

BASIC ACTIONS IN CASE OF BOMB THREATS

A Bomb Threat/Warning usually signals the start of such an incident. The majority of bomb threat/warning are communicated by telephone, and the term “bomb warning/threat” also refers to the alarm which is raised on the discovery of a suspect item.

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

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.

ACTION BY IN-HOUSE PERSONNEL (on receipt of Call)

The operator/receptionist or any one receiving the call should:

- a) Try to remain as **CALM** as possible;
- b) Concentrate on listening;
- c) Engage the caller in as much conversation as possible;
- d) Try to find out the exact location of the device;
- e) Try to find out the type of device;
- f) Try to find out the time the device is expected to detonate;
- g) Try to determine whether the call is valid or hoax;
- h) Try not to upset or panic the caller;
- i) Take notes of the exact words of the caller and his/her accent;
- j) Try to determine the sex of the caller; and
- k) Listen for any background music or noises.

In a case of a bomb threat/warning in a building, it is advisable to inform the caller that the building is occupied and the detonation of a bomb could result in numerous deaths and serious injury to occupants.

Actually, the essential information one must ascertain, is the time and place of the explosion. First get this information, and then try to get more.

The matter should be kept as quiet and low-keyed as possible and should not be given any publicity. Employees should not be informed of this, as it may only cause panic and lead to injury as the call may very well be a hoax.

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:-

Analyse the information received;

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.

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 organisation'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 Defence Force Search (using whatever equipment there may be. It is also necessary for plant personnel to assist in this search.

GUIDE TO EMPLOYEE'S SEARCH

- a) Never use more searchers than are absolutely necessary;
- b) Use a maximum of two (2) searchers per room, for an area of up to 250 sq. ft.
- c) Use searchers in alternate rooms or area;
- d) Never assume that only one device has been planted, continue searching until the whole area has been searched and cleared;
- e) Clearly mark and report areas searched and cleared; and
- f) Clearly mark and report areas found hazardous.

SEARCH TECHNIQUES

The purpose of searching is to detect and report foreign devices to the Police, Fire or Defence Force Bomb Technicians. It is not intended to touch/or even approach them (devices) too closely. Such tactics are renowned for placing "heroes" in wheel chairs, and they serve only to endanger the lives of everyone involved.

The basic principle of bomb searching is to trust nothing and assume nothing is safe. Searchers should remain fully alert for a bomber can conceal a device in almost any innocent looking article e.g. dispensers, books or even telephones.

The first two (2) stages of a search operation, i.e. employee work area and security personnel search, should be conducted under the supervision of Senior Plant officials. This is to ensure that safety rules are followed.

A room should be searched slowly and systematically. To avoid the possibility of areas being missed, the room should be split in two (2) halves; and each should be searched separately using the following format: -

Floor to Waist Level

Waist to Eye Level and

Eye to Ceiling Level

As the searchers enter the room/area, he/she should move slowly and carefully. Speed in the search comes from organised search procedures, not from hasty or reckless movement. Booby traps or trip wires may have been planted, and the searcher should be wary of them. When entering the room he/she should pause and listen. In this way he/she may be able to detect any ticking clockwork device.

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. The least desirable system is to make an announcement over a public address system.

It is imperative that organisations that have not implemented and tested an evacuation plan get in touch with the Fire Prevention Section of the Fire Service to develop evacuation measures/procedures.

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) assemble at a pre-determined point and await further instructions;
- c) avoid using elevators
- d) leave drawers, doors and windows open.

PREVENTIVE SECURITY

Good preventive bomb and other security can be achieved by the education and co-operation of all staff, from Management to shop floor workers. There are two (2) main preventive bomb security fundamentals: preventing the access of a bomb planter and speedily discovering planted devices or suspicious objects.

The objective of bombing and bomb threats is damage, harassment, the fermentation of employee's fear, death or injury. The counter-measures to each of these factors is the responsibility of Company or Departmental Management. The effect of the bomb threat will depend upon the type of Organisation/Department, e.g. in a small factory it will involve time wastage, loss of production, and staff fear/harassment; in a Government Department it may involve the loss of time and hindrance to many assignments that may have been concluded on the day in question.

For these reasons and many others, bomb threat security is obviously cost effective. Further, it is clearly the responsibility of Company or Departmental Management.

The following are some forms of Preventive Security:

- a) Employees should be encouraged to keep their immediate work area clean and tidy at all times;
- b) Strange persons not accompanied by an employee entering organisation or department should be approached so as to determine the reason for their presence;
- c) Employees should check their immediate work area on the assumption of duty to ensure that there is nothing unusual or out of place;
- d) All staff should be instructed to report any suspicious objects to management, and to refrain from touching same;
- e) Visitor entrance should be controlled and supervised but in a discreet and courteous fashion. The security officer, or receptionist should check for the visitor's identification, the reason for the visit and the person or department he/she wishes to visit.
- f) The security officer / receptionist should make a preliminary check as to visitor's authentication. The visitor may then be issued a temporary ID Card which should be worn externally;
- g) In large complexes, arrangements should be made for the visitor to be escorted to and from his internal destination point. All entries — visitors, staff and service people - should be recorded. Additionally, it is essential that any hand luggage, samples or other objects carried into the organisation by a visitor be properly checked and logged. This will assist in easy recognition of any parcel left behind.

KISS - KEEP IT SAFE AND SIMPLE

COMPLACENCY CAUSES CASUALTIES

PLANNING PREVENTS PANIC

CONFUSION COSTS MONEY

IMPORTANT NOTES

SOME USEFUL QUESTIONS TO ASK

- a) Where is it?
- b) What does it look like?
- c) When will it explode?
- d) Why did you place it there?
- e) Who are you?
- f) Where are you calling from?

CALLER'S IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

- a) Sex
- b) Age
- c) Accent
- d) Voice – loud / soft ; deep etc
- e) Diction – good / nasal / lisp etc.
- f) Calm / emotional

OTHER VITAL INFORMATION

- a) Date and Time of warning
- b) Exact words
- c) Was the caller's voice familiar
- d) Was the caller familiar with the area / unit / buildings

ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE BOMB TECHNICIANS TO REMOVE ANY SUSPICIOUS PARCELS / OBJECTS.

WHENEVER A SUSPICIOUS PARCEL / OBJECT IS DISCOVERED EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES, INCLUDING HOSPITAL PERSONNEL SHOULD BE ALERTED IN ORDER TO BE READY TO RECEIVE CASUALTIES IF THEY OCCUR.

THE USE OF TWO-WAY WALKIE-TALKIE RADIOS IN THE VICINITY OF A SUSPICIOUS OBJECT IS DANGEROUS AND SHOULD BE AVOIDED