



Victim Services of Waterloo Region

Fact Sheet on Bomb Threat Assessment

Bomb Threats?

Bomb threats, whether actual or fabricated, can bring schools, businesses, government agencies and individuals to a state of panic. Explosive threats and use are on the rise, and are a major media focus due to the current bomb threats in America. Anyone can call in a threat, or can leave a bag, box or parcel attended. But by being prepared for such an instance it is possible to alleviate some of the fears and to take quick action.

Bomb Threat Delivery

Bomb threats are often delivered by telephone, left on a voicemail message or in a fax transmission. Threats tend to be one of two types: specific and non-specific.

Specific Threats

The caller may be the person who made the bomb, set it in place or someone who learned of the bomber's plan. The caller claims that a bomb has been placed in a particular place and has a great deal of knowledge on the bomb, or wants to minimize personal injury. The more information given, the more likely the threat is legitimate.

Example: "There is a bomb under the Regional Building, in the parking lot. It is in the east stairwell, and is set to go off at 8:00 a.m. Get everyone out, and vacate Frederick Street from Lancaster to Weber! There is a pipe bomb taped under the stairs and I don't want anyone to get hurt!"

Non-Specific Threats

The caller provides no specific information and aims to create an atmosphere of panic and to disrupt activities at the location given.

Example: "There is a bomb in the jail!"

Reacting to Threats

Whether or not a threat seems legitimate, there is a responsibility to react effectively towards it. Time is of the essence.

If you are an individual and you spot a strange package, an unattended bag or anything else that seems out of the ordinary, call the police – don't touch it! If you are in a building where a threat has been called in, try to remain calm and evacuate in an orderly fashion. If you overhear of any plot to place or detonate a bomb call the police.



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It is important that businesses, schools and government agencies call in the police as well. There are officers trained to search for and respond to suspicious packages and bombs. Safety must always come first, and even if your building has its own security it is unlikely that they are trained in Bomb Threat Assessment.

By developing bomb threat policies it is easier to prepare and act effectively in the event of a threat. There should be an individual or a committee responsible for developing such a policy. Consider the following when developing such policies:

- Set a clear hierarchy of authority and responsibility within the policy.
- Develop procedures for responding to incidents as they arise.
- Select and train personnel to perform specific tasks such as searching and evacuating the building.
- Establish evacuation centres and routes.
- Practice your policies and procedures several times a year, and evaluate their effectiveness.
- Set guidelines and designate trained staff for handling media attention.

Choose How to React

There are three ways that people can react when a bomb threat is received:

- Ignore it.
- Search the premises.
- Search the evacuation routes, and once they are felt to be safe, evacuate the building.

Assess the threat, then react.

Searching Procedures

People who are familiar with the area make the best search team – they know what looks out of place, and where the good hiding spots are. Search public access areas first, like washrooms, the front lobby and so on. Never evacuate without searching the evacuation route first.

Team searches are quickest and the most thorough. Teams must be familiar with search techniques, descriptions of and improvised explosives. A well trained search team should be finished within an hour (longer searches are generally ineffective). Keep the building clean and secure to make their search easier.

If specific details are given, search the area disclosed first. Once the bomb is discovered, call 9-1-1 and evacuate the building (keep people away from the scene). If no details are given, call 9-1-1 immediately and initiate team search.

Prevention

There are steps to take to prevent bombing incidents. Focus on keeping buildings clean, safe and with restricted access. Develop policies to keep employees safe: team searches, evacuation procedures and initiatives to maintain good morale at the workplace. Lastly, training and drills can ensure that people are prepared for a threat, and will know how to handle themselves.

Planning for threats ensures that you will be able to react effectively!



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