

Bomb Threat Arrangement

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1 Introduction

Due to occasional hoax bomb threats at our public buildings, it is prudent for all services to ensure they have procedures in place for such occurrences.

The National Counter Terrorism Security Office's Venues and Public Spaces (VaPS) guidance [Bomb threats | ProtectUK](#) says the following about bomb threats:

"The vast majority of bomb threats are hoaxes designed to cause alarm and disruption and instances of valid bomb threats are rare. Terrorists and others may make hoax bomb threat calls to intimidate the public, businesses and communities, to draw attention to their cause and to mislead police."

While many bomb threats involve a person-to-person phone call, an increasing number are sent electronically using email or social media. No matter how ridiculous or implausible the threat may seem, all such communications are a crime and should be reported to the police by dialling 999.

It is important that potential recipients – either victims or third parties used to pass the message – have plans that include how the information is recorded, acted upon and passed to police."

2 Statement of purpose/Objectives

This document provides information and guidance to assist managers across the Council with the development of emergency procedures to protect the safety of employees, visitors and the general public and, where necessary, co-ordinate an evacuation in conjunction with the emergency services.

3 Provision of Information to Employees and Others

Service Areas should ensure that those with responsibilities under this arrangement:

- Are trained to an appropriate level
- Have access to competent advice and support

The responsible person must ensure that all employees including those from an outside undertaking who are working in or on the premises are provided with comprehensible and relevant information relating to the emergency procedures.

4 Co-operation & Co-ordination

Where two or more responsible persons share, or have duties in respect of, premises (whether on a temporary or a permanent basis) they must co-operate with each other to put appropriate plans in place for dealing with emergency situations.

5 Review of Arrangement

This arrangement will be reviewed by Health and Safety Team, in five years.

Approving Body

Consultation Health, Safety & Welfare Group July 2008

Approval Health and Safety Forum December 2008

Reviewed Health and Safety Team June 2020

Reviewed Health and Safety Team April 2026 – updated to include Protect UK guidance.

Bomb Threats - Frequently Asked Questions

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Appendix 1 Bomb Threat Check List

1 Roles and responsibilities/who does what?

The Organisation - Specific Responsibilities document sets out the roles and responsibilities with respect to health and safety for all levels of staff within the Council. This document forms part of the Council's Health and Safety Policy and can be found here: [Health and Safety Policy](#)

2 What is a bomb threat?

A bomb threat is where an individual places an article or communicates information with the intention of inducing a person to believe that something is likely to explode or ignite causing harm.

Bomb threats containing accurate and precise information and received well in advance of an actual attack, are rare occurrences. Precise motives for hoaxing are difficult to determine but may include revenge, extortion, a desire to impress or a combination of these and other less understandable motives. Whatever the motive, the intent is to cause disruption, fear and/or inconvenience the victim.

3. How could a bomb threat be received?

A bomb threat could be received in a number of ways. The threat is likely to be made in person over the telephone however, it may also be:

- recorded message, possibly using a text-to-speech synthesiser or a soundboard
- communicated in written form
- delivered face to face
- send by email or social media

A threat may be communicated via an independent third-party, i.e. a person or organisation unrelated to the intended victim and selected only to pass the message. However the threat is communicated, the police will need the exact wording and whatever other details are available.

All bomb threat communications are a crime and should be reported to the police by dialling 999, no matter how ridiculous or implausible the threat may seem.

4. What type of bombs may be used?

- Incendiary bombs are generally hand-carried devices usually intended to cause economic damage and weaken confidence rather than cause mass casualties.
- Letter bombs (including parcel, packages) are delivered by post or courier. They may be explosive or incendiary, or conceivably chemical, biological or radiological. Anyone receiving a suspicious delivery is unlikely to know which type it is, so procedures should cater for every eventuality.
- Person-borne devices/suicide bombers usually carried in containers such as rucksacks, vests or briefcases, which are chosen to blend in easily with the target surroundings or easily concealed by clothing.
- Vehicle borne improvised explosive devices capable of delivering a large quantity of explosives to a target.
- Chemical, biological and radiological (CBR) bombs. Although, there have been limited examples of terrorists using these.

5. How do I immediately respond to a bomb threat communication?

Any member of staff with a direct telephone line, mobile phone, computer or tablet etc. or who has any contact with the public, could possibly receive a bomb threat. Therefore, it is important that staff understand the actions required of them as the potential first response to a threat message and their duty of care to others.

If a telephone threat is received:

- Stay calm and listen carefully
- Have immediate access to the bomb threat checklist and the key information that should be recorded – see Appendix 1 below and [Bomb Threat Check List](#)
- If practical, keep the caller talking and alert a colleague to dial 999
- If displayed on your phone, note the number of the caller, otherwise, dial **1471** to obtain the number once the call has ended
- If the threat is a recorded message, write down as much detail as possible and retain for the police to secure
- If the threat is received via text message, do not reply to, forward or delete the message; note the number of the sender and follow police advice
- Know who to contact in your organisation upon receipt of the threat, e.g. Duty Manager, as they will need to make an assessment of the threat. It may be necessary to use a code word to use over communication

devices to ask for assistance without alerting those hearing the conversation to the situation and possibly causing a panic.

Ideally, the bomb threat checklist should be completed as soon as possible, i.e. whilst the threat is 'fresh' in the recipient's memory.

If the threat is delivered face-to-face:

- Try to remember as many distinguishing characteristics of the person who made the threat as possible and try to remember exactly what was said (again, the Bomb Threats Checklist may be a useful prompt)

If discovered in a written note, letter or as graffiti:

- Treat as police evidence and stop other people touching the item

If the threat is received via email or a social media application:

- Do not reply to, forward or delete the message
- Note the sender's email address or username/user ID for social media applications
- Preserve all web log files for your organisation to help the police investigation (as a guide, police will require data from 7 days prior to the threat message and 48 hours after)

Remember: Seek advice from the Duty Manager as soon as possible. All bomb threat communications are a crime and should be reported to the police by dialling 999.

6. What should happen after the bomb threat has been received?

Assessing the credibility of bomb threats. Evaluating the credibility of a threat is a critical task, particularly if the attack being threatened is imminent.

Short-notice threats are a tactic used to place additional pressure on decision makers, so the better prepared you are, the quicker the police response is likely to be.

Police will assess the threat and if specific intelligence is known, will give risk management advice accordingly. However, in the absence of detailed information or specific intelligence, it will be necessary for you to consider a number of factors relevant to your decision-making process:

- Is the threat part of a series? If so, what has happened elsewhere or previously?
- Can the location of the claimed bomb(s) be known with precision? If so, is a bomb visible at the location identified? Has a report of suspicious behaviour been received? Do you have CCTV coverage at or near the location specified?
- If a suspicious item is identified can anyone account for its presence? Are bomb-like characteristics visible? (e.g. wiring or a power source). Was the item located after suspicious activity was noted?

- Considering the hoaxer's desire to influence behaviour as a form of social engineering, is there any good reason to believe their words or follow any instructions they give?
- If the threat is imprecise, could an external evacuation inadvertently move people closer to the hazard specified or to other forms of physical attack, e.g. the possibility of a vehicle as a weapon or knife attack?

7. Should the premises be evacuated or locked down?

Clearly, this is a matter of judgement, having regard to all the information available. Responsibility for the initial decision making remains with the Premise or Duty Manager (taking the position of Incident Lead) of the location being threatened and must form part of an inclusive process for managing risk.

As already noted, all bomb threats should be reported to the Police and their advice should be followed. Police will assess the credibility of the threat not just to the building and the people within it, but also to the surrounding area. This will be done at the earliest opportunity, followed by the provision of appropriate guidance, which may inform your further options.

However, do not delay your decision-making process waiting for the arrival of Police. The speed of decision-making and implementation during an incident is critical.

It is essential that appropriate evacuation, lockdown or invacuation plans exist and are tested; they should be event and location specific, and accommodate foreseeable variables. Further information can be found here [Evacuation, invacuation, lockdown, protected spaces | ProtectUK](#)

In general, users of buildings will be required to evacuate if the threat to them is greater inside the building than any danger outside the building. The Incident Lead must consider which exit/evacuation routes are safe to use or where persons should be invacuated to.

8. How should the premises be evacuated?

Those persons who would be involved in evacuating the premises for a fire would also be involved in evacuating the premises as the result of a bomb threat.

Ideally, the instruction to evacuate should be by word of mouth or use of a designated bomb alarm (e.g. intermittent alarm sounder). Only if this is not practicable (e.g. if the co-ordinator is concerned at the lapse of time since the threat was received) should the fire alarm be used.

If personal belongings are nearby, employees and members of the public should be asked to take them with them as this will facilitate the search.

A designated bomb assembly point should be a suitable distance away from buildings and car parks, taking into account the possible spread of blast, glass and debris damage. See more on this in question 12, below. This assembly point should be easy for emergency vehicles to access and also be a location to use as an Incident Control point.

9. What is the Police procedure?

Having been advised of a bomb threat, it is not normal police practice to search the premises. This is because police officers:

- (a) are unlikely to know the lay-out of the buildings, or the likely places in which a device could be concealed,
- (b) being unfamiliar with the premises, would not be able to distinguish between items which ought and ought not to be there.

Where the Police believe the threat to be credible, they may decide to call in the Explosives Ordnance Division who may undertake a search of the premises.

10. Should the building search be carried out?

In deciding whether to initiate a search the safety and opinions of employees must be the overriding consideration. No-one can be compelled to perform a search and the Incident Lead is **not expected** to do so nor to direct others to do so unless everyone feels comfortable with that decision.

If, taking into account the advice of the police, the decision is made to initiate a search, the responsibility for directing and supervising it remains with the Incident Lead.

The search should be conducted in a methodical way.

The search of the ground floor should also include outside areas and the perimeter of the building.

At the conclusion of the search, the searchers should report their findings to the incident lead.

Should anything suspicious be found a marker should be placed close to but not on the item.

11. When can the building be re-occupied?

If the search has revealed nothing untoward and if the incident lead (in liaison with the police) concludes that the risk to people and property is minimal, re-occupation of the building should take place.

If there is any doubt at all about the safety of employees, the building must not be re-occupied.

12. Do I need a written emergency action plan for my building?

Yes, it is a good idea to have a written plan setting out the action to be taken by all employees in the event of an emergency. This should be prepared by the Premise Manager or responsible person for the building and should be displayed in prominent areas.

It should include:

- the method for raising the alarm;
- the people involved in leading an evacuation;
- provide details of relevant contact names; and
- the location of evacuation assembly points (which will be different from fire assembly points). See question 12 below for more on this.

13. What travel distance should the assembly point be from the threat?

Evacuation points for when there is a risk of explosion generally need to be further away from the building than for fire evacuation.

As a guide bomb, assembly points should meet the following minimum criteria:

Letter bombs – 100 metres;

Car bombs – 200 metres;

Lorry bomb – 500 metres;

14. What information, instruction and training should be provided to staff.

Training in what to do in the event of a bomb threat should be given to staff, in the same way that fire training is given.

Notices of what action staff should take in the event of a bomb threat should be displayed alongside fire notices.

Evacuation or lockdown of the building and invacuation as the result of a bomb threat can be practised, in the same way you would practise a fire evacuation, to ensure that staff understand what action to take. These drills should be recorded.

15. Does the incident need to be centrally recorded?

Yes, as soon as possible after the event complete an ERP Incident Report.

Appendix 1 Bomb Threat Check List from www.protectuk.police.uk

Try to keep the person on the phone as long as possible. Alert staff around you to inform a senior manager without alarming the person on the phone - make use of Teams messaging or physically alert staff perhaps by holding up a designated bomb threat picture (e.g. zebra) or by message "I have a potential zebra in the building, please alert the Premises Manager". Other staff should try to stay in the room to support.

Section 1: Keep calm and talk to the caller. Record the call, if possible. If not, write down as much information as possible at the time of the call or immediately after.

- Record the exact wording of the threat _____

- **ASK CALLER**

1. Where exactly is the bomb right now?

2. When is it going to explode?

3. What does it look like?

4. What does the bomb contain?

5. What will cause it to explode?

6. Did you place the bomb? If not, who did?

7. Why?

8. What is your **Name?** **Address?** **Telephone Number?**

9. Time 999 call was made to the Police: _____

Name and telephone number of Premises/Facilities Manager contacted:

Section 2:

Time and date of call: _____ Length of call: _____

Telephone number that received the call: _____

Number of caller: _____

About the caller:

Male _____ Female _____

Nationality _____ Age _____

Threat language:

Well spoken _____ Irrational _____ Taped _____

Foul _____ Incoherent _____

Caller's voice:

Calm _____ Crying _____ Angry _____ Laughing _____ Clearing throat _____

Slurred _____ Excited _____ Stutter _____ Disguised _____ Slow _____ Lisp _____

Hoarse _____ Rapid _____ Deep _____ Nasal _____ Accent (what accent) _____

Familiar? If so who did it sound like? _____

Background sounds:

Street noises _____ House noises _____ Animal noises _____ Crockery _____

Office machinery _____ Voices _____ PA system _____ Static _____

Factory machinery _____ Music _____ Vehicles _____ Clear _____

Other (specify)

Remarks _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Print name _____