



Hurworth Primary School

GUIDANCE WHEN RESPONDING TO THE THREAT OF A BOMB ATTACK

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PURPOSE OF GUIDANCE

The purpose of this document is to give guidance on the response staff should take if a bomb threat of any form is made against Hurworth Primary School premises. The Head Teacher will ensure that all staff are made aware of this guidance.

The guidance is based on Home Office and Police advice. It should be noted that whereas this guidance refers to 'the responsible manager' on the premises, or manager for short, the Police tend to use the term Co-ordinator for such a person. In either case the manager/co-ordinator will be the Head Teacher or delegated person in charge at the time of the threat.

The response to a bomb threat of any form is up to the judgement, on the day, of the responsible manager on the premises. Decisions in such circumstances are difficult and onerous, and this guidance should give managers the confidence to make sensible decisions and responses.

Without guidance not only is there a risk of inappropriate response to a genuine threat, thus endangering lives and premises, but also the hoax threats are over-reacted to, thus inviting further disrupting hoax threats.

This guidance also contains, as appendices, guidance for managers to issue to appropriate employees on:

- a) records to be made of telephone bomb warnings, which will be of use to the police in relation to both genuine and hoax calls; and
- b) the recognition of, and immediate action to be taken in respect of, suspect postal/letter bombs.

BACKGROUND

There are four different kinds of bombs: high explosive bombs; incendiary devices/fire bombs; vehicle/car bombs; and postal/letter bombs. All of these are designed to kill, maim and/or cause extensive damage. They are readily disguised and may either be brought into buildings or left close to the premises.

Whilst the risk to our premises being affected by a genuine threat of bomb attack is very small, it is nevertheless important that managers are prepared to respond to such a threat in a suitable and effective way.

If line managers familiarise themselves with this guidance and convey the relevant information to key members of their staff, then this should be sufficient to ensure a suitable response.

BUILDING SECURITY

Protection against a bomb attack starts with basic security. The harder it is for an intruder to freely enter or move around the building the less likely a bomb attack will occur. All appropriate doors and windows within the school premises will be secured when not in use. Make sure when securing doors not to infringe fire exits.

Good housekeeping practices reduce the number of places a bomb could be hidden. Do not let rubbish accumulate. If the premises are tidy it is more likely that any suspicious item will be spotted.

Bombers rely on the complacency of staff and their reluctance to challenge strangers, so encourage staff to always be vigilant: a polite "Can I help you?" will often deter the dishonest.

DEALING WITH TELEPHONE WARNINGS

Terrorists frequently (but not always) give telephone warnings of bomb explosions. So, unfortunately, do hoaxers whose threats are empty.

You may receive a warning that your own premises are at risk. In such cases you will have to decide how to respond. In particular, you will have to decide whether to evacuate your premises. In all cases, whether or not you consider the threat to be credible, you should:

- telephone the police **immediately**
- search the premises (unless immediate evacuation is warranted)
- consider whether to evacuate the premises

The person who takes the telephone warning should be available for interview by the police.

Responding to warning calls often involves making difficult decisions. What is often overlooked however, is how important, and yet how difficult, it is to gain the maximum amount of useful information from the call. The following advice is designed to help in this, and should be brought to the attention of those staff on the premises who are most likely to receive the telephone warning.

ACTION BY PERSON TAKING THE CALL

The four key rules are:

- Keep calm.
- Try to obtain as much information as possible from the call.
- Keep the line open even after the caller has hung up.
- As soon as possible report the call to the responsible manager on the premises.

The caller may ring off immediately after giving the message, but whoever takes the call should nevertheless try to get a response to the following questions and write down the answers.

- Where is the bomb?
- What time will it go off?
- What does it look like?
- What kind of bomb is it?
- Why are you doing it?

The person receiving the call should also try and assess the following:

- **The Caller**
Is it a man, women or child?
- **The Speech**
Is it intoxicating, rambling or irrational? Has it a distinctive accent? Was the caller laughing? Did the caller have a speech impediment
- **Distractions**
Is the call from a public call box or a private phone? Is there background noise, such as a train, aeroplane, traffic or possibly conversation and music that may indicate a public house or other place of entertainment?

In order to help with this task, the form (at Appendix A) sets out the points mentioned above. It should be displayed prominently at the switchboard, and issued to all members of staff who routinely take outside telephone calls.

Keep the caller talking for as long as possible. Do not replace the telephone handset - keep the line open even when the caller has rung off, unless the handset is required to take further action.

SEARCHING THE PREMISES

Normally, the police will not themselves search a building following the receipt of a bomb threat.

This is for two good reasons.

Firstly, police are unlikely to know the layout of the premises, and the various places in which a device could be concealed. School staff should know, and should be able to search more quickly and more thoroughly.

Secondly, the police, unlike your staff will not know what should be there. Consequently, they will not so easily be able to spot anything which is out of place.

So where the responsible manager deems a search of the premises to be appropriate, he/she will normally need to initiate the search. Members of staff should be **requested** to search areas which they are familiar with.

A search should be conducted in a logical and thorough manner so that no part of the school premises is left unchecked.

What volunteer searchers, and other members of staff checking their own rooms or work areas, are looking for is an unidentified object:

- **That should not be there**
- **That cannot be accounted for**
- **That is out of place**

They should look for any unusual lights (including small light sources known as LED's which are often used in terrorist bombs). They should also listen carefully for any unusual noises particularly ticking or whirring noises.

If anything unusual is seen, the responsible manager should be alerted and he/she will decide whether to evacuate the building.

Use of Radios or Mobile Phones.

Once a suspect device has been located, those using hand held communication should immediately move away.

IF A SUSPICIOUS OBJECT IS FOUND

Follow the golden rules:

- **DO NOT TOUCH OR MOVE.**
- If possible leave a distinctive marker near (not touching) the device.
- Inform the responsible manager.
- The manager should initiate evacuation of the premises.

The person finding the object should be immediately available for interview by the police.

POSTAL/LETTER BOMBS

As well as a very small risk of a telephone threat of a bomb attack, there is also a very small risk that a suspect postal/letter bomb may be received at your premises. If a suspect package is received, then you should:

- Telephone the police **immediately**.
- Consider whether to evacuate the premises, or partially evacuate the premises.

Those of your staff who handle incoming post should be issued with, or otherwise have attention drawn to, Appendix B of this guide. Appendix B sets out tell-tale signs which help employees to identify suspect packages, and it advises them on the immediate action they should take.

MAKING A DECISION WHETHER TO EVACUATE

If a telephone warning of a bomb threat is received, and/or a suspect package or object is found or received, then it will be necessary for the responsible manager to decide whether to evacuate the premises.

The purpose of evacuation is to move people away from an area where they might be at risk to a place of safety. This may be achieved by:

- Partial evacuation (where only a suspect letter bomb is found).
- Full evacuation.

In all cases where a bomb threat is received, or suspect package is received or found, the responsible manager should immediately inform the police and advise them of what action is being taken

The decision to evacuate must normally be taken by the responsible manager but the police may be ready to advise on request.

In exceptional circumstances, where for example the police have received specific information, they may themselves order an evacuation, if necessary overruling the decision of the manager. But they will always seek the manager's help.

On the other hand, it may be necessary for the police in some circumstances to insist that the premises are not evacuated. They might, for example, have reason to believe that there may be an explosive device outside the building and evacuation would place people at greater risk.

There are four actions open to a manager. Which one is chosen depends upon his/her assessment of the threat which the situation presents. **The choices are:**

- **To do nothing; or**
- **To search, and then to evacuate if a suspicious object is found: or**
- **To evacuate all except volunteer staff who will carry out the search, then to carry out a search and evacuate fully if a suspicious object is discovered; or**
- **To evacuate immediately without searching.**

Option 1: DO NOTHING

This option may appear attractive if the threat comes from a drunk or a child, but it should not be adopted unless the manager is **absolutely sure that it is a malicious call or a prank**. If there is the **slightest** doubt, the manager must turn to one of the other options.

Option 2: SEARCH AND THEN EVACUATE IF NECESSARY

This choice means, of course, that people will be in the building for a longer period if there is a bomb present. However, if a suspect object is found, they can then be evacuated away from danger. If nothing is found and there are no other significant factors, the manager may then decide to declare the building safe. **The manager may consider this option appropriate if assessing the threat level as low, for example when it appears likely but not certain that the threat is a malicious call or prank.** It also has the advantage that all of the staff, who are best placed to search their own work areas, are available to do so, leaving only the communal areas to the **volunteer** searchers.

Option 3: SEARCH AND PARTIAL EVACUATION OF THE SCHOOL

When the threat level is considered to be moderate, but there is no reason to believe an explosion may be imminent, the manager might consider retaining only **volunteer** search staff on the premises. Alternatively, where a suspect object is very small (e.g. a letter bomb), and parts of the premises are a considerable distance from the device, the manager might consider evacuating only part of the premises.

Option 4: EVACUATE IMMEDIATELY

If a call is received which the manager considers to indicate the existence of a high risk, there will be a case for total evacuation as quickly as possible without conducting a search, especially where there is a possibility of an imminent explosion.

When the time of the explosion has been disclosed in a threat call, then the manager must ensure any searches are finished and staff cleared at least 20 minutes before the deadline, irrespective of whether any device has been found or not.

EVACUATION OF PREMISES

When the decision has been taken to evacuate this should be done as quickly and efficiently as possible, using all available exits other than those which will require people to pass close to the suspect device (where there is a choice).

Occupiers of nearby neighbouring premises should be informed of the decision to evacuate.

Preferably two assembly areas (in opposite directions) should be designated where persons can congregate after evacuation. Sometimes, Fire Assembly Points can be utilised for this purpose, but only if they are located at a considerable distance from the building (preferably at least 500 metres) and are not adjacent to a predominantly glass structure. **Car parks should not be used as assembly areas.**

When no other form of communication is available the fire alarm can be used providing either: -

- a) it can be sounded in a way which distinguishes it from a fire warning, and staff have been trained to recognise the distinct signal; or
- b) steps are taken to ensure that persons are directed away from, or moved on from, unsuitable fire exits or fire assembly points.

If the fire alarm is part of an automatic system connected to the Fire Brigade, then prior to its use the Fire Brigade should be telephoned to advise them that this is a bomb evacuation rather than a fire evacuation.

Ideally, all employees and other persons on the premises (e.g. members of the public) should be asked to take personal belongings with them, since this will help to avoid unnecessary suspicion over articles of property left behind after evacuation. However, this is contrary to standing instructions to fire evacuation, and will be difficult to implement unless suitable means of communication is readily available.

When an evacuation is initiated, doors and windows, should, whenever possible be left unlocked, especially in the vicinity of a suspect object. Lights should be left on, but plant and machinery shut down where practicable.

Methods similar to those employed in fire evacuation procedures should be employed to ensure that all personnel (staff and visitors) have evacuated. They should be instructed not to re-enter until the building is declared safe.

RE-OCCUPATION OF PREMISES

Once an evacuation has been completed, the manager will at some stage have to decide when the building can be reoccupied. Of course, where a suspect object has been found, the police (if not already present) will attend immediately and assume control until the object is declared safe. Thereafter, control will revert to the manager.

The manager should remember that there may be another suspicious object somewhere in the building - undiscovered because the search was terminated and the building evacuated due to the discovery of the first suspect object. The manager should, therefore, have the rest of the building searched before considering normal re-occupation.

It also follows that, where the evacuation was carried out before any search, the manager will have to initiate a search before considering the question of normal re-occupation.

The search before normal re-occupation could be carried out using volunteer searchers only, or a combination of volunteer searchers checking communal areas with other staff checking their own rooms. Normal re-occupation would, of course, be dependant upon finding nothing suspicious on such a search.

Where the time has been given for an explosion, but no explosion occurs, the manager must ensure that at least one hour is allowed to lapse after that time before search procedures are initiated or recommenced.

Where police have ordered the initial evacuation, they will remain in control and declare the building safe for re-occupation.

TELEPHONE BOMB WARNING RECORD.

THE MESSAGE (TRY TO RECORD EXACT WORDING OF THREAT)

TRY TO ASK THESE QUESTIONS

- 1 Where is the bomb right now ?
- 2 When is it going to explode ?
- 3 What does it look like ?
- 4 What kind of bomb is it ?
- 5 What will cause it to explode ?
- 6 Did you place the bomb ?
- 7 Why ?
- 8 What is your name?
- 9 What is your address ?
- 10 What is your telephone number ?

Record Time Call Completed

Keep telephone line open (even though caller has disengaged)

Where Automatic Reveal Information is available record the number shown

IMMEDIATELY INFORM THE HEAD TEACHER OR A RESPONSIBLE MANAGER ON THE SCHOOL PREMISES WHO WILL ARRANGE FOR THE POLICE TO BE CALLED AND OTHER APPROPRIATE ACTION TO BE TAKEN.

N.B For further information to be recorded later please see overleaf

FURTHER INFORMATION TO BE RECORDED LATER

Time and date of call

Length of call

Number of extension at which call is received

ABOUT THE CALLER

Male Female Adult Child

THREAT LANGUAGE

Well spoken Irrational Taped Foul Incoherent

Message read by threatmaker

CALLERS VOICE

Calm Crying Clearing throat Angry Nasal Slurred

Excited Stutter Disguised Slow Lisp Accent *

Rapid Deep Familiar Laughter Hoarse

If the voices sounded familiar, who did it sound like ?

* What accent?

BACKGROUND

Street noises House noises Animal Noises Crockery

Motor Clear Voices Static

PA System Booth Music Factory machinery

Office Machinery

Other (please specify)

Print Name and position

Signature

Date

APPENDIX B

GUIDANCE TO SCHOOL STAFF WHO HANDLE INCOMING MAIL - ON SUSPECT POSTAL / LETTER BOMBS

Postal bombs take many forms. They may come in any shape or size: parcels, envelopes or padded "jiffy-bags". They may explode or ignite when opened and sometimes before they are opened. They are usually designed to kill or maim the person who is opening them. Instead of being posted, such devices may be delivered by hand or arrive via a courier.

You should look for the tell-tale signs:

- Grease marks on the envelope or wrapping.
- An unusual odour such as marzipan or machine oil.
- Visible wiring or tin foil, especially if the envelope or package is damaged.
- The envelope or package may feel very heavy for its size.
- The weight distribution may be uneven: the contents may be rigid in a flexible envelope.
- It may have been delivered **by hand** from an unknown source or posted from an unusual place.
- If a package, it may have excessive wrapping.
- There may be poor handwriting, spelling or typing.
- It may be wrongly addressed, or come from an unexpected source.
- There may be too many stamps for the weight of the package.

If you suspect that a package may contain an explosive device you should:

- Put it down gently and vacate the immediate area.
- On no account place the package into anything (including water) or place anything on top of it.
- If possible leave a distinctive marker near (not touching) the suspect package.
- Immediately inform a responsible manager.

Further action by responsible manager.

- Telephone the police **immediately**.
- Establish, if possible, whether anyone is expecting a letter or package which has given rise to suspicion.
- Where possible (e.g. if sender details on outside of packaging) seek to contact the sender of any unusual letter or package which gives rise to concern.
- Consider whether to evacuate/partially evacuate the building (bearing in mind the possibility that a large suspect parcel may contain a high explosive device).