



Bomb Threat Management - Basic Actions in case of Bomb Threats

Introduction:

A bomb threat is an effective means of disrupting business. **The problems are intensified when the incident involves an actual explosive or incendiary device. Although there is no foolproof means of securing a premises against a bomb threat (or bomb attack), a good security plan, correctly executed, will enable a business to deal with an incident properly.** Bombs and the threat of their use has become the primary weapon of the terrorist. **They are also used as a means of retaliation by employees with real or fancied grievances, as well as by criminal extortionists.**

Purpose of a Bomb Threat:

The only reasonable explanations for a call reporting that a bomb is to go off at a particular location are:

- **The caller has definite knowledge or believes that an explosive or incendiary device has been or will be placed and may want to minimize personal injury or property damage.** The caller may be either the person who placed the device or someone else who has become aware of such information.
- **The caller wants to create an atmosphere of anxiety and panic** which will, in turn, possibly result in a disruption of the normal activities at the facility where the device is purportedly located.

TYPES OF BOMBS:

There are many types of bombs, some of which are as follows: a) Petrol Bomb b) Simple Incendiaries c) Blast Bombs d) Blast Fragmentation Bombs e) Time-delayed Bombs f) Booby Traps g) Command Initiated Bombs h) Postal Bombs i) Projected Explosive Devices j) Blast Incendiary Device

Preparation:

Lines of organization and plans must be made in advance to handle bomb threats. Clear-cut levels of authority must be established. By having established procedures, a bomb threat can be handled with the least risk, instilling confidence in employees and eliminating panic. In planning, a control center or command post should be designated. This control center should be located in the switchboard room or other focal point of telephone or radio communications. The management personnel assigned to operate the control center should have decision-making authority on the action to be taken during the threat. Only those with assigned duties



should be permitted in the control center. Provision should be made for substitutes in the event someone is absent when the threat is received.

The following recommendations are intended as guidelines in developing a plan to handle bomb threats and incidents:

- **Contact the police, fire department, or other local governmental agencies** to determine whether any has a bomb disposal unit. Under what conditions is the bomb disposal unit available? What is the telephone number? How can the services of the bomb disposal unit be obtained in the event of a bomb threat? Will the bomb disposal unit assist in the physical search of the building, or will they only disarm or remove explosives?
- **Develop a positive means of identifying personnel** and controlling access to the facility.
- **Establish strict procedures for control and inspection of packages** and material entering critical areas.

Statistics have shown that over 95% of Bomb Threats (written or phones) are hoaxes. However, the chance remains that the threat may be authentic and appropriate action should be taken in each case to provide for the safety of people and property, and to locate an actual explosive or incendiary device so that it can be neutralised and so rendered safe.

When a bomb threat call has been received, there will be a reaction to it. If the call is directed at a business where there has been no organized, advance planning to handle such a threat, the call may result in panic.

Panic is defined as a "sudden, excessive, unreasoning, infectious terror." Panic is caused by fear - fear of the known or the unknown. It is one of the most contagious of all human emotions. Panic can also be defined, in the context of a bomb threat call, as the ultimate achievement of the caller.

Once a state of panic has been reached, the potential for personal injury and property damage is dramatically increased.

Emergency and essential facilities may be shut down or abandoned and the community denied their use at a critical time. Leaving facilities unattended can lead to destruction of the facility and the surrounding area. Large chemical manufacturing plants, power plants, unattended boilers, and other such facilities often require the constant attention of operating personnel.

Other effects of not being prepared, or not having an organized plan to handle bomb threat calls, can result in a lack of confidence in the leadership. This will be reflected in lower morale and productivity, or reluctance on the part of employees to continue employment at a location that is being subjected to bomb threat calls.

ACTION BY IN-HOUSE PERSONNEL (after receipt of call):



The information should be passed on to the person in charge of the office or the person designated by management to receive this type of information or the officer in charge of security, whoever has been designated or so detailed. Such person should then inform Top Management, the Police, Fire Service or Defence Force.

ACTION BY MANAGEMENT:

The Action to be taken by Management is to:- A) Analyse the information received; B) Determine the steps to be taken.

While the responsibility for action rests primarily with the protective services, there is a need for decisions to be taken by other persons who are threatened, for example, a Plant Manager or a School Principal must make the decision whether or not to evacuate the building after a bomb threat has been received and where to relocate the occupants who are evacuated. Selected/designated search teams consisting of responsible persons in each organisation should be nominated to conduct preliminary searches of threatened premises.

Handling a Bomb Threat:

Under most circumstances, because of the difficulty in discriminating in advance between a threat which is credible and one which is not, the response is the same - all threats must be taken seriously and properly addressed. On the other hand, a business must decide if it is feasible to evacuate a building every time a threat is received.

Telephone Threats:

When a bomb threat is called in, the procedures listed hereafter should be followed:

- Keep the caller on the line and attempt to get as much information as possible. Ask for the message to be repeated to confirm it. If possible, record the message.
- If the caller does not indicate the location of the bomb or the time of possible detonation, ask for this information.
- Inform the caller that the building is occupied and the detonation of a bomb could result in death or serious injury to many innocent people.
- Pay particular attention to background noises which may give a clue as to the location of the caller
- Listen closely to the voice (male or female), voice quality (calm or excited), accents, and speech impediments. Immediately after the caller hangs up, report the call to the person designated by management to receive such information. Law enforcement personnel will want to talk first-hand with the person who received the call.
- Report the threat immediately to the appropriate agencies, such as the police or fire department or CBI.
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Written Threats:

While written messages are usually associated with generalized threats and extortion attempts, a written warning of a specific device may occasionally be received. It should never be ignored.

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When a written threat is received, the procedures listed below should be followed: • Save all materials, including any envelope or container. Once the message is recognized as a bomb threat, further unnecessary handling should be avoided. • Every possible effort must be made to retain evidence, such as fingerprints, handwriting or typewriting, paper, and postal marks, which are essential to tracing the threat and identifying the writer.

Mail and Package Bomb:

The FBI Bomb Data Center has developed the following letter and package bomb indicators and recognition points:

- Excessive postage
- Incorrect titles
- Titles but no names
- Misspellings of common words
- Oily stains or discoloration
- No return address
- Excessive weight
- A rigid envelope
- Lopsided or an uneven envelope
- A strange odor
- Protruding wires or tinfoil
- Visual distractions
- Foreign mail, air mail, and special delivery
- Restrictive markings, such as confidential and personal
- Hand written or poorly typed messages
- Excessive securing material, such as masking tape and string

In the Atlanta courthouse incident, routine X-ray screening of incoming mail revealed that the package contained a pipe bomb. A bomb disposal unit was called and the bomb was removed without incident. Bomb and metal detection equipment available today employ various technologies to find dangerous objects, and an investment in such equipment is a function of an assessment of the seriousness of the threat posed to the business.

SEARCHES:

There are three (3) types of bomb searches:-

- a) An employee's search of the immediate work area is probably the most efficient response to a bomb threat. Only employees can quickly detect any strange or displaced items in their normal working environment.***
- b) Security Personnel Search (mainly potential bomb planting areas)***



- The organization's security personnel should search areas such as reception lounges, corridors, rest rooms, locker rooms, lavatories, elevators, etc.
- After these areas have been searched, security personnel can then move to search general areas and other potential targets.

c) **Police/Fire or Defense Force Search** (using whatever equipment there may be. It is also necessary for plant personnel to assist in this search.

EVACUATION:

This is the prerogative of Management, and should be done only when there is reason to believe there is imminent danger. *This decision is to be made after careful consideration of the facts e.g. if the employee search has unearthed a suspect package, or where the bomb is reported to detonate before an effective search can be carried out. The evacuation method will depend upon the tactical situation.* When only a small number of people have to be controlled, then instructions can be given in person. This is preferable in avoiding panic. Where a large number of people must be controlled, evacuation instructions should preferably be given by Managers/Supervisors or Security Personnel.

In the interim, the following basic guidelines are given for an evacuation exercise: a) walk out of the building in a quiet and orderly manner. Do not cause other people to panic by running; b) assembles at a pre-determined point and await further instructions: Avoid using elevators and leave drawers, doors and windows open.

Summary

Planning efforts for bomb threats begin with a vulnerability assessment of the facility. An estimate of the risk of attack is required, based on the type of business, its location, past threats, and current trends. Management must establish procedures before an incident occurs, so that a bomb threat can be handled with the least risk of creating panic. Employees must be trained in the proper procedures to follow in handling bomb threats, conducting bomb searches and evacuating a building. In the past, the majority of bomb threats turned out to be hoaxes. However, today more of the threats are materializing. Thus, management's first consideration must be for the safety of people. It is practically impossible to determine immediately whether a bomb threat is real or a hoax