



# Bomb Threat Safety Training Program



## Goals

The goals of this program are to ensure that:

- an employee who receives a bomb threat responds quickly and properly to save lives; and
- management develops a Bomb Threat Response Plan to safely guide employees through every aspect of a bomb threat.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) encourages employers to include bomb threat procedures in their company's emergency response plans.<sup>1</sup>

## Bomb Threats

**Take all bomb threats seriously!** A bomb threat can come in almost any form:

- an unidentified package received at a worksite;
- a suspicious object left in a public area;

- a social media post;
- a text or email message;
- a handwritten note, memo, or letter; or
- even written words on a wall.

However, **most bomb threats come over the phone.**<sup>2</sup>

**Investigate all bomb threats!** Some threats are pranks to disrupt businesses, special events, or classroom activities. However, even a prank threat is a federal crime, which can “threaten interstate communications, convey false information, and perpetuate a hoax.”<sup>3</sup> It also wastes law enforcement resources and can put first responders in needless danger. When a bomb threat is received, **gather as much information as possible.** The more specific the information, the more likely an explosive device exists.

A person's or group's reasons for planting an explosive device can vary. A bomb threat may

come from a person who knows about the device and wants to warn others to leave a location so no one gets hurt. At other times, the bomb threat may be to disrupt lives or create fear, uncertainty, and panic.<sup>4</sup> In these instances, gaining power may be the goal: having the ability to shut down a business, cost an employer money, or send employees home early. Also, some bomb threats may be linked to domestic or foreign terrorism. These threats are usually planned to achieve ideological goals, such as political, religious, social, racial, or environmental demands.<sup>5</sup>

Whatever the reason for a bomb threat, proper planning and preparation can result in less chaos, better threat assessments, and safer outcomes.

## Preparing for a Bomb Threat

- Help mitigate threats by:
  - controlling building access;
  - strictly managing master keys;
  - inspecting incoming parcels;
  - protecting confidential material;
  - keeping exits clear;
  - installing indoor and outdoor emergency lighting; and
  - using electronic surveillance.

# BOMB THREAT CHECKLIST

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ TIME: \_\_\_\_\_ TIME CALLER HUNG UP: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER WHERE CALL RECEIVED: \_\_\_\_\_

### Ask Caller:

- ▶ Where is the bomb located?  
(building, floor, room, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ When will it go off? \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ What does it look like? \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ What will make it explode? \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ Did you place the bomb? Yes No \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ Why? \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ What is your name? \_\_\_\_\_

### Exact Words of Threat:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Information About Caller:

- ▶ Where is the caller located?  
(background/level of noise) \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ Estimated age? \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ Is the voice familiar? If so, who does it sound like? \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ Other points: \_\_\_\_\_

Caller's Voice	Background Sounds	Threat Language
<input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Animal Noises	<input type="checkbox"/> Incoherent
<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> House Noises	<input type="checkbox"/> Message Read
<input type="checkbox"/> Accent	<input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen Noises	<input type="checkbox"/> Taped Message
<input type="checkbox"/> Angry	<input type="checkbox"/> Street Noises	<input type="checkbox"/> Irrational
<input type="checkbox"/> Calm	<input type="checkbox"/> Booth	<input type="checkbox"/> Profane
<input type="checkbox"/> Clearing Throat	<input type="checkbox"/> PA System	<input type="checkbox"/> Well-Spoken
<input type="checkbox"/> Coughing	<input type="checkbox"/> Conversation	
<input type="checkbox"/> Cracking Voice	<input type="checkbox"/> Music	
<input type="checkbox"/> Crying	<input type="checkbox"/> Motor	
<input type="checkbox"/> Deep	<input type="checkbox"/> Clear	
<input type="checkbox"/> Deep Breathing	<input type="checkbox"/> Static	
<input type="checkbox"/> Disguised	<input type="checkbox"/> Office Machinery	
<input type="checkbox"/> Distinct	<input type="checkbox"/> Factory Machinery	
<input type="checkbox"/> Excited	<input type="checkbox"/> Local	
<input type="checkbox"/> Laughter	<input type="checkbox"/> Long Distance	
<input type="checkbox"/> Lisp		
<input type="checkbox"/> Loud	<b>Other Information:</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Nasal	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Normal	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ragged	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Rapid	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Raspy	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Slow	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Slurred	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Soft		
<input type="checkbox"/> Stutter		

- Coordinate with local law enforcement and first responders to ensure smooth handling in the event of a bomb threat
- Select Site Decision Maker(s) and develop clear-cut primary and alternate levels of authority.
- Select Evacuation Teams and Search Teams.
- Identify key emergency contacts and provide a written list of their names and phone numbers to all employees, such as the:
  - Site Decision Maker(s);
  - local fire, law enforcement, and emergency medical responders;
  - Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI);
  - Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF);
  - Postal Inspector; and
  - the nearest hospital.
- Choose evacuation routes, assembly areas, and alternate locations for employees to meet.
- Create evacuation signals.
- Select a control center location.
- Determine search procedures.
- Provide bomb threat training to all employees.
- Give all employees a [Bomb Threat Checklist](#) (see page 2).
- Include this information in a written Bomb Threat Response Plan and make it available to all employees.



## Receiving a Threat

**Document all threats!** Every bomb threat is unique. Handle it according to its type and the facility, location, and environment in which it occurs.

### *For threats made by phone:*

- Stay calm and courteous. Listen and do not interrupt!
- If possible, signal or pass a note to have a co-worker listen and help notify authorities.
- Keep the caller talking as long as possible. **DO NOT HANG UP**, even if the caller does.
- Ask questions:
  - Where is the bomb located?
  - When will it 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?
  - Where are you now?

- Write down as much information as possible to aid investigators:
  - time of the call;
  - caller ID number;
  - exact wording of the threat;
  - type of voice or behavior;
  - background noise;
  - estimated age; and
  - is the voice familiar?
- Record the call, if possible.
- If unable to get a co-worker to call for help, immediately at the end of the call – **DO NOT HANG UP** – contact the Site Decision Maker(s) and call 9-1-1 from a different phone.
- Immediately fill out a [Bomb Threat Checklist](#) (see page 2).
- Stay available for interviews with the building’s Emergency Response Team and law enforcement.
- Follow the company’s Bomb Threat Response Plan until the Site Decision Maker(s) and law enforcement determine the credibility of the threat.

### **For threats made by email, text, or social media:**

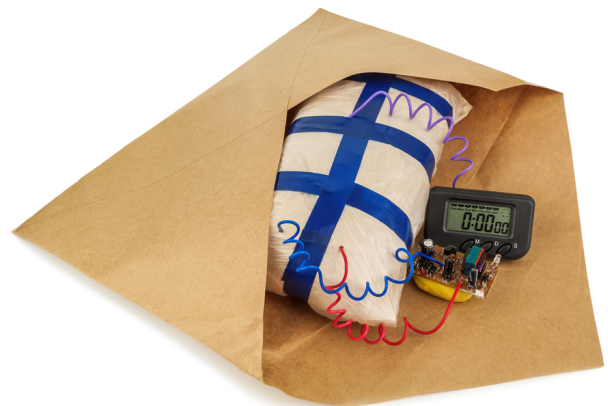
- Leave the message open on the computer or smartphone.
- Notify the Site Decision Maker(s) and law enforcement.
- Print or take a screenshot of the message including any subject line.
- Note the date and time.

### **For threats made in writing:**

- Handle the document as little as possible.
- Notify the Site Decision Maker(s) and law enforcement.
- Rewrite the threat exactly as is on another sheet of paper.
- Note the following:
  - date, time, and place the document was found;
  - any situations or conditions surrounding the discovery or delivery;
  - full names of any personnel who saw the threat; and
  - secure the original threat.
    - ✓ If it is small or removable, place it in a bag or envelope.
    - ✓ If it is large or stationary, secure the location.

### **For threats made verbally:**

- If the person who makes the threat leaves, notice which direction he or she went.
- Notify the Site Decision Maker(s) and law enforcement.



- Write down the threat exactly as it was communicated.
- Note the description of the person who made the threat:
  - name (if known);
  - gender;
  - body size (height/weight);
  - distinguishing features;
  - race;
  - type and color of clothing;
  - hair and eye color;
  - voice (loud, deep, accent, etc.); and
  - any other identifying information.



### ***If a suspicious item is found:***

A **suspicious item** is any bag, vehicle, or another object (s) “that is reasonably believed to contain explosives, an improvised explosive device (IED), or other hazardous material that requires a bomb technician to further evaluate it.”<sup>6</sup> Anything considered **HOT** – **H**idden, **O**bviously suspicious, and not **T**ypical – should be deemed suspicious. Examples include:

- unexplainable wires, electronics, metal foil, or strings;
- unusual sounds, vapors, mists, or odors;
- unexplained placement of an item near people or a valuable asset;
- unusual or unexpected point of origin;
- unreadable address or no return address;
- errors in the company address or title(s);
- markings such as “personal”, “to be

opened only by,” or “do not delay delivery;”

- envelopes or packages with unusual weight, thickness, or size;
- excessive postage;
- makeshift labels or disguised script;
- a feeling of springiness or rigidity;
- oily or greasy stains on the packaging or tape; or
- an unbalanced or lopsided letter or parcel.

**Not all items are suspicious.** An **unattended item** is a bag, package, vehicle, or another item “of unknown origin and content where there are no obvious signs of suspicion.”<sup>7</sup> A facility search, lock-down, or evacuation is not necessary unless the item is determined as suspicious. (See the CISA’s Office for Bombing Prevention’s video, [What to Do: Suspicious or Unattended Item.](#))

If the item appears suspicious:

- remain calm;

- **do not touch**, tamper with, or move the package, bag, or item; and
- notify Site Decision Maker(s) and law enforcement immediately and explain why the item appears suspicious.

Site Decision Maker(s) and law enforcement will assess the situation and provide guidance regarding whether to shelter in place or evacuate. The Site Decision Maker(s) role is to:

- ensure the area is secure;
- move people away from suspicious objects or packages;
- notify Search Team members;
- ensure emergency responders are briefed; and
- ensure that the Evacuation Team and Search Team remain available to assist evacuees and keep media, staff, and others informed.

If no guidance is provided and there is a concern about immediate danger, employees should calmly evacuate the area. Distance and protective cover are the best ways to reduce injury from a bomb. Always be aware that there could be other threats or suspicious items.

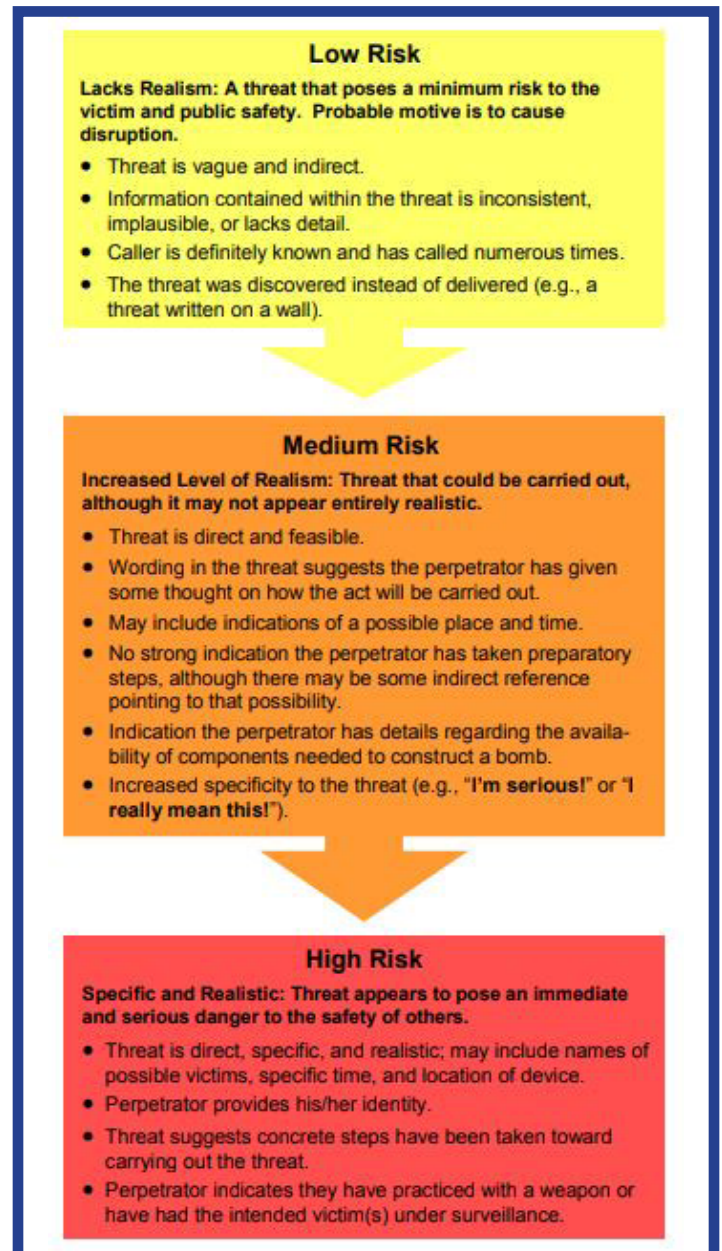
## The Decision to Lockdown or Evacuate

A bomb threat does not mean an automatic evacuation of the building. It is important to calmly evaluate each threat to determine the best course of action. (See the CISA's Threat Assessment Risk graphic to the right.)

- Question and rate the risk posed by the threat:
  - Does it seem credible?
  - Was the caller identified?

- Does it sound like there may be additional bombs or other threats?

- Work with law enforcement to determine the best course of action, which may include staying in the building, searching for the device, or evacuating the facility.
- Communicate to employees that there are security concerns in the building and that they should stand by for instructions.



## Conducting a Bomb Search

**Never move or touch a suspicious objective! Move people away from it!**

Law enforcement or the bomb squad do not search for a bomb since they do not know what is unusual, suspicious, or out of place. They rely on the people familiar with an area to let them know.

Designate at least one person familiar with each area to look for an unusual, suspicious, or out-of-place object or package when a bomb threat is made. Common areas, such as breakrooms and bathrooms, may require a two-to-three-member Search Team.

Search Team members should:

- **look, listen, and smell** before entering a room;
- divide the room into high, low, and waist-level areas;
- use a grid or spiral pattern to conduct the search; and
- leave lights the way they are – on or off – to avoid possibly setting off a bomb.

Remember a bomber has only a limited time to plant a bomb. Search easy-access areas first. Start with the outside of the building, then move to the common areas open to the public, and finally, search the private areas last. Once the facility and grounds have been searched, secure the area. (See the CISA's Office for Bombing Prevention's video, [What to Do: Bomb Searches](#).)

If a suspicious object or package is found, either evacuate the building or move all personnel at least 300 feet away, depending on the size of the bomb. Follow routine



evacuation procedures. Check the routes and assembly areas for secondary bombs or suspicious items.

## Actions After Evacuation

Site Decision Maker(s) should:

- debrief law enforcement and emergency services personnel;
- determine whether to reoccupy or dismiss;
- notify all personnel of reoccupy or dismiss actions and ensure accountability;
- open, if needed, media, medical, and family areas and brief them regularly; and
- remain on-scene until the situation is resolved or until relieved by another administrator.

With pre-planning and training, employees and Site Decision Maker(s) can reduce panic and assure a quick response to a threat.

## Review

1. In general, the more specific description a caller gives, the more likely it is a real threat.

True or False?

2. A bomb threat is made:

- a. because the caller doesn't want anyone to get hurt;
- b. to give the caller a feeling of power over the employer;
- c. because the caller wants to leave work early;
- d. all of the above.

3. Not all bomb threats need to be taken seriously.

True or False?

4. The police or bomb squad will not search for a bomb in your place of business because they are not familiar with its contents.

True or False?

5. In trying to spot a bomb, a searcher should be familiar with the area. He or she should look for anything:

- a. unusual
- b. out of place
- c. suspicious
- d. a, b, and c

**Answer Key**  
1. True; 2. d.; 3. False. All threats must be taken seriously.; 4. True; 5. d.



## References

<sup>1</sup>Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Standard Interpretation: Natural Phenomenon and 1910.120. Website. <https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/standardinterpretations/1991-06-26>. Accessed January 18, 2023.

<sup>2</sup>University of California, Merced, Emergency Preparedness: Bomb Threat. Website. <https://emergency.ucmerced.edu/planning-procedures/bomb-threat>. Accessed January 18, 2023.

<sup>3</sup>Federal Bureau of Investigations, Think Before You Post: Hoax Threats are Serious Federal Crimes. Website. <https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/hoax-threats-awareness-100518>. Accessed January 18, 2023.

<sup>4</sup>Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, What to Do-Bomb Threat, Website. <https://www.cisa.gov/what-to-do-bomb-threat>. Accessed January 18, 2023.

<sup>5</sup>Federal Bureau of Investigation, What We Investigate: Terrorism, Website. <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/terrorism>. Accessed January 18, 2023.

<sup>6</sup>Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, What to Do-Bomb Threat, Website. <https://www.cisa.gov/what-to-do-bomb-threat>. Accessed January 18, 2023.

<sup>7</sup>Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, What to Do-Bomb Threat, Website. <https://www.cisa.gov/what-to-do-bomb-threat>. Accessed January 18, 2023.



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