of SLT who will begin to search different parts of the building.

HOW TO SEARCH

The overriding principle is that it be conducted in a systematic and thorough manner so that no part is left unchecked (see Appendices 3 and 4)

HOT CHARACTERISTICS

H Has the item been **hidden**? Has any attempt been made to conceal it from view or place it where accidental discovery is unlikely? *Innocent items are not usually hidden deliberately. Explosive devices, because of the consequences of the device being found before it functions, are not usually left in the open.*

O Is the item **obviously** suspicious? Does it look like a bomb? **Visual check only** (Can you see wiring; circuitry; or batteries or something attached to it that may be explosive material?)

T Is the item **typical**? Of what you might reasonably, expect to find in the given location? *For example, lost property is often found in locations where people congregate or wait before moving to a new location.*

What Happens when something is found?

The searcher who finds a suspicious item must not move it or interfere with it in any way. They will need to communicate what has been found to the Head Teacher.

- Do not touch it or move it;
- Move away from the device immediately;
- Communicate what has been found to the co-ordinator, using hand-held radios only once out of the immediate vicinity of the device (15 metres); and
- The person finding the device must remain on hand to brief the police on the exact location and description;
- Initiate evacuation to safe location of all pupils and staff.

BOMB THREAT EVACUATION PROTOCOL

The purpose of evacuation is to move people from an area where they might be at risk to a place of lesser risk. The biggest dilemma is how to judge where might constitute a place of safety.

The decision to evacuate will normally be taken by the Executive Headteacher or Head of School in consultation with the SLT or School Business Manger but the Police will be ready to advise.

In exceptional circumstances, when the Police have received specific information, they may themselves order an evacuation, if necessary, overruling the Executive Headteacher.

Evacuation may need to take place in response to:

- A threat call directly to the site venue;
- A threat call received elsewhere and notified to site venue by the police;
- Discovery of a suspicious package in the building;
- Discovery of a suspicious item or vehicle outside site venue building; or
- Discovery of an external device, notified to you by the police.

The Evacuation Plan

The evacuation plan must involve:

- Full evacuation outside the building; or
- Evacuation of part of the building if the device is small and thought to be one-off confined to one location;
- Evacuation of all staff and guests apart from designated searchers; or
- Full evacuation to an internal safe area as decided on a site-by-site basis.

NOTE: The size and type of suspect package will depend on the location of the assembly point.

Small items (handbag/briefcase size) -	100 metres
Medium Items (small car) -	200 metres
HGV's & Vans -	400 metres

The above relates to 'Cordon' distances in the event of a suspicious incident.

DO NOT USE FIRE EVACUATION ASSEMBLY POINTS but exit to the designated site.

Re-occupancy

Must always be discussed with the police and as necessary the other emergency services for approval and agreement.

Rehearsals

Evacuation procedure must be rehearsed at regular intervals at least once a year.

SUSPICIOUS PACKAGES / PARCELS / LETTERS

Preparing for the Possibility

Based on two simple features that the mail will already have undergone some rough handling, by the postal service, uncertainty over exact delivery times, the weight and complexity of reliable timing devices, all makes it very unlikely that a timer will trigger the device. Handling delivered mail is therefore not generally dangerous itself.

Possible indicators of that a delivered item may be of concern

Many of these indicators are quite general. One alone will not necessarily constitute a cause for concern. Their individual relevance will vary with context, e.g. depending on the nature of the organization's business, and in light of the current threat and Response Level. Any suspicions should be considered in combination with a thorough risk assessment.

General indicators

General indicators that a delivered item may be of concern include:

- unexpected item, especially if hand delivered;
- a padded envelope ('Jiffy Bag') or other bulky package;
- additional inner envelope or other contents that may be difficult to remove;
- labeling or excessive sealing that encourages opening at a particular end or in a particular way;
- oddly shaped or lopsided;
- envelope flap stuck down completely (normally gummed envelope flaps leave slight gaps at edges);
- marked 'to be opened only by...' 'personal' or 'confidential';
- item addressed to the organization or a title (rather than a specific individual);
- unexpected or unusual origin (postmark and/or return address);
- no return address or return address that cannot be verified;

- poorly or inaccurately addressed;
- address printed unevenly or unusually;
- unfamiliar writing or unusual style;
- unusual postmark or no postmark;
- more stamps than needed for size or weight of package;
- greasy or oily stains emanating from package;
- odours emanating from package.

Explosive or incendiary indicators

Additional explosive or incendiary indicators include:

- unusually heavy or uneven weight distribution;
- small hole(s) in envelope or wrapping.

"White powder" indicators

Additional chemical, biological or radiological (CBR) indicators include:

- powders or liquids emanating from package;
- wrapping stained by liquid leakage;
- unexpected items or materials found in package on opening or X-raying (loose or in a container) such as powdered, crystalline or granular solids; liquids; sticky substances or residues;
- unexpected odours observed on opening;
- sudden onset of illness or irritation of skin, eyes or nose.

extract from PAS 97

Action upon discovery of any suspicious delivered items

You could discover a suspicious item in a mail room, or anywhere else in the building – ensure you have appropriate emergency response plans in place.

Avoid unnecessary handling and X-raying:

- if you are holding the item, put it down on a cleared flat surface;
- keep it separate so it is easily identifiable;
- do not move it, even to X-ray it;
- if it is in an X-ray facility, leave it there.

Move away immediately

- clear immediate area and each adjacent room, including rooms above and below;
- if there is any suggestion of CBR materials, move those directly affected to a safe location close to the incident – keep these individuals separate from those not involved;
- prevent others approaching or accessing the cleared areas.

Do not use mobile phones or two-way radios in the cleared area or within fifteen metres of the suspect package.

Communicate regularly with staff, visitors and the public.

Notify police

- if the item has been opened, or partially opened prior to being deemed suspicious, it is vital that this is communicated to the police;
- ensure informants and witnesses remain available to brief the police, and that the accuracy of their observations is preserved: encourage witnesses immediately to record their observations in writing, and discourage them from discussing the incident or their observations with others prior to the arrival of the police.

extract from PAS 97

Other considerations re – Suspect Mail:

- All incoming suspect mail and deliveries should be accepted and processed in a separate room away from main office accommodation.
- Only permanent office staff to handle mail.
- Only accept mail for current staff members.
- Encourage regular correspondents to put their return address on each item.
- All incoming suspicious mail should be included in the screening process (royal mail, couriers, hand delivery)
- Open mail with letter openers.
- Open mail with minimum of movement. Do not shake or blow into unidentified letters/packages
- Wash hands after handling mail.
- Consider using latex gloves / face mask – contamination purposes or forensic issues (obscene / threatening mail)
- Packages suspected of containing unidentified material / substance, i.e. WHITE POWDER incidents. Item should be left intact. (see white powder incidents)
- Alternative uniform is available in case staff should need to remove contaminated clothing.

If you are suspicious ... THINK:

- What concerns you & why? Check for the classic visual features of hazardous devices.
- Contact the addressee – are they expecting a package containing wiring etc?
- After evaluation, isolate the suspect package from other mail immediately.
- Do **not** over-handle. Do **not** shake or attempt to open the package.
- Leave in-situ. Do **not** place in a filing cabinet or bucket of water/sand. Contact your Line Manager and inform of circumstances.

WHITE POWDER INCIDENTS

Firstly, it is important to remember that incidents involving chemical or biological attacks have been extremely rare. Hoax calls are a possibility. Most emergency services are highly skilled in the event of an incident.

Considerations for staff in the event of a suspicious package as described being found.

- Reassure! Ask them to remove any contaminated outer clothing. (retain modesty) and leave in room. **Do not remove clothing over the head, cut clothing off where possible**) Allow those involved to remove any powder contamination from body /clothing by wiping with a dry clean absorbent material to dabs hands and face. Unless burning caustic substance, in which case wipe and rinse the area.
- Reassure those directly involved and move away from the substance and preferably in the open air. (**LOOKOUT:** for sudden onset of illness or irritation of skin, eyes or nose).
- Those directly involved to Blow Nose.
- Turn off any air conditioning systems in room/building.
- Secure and isolate in a room.
- Prevent further access to area.
- Reassure and monitor the person(s) involved for health & safety reasons.

APPENDIX 1 – BOMB THREAT CHECKLIST

BOMB THREAT CHECKLIST

Bomb threat checklist

This checklist is designed to help staff to deal with a telephoned bomb threat effectively and to record the necessary information.

Actions to be taken on receipt of a bomb threat:

- Switch on recorder/voicemail (if connected)
- Tell the caller which town/district you are answering from
- Record the exact wording of the threat:

Ask the following questions:

- Where is the bomb right now?
- When is it going to explode?
- What does it look like?
- What kind of bomb is it?
- What will cause it to explode?
- Did you place the bomb?
- Why?
- What is your name?
- What is your address?
- What is your telephone number?

Record time call completed:

- Where automatic number reveal equipment is available, record number shown:
- Inform the Security Co-ordinator of name and telephone number of the person informed:
- Contact the police on 999. Time informed:

The following part should be completed once the caller has hung up and the Security Co-ordinator and the police have been informed.

- Time and date of call:
- Length of call:
- Number at which the call was received (i.e. your extension number):

About the caller

- Sex of caller:
- Age:
- Nationality:

✓ Tick where appropriate

Language

- Well spoken
- Irrational
- Taped message
- Offensive
- Incoherent
- Message read by threat-maker

Caller's voice

- Calm
- Crying
- Clearing throat
- Angry
- Nasal
- Slurred
- Excited
- Stutter
- Disguised
- Slow
- Lisp
- Accent

Type of accent

- Rapid
- Deep
- Hoarse
- Laughter
- Familiar

If so, whose voice did it sound like?

Background sounds

- Street noises
- House noises
- Animal noises
- Crockery
- Motor
- Clear
- Voice
- Static
- PA system
- Booth
- Music
- Factory machinery
- Office machinery
- Other (specify)

Other remarks

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Print name: _____

Remember: the more information you get, the easier it will be to decide if the call is genuine.

Immediately inform School Business Manager or Executive Headteacher or Head of School

It is important to write down as much as you can remember. You are the only link between the caller and those assessing the call.

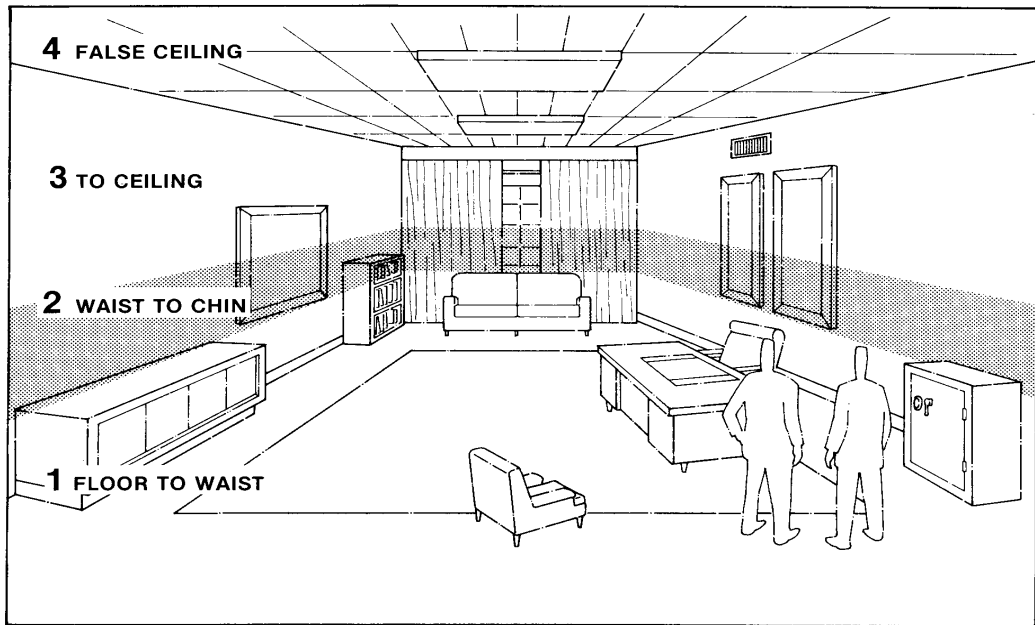
1. Even the slightest change can affect the meaning of the message. Write it down as accurately as you can, BUT if you realise you have made a mistake, do not be afraid to say so. Correct wording can make a difference. Especially note any inconsistencies if the message is repeated.
2. Try to find out exactly where a device is. Any ambiguity could mean persons being evacuated towards the device instead of away from it.
3. Time is an important factor. How long do we have to assess, decide and take action?
4. A good description may help a device to be identified more quickly.
5. It will help bomb disposal officers decide the best way to deal with a device if you can tell them what sort it is. This can also be important later, when trying to trace the persons who planted the device.
6. If we know whom the caller represents, we will know what code words to look for in the message. **DO NOT ASK FOR A CODE WORD – only record one if provide voluntarily.**
7. Knowing the leader of a cause is important, especially if the faction is a breakaway group.
8. The name of the group/faction, or the code word will help decide if the call is genuine or otherwise.
9. The address given could also give clues as to the real identity of the caller/group.
10. The precise time of the call is very important. Assessors need this as a base time to work from.
11. Accurate information about the caller may help later identification.
12. Every inflection could be important – there is a difference between a prepared message and a spontaneous one.

13. Information about the telephone, line and quality of call is of use to assessors
14. Background noises can give clues as to where the call is coming from
15. It is vital to note who took the call and how to contact you in case investigators need to speak to you later.
16. The number, which was called, is also important, especially if it is an extension number or an ex-directory line.

APPENDIX 2 - BOMB SEARCH PLAN

- The Executive Headteacher or Head of School is to make the decision to search for suspect packages and declaring that the search is complete.
- It is vital that if a threat is received by a telephone call, or other form of verbal communication, a description of the package is obtained.
- Consider which members of staff are to be tasked with carrying out the search. Remember that staffing levels will differ at different times of the day.
- Consider training and testing members of staff in basic search methods.
- Consider training and testing staff in recognition of what is a suspect package and what is unattended baggage.
- Consider what actions staff or members of the public should take if they discover a suspect package during the search?
- What actions staff or members of the public should take if they observe suspicious activity during the search?
- Consider what information, is communicated to guests and members of the public during the search. It is unlikely that a search can be carried out without the realisation of guests.
- Consider what form of communication is delivered when the search is complete.
- Consider whether and at what stage emergency services are informed of a threat and that a search is being conducted.
- Search sheets (example follows) must be carefully completed for all areas of the building and kept with other emergency information.

APPENDIX 3 – INTERNAL SEARCH PATTERN



#2 DIVIDE ROOM BY HEIGHT FOR SEARCH

APPENDIX 4 - BOMB THREAT EVACUATION MODEL

Our objective is to evacuate the premises quickly and efficiently and provide safe routes of escape.

The Executive Headteacher or Head of School will assume the role of Evacuation Co-ordinator, and will direct the operation.

1. All members of Management will be contacted by Reception, and report to Reception.
2. Evacuation Co-ordinator meets with members of management and briefs them of the situation. Bomb Threat Search Lists to be used/available
3. **IF TIME DOES NOT PERMIT THE ABOVE ACTIONS TO BE CARRIED OUT, ACTIVATE FIRE ALARM AS EVACUATION METHOD. REDIRECT FROM FIRE ASSEMBLY POINTS ON ARRIVAL.**
4. Hand-held radios, mobile phones can be used, but persons with such equipment should not be near a suspicious package found to ensure safety i.e. 15 metres.