



# **Bomb Threat & Suspicious Package Policy**

# BOMB THREAT & SUSPICIOUS PACKAGE POLICY

(April 2016)

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## • Introduction

The Council as your employer recognises its responsibility to protect its employees, visitors and service users from harm, as outlined in the Health and Safety at Work, Act (1974) and other relevant health and safety regulations.

It is recognised that any individual employee might receive a bomb threat or find themselves dealing with a suspicious package and it is therefore important to consider what can be done to ensure that there is a safe and supportive working environment available to all staff.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance and set out the way in which to respond to a bomb threat or the discovery of a suspicious package. It will align the process across council sites for dealing with threats of this nature.

## Scope

Everyone is covered by this policy at whatever location they are based. This includes full and part-time staff as well as temporary workers, agency staff and contractors. Everyone has a responsibility to ensure that security measures and procedures are observed at all times. Managers are required to take a lead role in promoting and developing a security conscious environment.

## Our responsibilities in creating a safe and supportive working environment:

### Head of Service or Senior Managers responsibilities

If the Head of Service or Senior manager for your worksite is not available when an incident occurs or cannot be contacted then the Chief Fire/Bomb Marshal should assume the full responsibilities for the required action to be undertaken. A list of Fire/Bomb Marshals should be on display at each site. These duties include:

- Establishing a bomb assembly point and an alternative site for their worksite and communicating this to staff
- Arrange staff training for all responsible persons including communication, cascades and drills
- Assessing and evaluating the threat and decide on the best course of action to be taken based on the information available. (See appendix 3).
- Liaising with the police and other emergency services.
- Deciding when to re-occupy the building, on the advice of the police.
- Organising a review meeting after the incident and instigating a review of policies and procedures as required.
- Once the incident has been resolved, raise a report on Workrite accident reporting and management system

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## **Fire/Bomb Marshals**

- If an evacuation is required, ensure that your designated area of the building is clear of all persons checking for any suspicious items, device or package that look out of place. If a suspicious item is identified report this immediately to the senior manager or Chief Fire/Bomb Marshal
- Issue instructions to staff members, service users and contractors on what response you require them to undertake
- Where safe to do so, ensure that windows and doors are not locked, particularly in the area close to a suspicious device
- If it is safe and practicable to do so doors and windows on the route out from the suspicious device should be placed in the open position. Doors and windows that are already open should remain open.

## **All staff members**

- Make sure that you have read the bomb alert policy and be aware of what to do in the event of a bomb threat and the appropriate action to take.
- Be aware of what to do if a suspicious package/letter is discovered at your workplace and what the appropriate action is to take and who to notify.
- Take care of yourself and others who may be affected by your actions
- Remain vigilant at all times and comply with any instructions given and all security procedures in place at your workplace
- Report to your line manager or other senior staff present as soon as possible any concerns you may have in relation to a bomb threat or if you notice a suspicious package.
- Be prepared to deal with the situation yourself as far as is possible, if a more senior member of staff cannot be found
- Attend any training or evacuation drills as required

## **If a suspected bomb or suspicious package is found you should:**

- Not touch any suspicious items
- Report to your line manager or other senior staff present
- Move away to the designated assembly point as instructed by the person who has assumed responsibility for the management of the situation
- If a suspect device is located outside the building, you may be exposed to greater danger if the evacuation route takes you past the device, so you may be instructed to an internal protected spaces (areas of a building with enhanced levels of protection against the effects of blast) if these are present
- Take action to prevent others from approaching a suspicious item
- Move at least 15 metres away from the suspect package before using a mobile phone or hand-held radio. or even better do not use them at all unless it is absolutely necessary
- Follow any other guidance as set out in this policy.

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## Types of bomb threat

There are many groups who are capable of causing disruption and injury through the use, or by threatening the use, of explosive devices. While many bomb threats involve a person-to-person phone call, an increasing number are sent electronically using email or social media applications. Some will be made by hoaxers designed to cause alarm and disruption but all must be taken seriously. No matter how ridiculous or implausible the threat may seem, all such communications are a crime and should be reported to the police.

Bomb threats may be conveyed in several ways, these being:

(a) Telephone Calls Bomb warnings will often be made by telephone, and could be received by any member of staff. You should familiarise yourself with the procedure for dealing with such calls. In the event of a bomb threat you must follow the procedure and complete a checklist for telephone bomb warnings as found in Appendix 1.

(b) By Letter if you receive a written bomb warning, you should initiate the bomb threat procedure for dealing with a postal bomb. Treat as Police evidence and stop other people touching the item to avoid any possible contamination of the evidence.

(c) Electronically using email or social media applications – initiate the bomb threat procedure. 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 the ICT department to help the police investigation. Complete a checklist for a bomb threat sent via email or social media in Appendix 2

(d) In Person if someone alleges that a device has been placed (or you have overheard this) the warning should initiate the bomb threat procedure.

(d) By Discovery of a Suspect Package If you discover a device, you should initiate the bomb threat procedure, this will initially mean evacuation of the immediate area.

## Dealing with a telephone bomb threat

Any staff member with a direct telephone line could conceivably receive a bomb threat. As a result you need to familiarise yourselves with how to deal with a call as the potential first response to a threat message. In all cases it is important to telephone the police immediately with details of the call.

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 you in this.

The key rules are:

- Keep calm and listen carefully

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- If practical keep the caller talking for as long as possible and alert a colleague to dial 999 or 112
- Have immediate access to a checklist on key information that should be recorded. The caller may ring off immediately after giving the message, but whoever takes the call should try to get a response to the questions on the Bomb Threat Report form found in (Appendix 1).
- If the threat is 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 received via text message do not reply to, forward or delete the message. Note the number of the caller and follow Police advice
- Do not replace the telephone handset - keep the line open even after the caller has hung up.
- Report the call to a senior member of staff to make an evaluation of the threat

The action you should take on receipt of a bomb threat is shown in (Appendix 1 – The Bomb threat report form). You should keep a copy of this near your telephone for reference at all times and fill it in during and after the telephone call.

As soon as practicable, you should immediately report the bomb threat to a senior member of staff, or in their absence, the Chief Fire/Bomb Marshall on site. If they are not available then take responsibility for the situation yourself.

The senior member of staff or Chief Fire/Bomb Marshall will assess the threat; guidance can be found in (Appendix 4), and then decide what course of action to be taken. If the Police have not already been called dial 999 or 112 and pass on any intelligence gathered, (see Appendix 3).

The senior member of staff, or Chief Fire/Bomb marshal, will decide whether or not to evacuate and where to evacuate to. Depending on any known location of the device this may not be to the designated assembly point if it will expose staff to greater danger.

**Any one of the following signs should alert members of staff to the possibility that an item, letter or package contains an explosive device:**

- Any obvious components or signs that it is a terrorist device
- 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 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

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- An unusual item to be found in that particular location or the item is hidden or disguised
- It is near a vulnerable structure or building or at the site of an important event
- There have been threats to target the area in question
- There has been a report of suspicious activity near where the item was found
- A Telephone warning has been given about a device
- Anything that you consider gives cause for concern

## Dealing with Postal Bombs

Postal bombs take many forms. They 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.

Unless you are on the lookout for the tell-tale signs you may not notice anything amiss. Instead of being posted, such devices may be delivered by hand or arrive via a courier.

If you are required to open mail in the course of your work and you have any suspicions that a package may contain an explosive device you should:

- Evacuate the immediate area and raise the alarm with the senior member of staff or Chief Fire/Bomb Marshall who will notify the Police, assess the situation and decide the course of action to be taken.
- On no account should you place the package into anything (including water) or place anything on top of it.
- Doors and windows should be left open to minimise the effects of the blast.

Follow these rules if you do receive a suspicious package or suspected postal bomb:

- **Put it down gently and walk away from it, Do Not Touch Or Move It**
- If possible leave a distinctive marker near (not touching) the device and complete the questions on the form found in (Appendix 3). Move away from the device and inform the senior member of staff or Chief Fire/Bomb Marshall on duty. They will make a threat assessment, (see Appendix 4), and notify the Police, dialling 999 or 112 and passing on all intelligence gathered. You may be required to assist in drawing an accurate plan of the location of the suspicious package or device.
- Do not use radios or mobile phones within 15 metres.
- The senior member of staff, or Chief Fire/Bomb Marshall should implement the building fire/bomb evacuation plan if appropriate.
- You should stay at the safe assembly point until further instruction and be immediately available for interview by the police.
- Members of the public should not be able to approach the area until it is deemed safe

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## **A Suspicious package or item leaking a powder substance, liquid, or has a strangemell**

- You should stay as calm as possible and complete the questions on the form found in (Appendix 3).
- Inform the senior member of staff or Chief Fire/Bomb Marshall. They will make a threat assessment (Appendix 4) and notify the Police.
- If you have had contact with the item you will be isolated i.e. sent to a meeting room with a phone so you can speak to the Police on their arrival. You should provide as much information as possible on the location and description of the item. Make sure no one else enters the room. If possible you will be provided with water to wash hands and other exposed areas, wash hands again. Avoid eating, drinking and smoking.
- Do not make you own way to hospital.
- If in a building, leave the item/package alone. Do not cover, immerse or move it. If the item can be isolated do so, shut the door and windows and secure room and restrict any access to the area but do not lock doors if at all possible to ensure First Responders have easy access.
- Close any other windows and doors in the immediate area if safe to do so.
- Shut down air conditioning, fans and air circulations systems.
- Move staff to upper floors or adjacent sealed rooms if safe to do so whilst awaiting further instruction
- Do not operate appliances or lights.

## **Alert Process**

If the decision is made to evacuate the building staff members, contractors and visitors need to be made aware. If the building/site has a designed bomb alert alarm then this should be sounded. This will indicate to you that you need to make your way to the bomb threat evacuation point rather than the fire evacuation point. The bomb threat alarm is unlikely to be connected to the control centre which automatically calls the fire brigade so the senior member of staff or Chief Fire/Bomb Marshall will dial 999 and make them aware of the situation.

If the building doesn't have a bomb alarm then the fire alarm should be sounded by the method for your building. A fire marshal or responsible person, as instructed by the senior member of staff or Chief Fire/Bomb Marshall, will go to the fire assembly point and direct staff to the bomb threat assembly point. It is likely that for the majority of sites the alarm will signal direct to the Fire Brigade, however if unsure the senior member of staff or Chief Fire/Bomb Marshall will dial 999 providing their name and contact number and advise that it's a bomb threat or a suspicious package has been found, rather than a fire; confirm that staff are being evacuated to the bomb assembly point and if known confirm where the bomb/suspicious item is located.

## **Evacuation and Searching for Suspicious Items**

The decision to evacuate the building is normally the responsibility of the senior member of staff or Chief Fire/Bomb Marshal but the Police will provide advice. In exceptional cases the Police may insist on evacuation if it is reasonable to assume

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that the threat is credible or that people should not leave the building if it is safer for them to remain inside.

The purpose of the evacuation is to move people from an area where they might be at risk, to a place of lesser risk or shelter.

Depending on the situation the evacuation plan may involve:

- Full evacuation to an agreed designated assembly point
- Evacuation to a particular part of the building if the device is thought to be small and confined to one area
- Full evacuation to an alternative internal safe area

If evacuation is required the senior manager or Chief Fire/Bomb Marshal along with any assistance required from Fire Marshalls, will check that no one is left in the building, checking for any suspicious items, device or package that look out of place. If a suspicious item is identified the Chief Fire Marshal will report this to the police or bomb disposal team.

The actual evacuation procedure will be as already clearly defined in the Fire Evacuation Procedure but with the following exceptions: -

- You should be careful not to evacuate the area until advised to do so by the senior member of staff, Chief Fire Marshall or Police. This could be a ploy by the caller to move people into an area e.g. the car park, where the real device is situated
- There will be a different predetermined external assembly point. Depending on the type and size of the device, glass and metal fragments could travel several hundred metres.

If practicable during evacuation and it is safe to do so, you should take all personal belongings and laptops with you. A handbag or briefcase and any unidentified objects can be a potential threat to a Search Team.

## **Assembly Points**

A designated bomb threat assembly point and an alternative assembly point for each building will have been agreed by a senior manager for the site with guidance from the Health, Safety and Welfare Team. This will be a different point to the fire assembly point and will generally be 500m away or not in direct line of site of the premises. Car parks should not be used. You should make sure you are aware of the bomb threat assembly point however if this assembly point is unsuitable on the day an alternative site will be used as directed by the senior officer or Chief Fire/Bomb Marshall. You will be required to remain at the assembly point and will be given advice from the Police whilst they carry out their investigation.

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## **Stand Down/Building Re-entry**

Re-entry to the building shall be instigated following instructions from the senior manager and the Police. You must remain outside in the designated assembly points until the Police, or senior officer, Chief Fire/Bomb Marshall issues the instruction that it is safe to re-enter the building.

If it is not safe, the senior manager along with the Police will determine the most appropriate course of action.

After the incident, a post evacuation debrief will be held by the relevant staff members and emergency services, confirming any issues noted during the incident and obtaining feedback on how to improve the process.

## **Support**

The council will provide support for employees who may be suffering stress or other psychological effects after they receive a bomb threat or suspicious package. This support is initially available through the councils' employee assistance scheme, details of which are available on the intranet.

You may also discuss your concerns with your line manager or your Trade Union Representative.

## **Communication & Training**

Information about this policy will be cascaded to all staff via the vine and to managers via Managers Brief. The policy will be placed on wightnet for easy accessibility. During induction managers should make all staff aware of the policy and procedure for dealing with a bomb threat or suspicious package. Bomb threat awareness training/information will also be provided to areas at high risk. Fire/Bomb marshals must be trained how to assist with carrying out a search if required.

## **Review**

The policy will be reviewed regularly in light of changing layout, advice, research and legislation and in consultation with recognised Trade Unions where required. All changes to this policy must be ratified by the council's senior management team.

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## Appendix 1 – Bomb Threat Report Form

### BOMB THREAT REPORT FORM

1. Remain Calm and talk to the caller
2. Note the caller's number if displayed on your phone
3. If the threat has been sent via email or social media, see appropriate section below
4. If you are able to record the call, write down the exact wording of the threat in the box below

### ASK THESE QUESTIONS

1. Where exactly 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? If not you, who did?.....
  7. Why have you placed the bomb? .....
  8. What is your name? .....
  9. What is your address? .....
  10. What is your telephone number? .....
  11. Do you represent a group or are you acting alone? .....
- RECORD TIME CALL COMPLETED.....

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KEEP TELEPHONE LINE OPEN (even though caller has disengaged)

WHERE AUTOMATIC NUMBER REVEAL EQUIPMENT IS AVAILABLE RECORD NUMBER SHOWN

.....  
INFORM THE SENIOR MEMBER OF STAFF

Name & telephone number of person informed.....  
.....

## DIAL 999 AND INFORM THE POLICE

Time informed .....

THIS PART SHOULD BE COMPLETED ONCE THE CALLER HAS HUNG UP AND POLICE/BUILDING SECURITY OFFICER HAVE BEEN INFORMED

Time & date of call .....

Length of call .....

Number at which call is received (your extension number) .....

## ABOUT THE CALLER

Sex of caller? Male Female

Nationality? ..... Age? .....

## THREAT LANGUAGE

Well spoken "Irrational "Taped

Foul "Incoherent "

Message read by threat maker "

## CALLER'S VOICE

Calm "Crying "Clearing throat "

Angry "Nasal "Slurred "

Excited "Stutter "Disguised "

Slow "Lisp "Accent "\*

Rapid "Deep "Familiar "

Laughter "Hoarse "

If the voice sounded familiar, who did it sound like?  
.....

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What accent? .....

## BACKGROUND SOUNDS

Street noises "House noises "  
Animal noises "Crockery "Motor "  
Clear "Voices "Static "  
PA system "Booth "Music "  
Factory machinery "Office machinery "  
Other (specify).....

## REMARKS

.....  
.....

**ADDITIONAL NOTES:** .....

Signature: ..... Date: .....

Print name: .....

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## Appendix 2 - ACTION TO BE TAKEN ON RECEIPT OF A BOMB THREAT SENT VIA EMAIL OR SOCIAL MEDIA

1. DO NOT reply to, forward or delete the message
  
2. If sent via email, note the address  
.....  
.....
  
3. If sent via social media, what application has been used and what is the username / ID .....
  
4. Inform the senior member of staff, or Chief Fire/Bomb Marshall, they will make a threat assessment, see Appendix 3
  
5. Inform the Police, dial 999 or 112 and pass on all intelligence gathered, see Appendix 3, follow police guidance
  
6. Preserve all web log files for your organisations to help the police investigation (as a guide, 7 days prior to the threat message and 48 hours after)

Signature..... Date.....

Print Name.....

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## Appendix 3 - Useful information to inform the Police of Suspicious Package or Suspected Postal Bomb

- What type of package or item is it? .....
- What does it look like? .....
- Is it leaking? .....
- Is it discoloured? .....
- How far through the postal system has it come .....
- Who is it addressed to? .....
- Is the origin of the package significant? .....
- Who has sent the article? .....
- Did it arrive on a significant date? .....
- Who has seen/touched it since? .....
- Why is it suspicious? .....
- Does it smell? .....
- Type of wrapping or packaging? .....
- The exact location of package? .....
- Has it been opened? .....
- Was it expected? .....
- What does it have on the postmark? .....
- Isolated item or one of a series? .....
- Who was present when opened? .....

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## Appendix 4 - Threat Evaluation Guidance

Each bomb threat incident should be evaluated on a case by case basis. In evaluating the authenticity of the threat the existence of such a device must be assumed from the outset even though the percentage of cases in which explosive devices are actually present is small. The form of threat can be specific or non-specific:

*Non-specific threat:* is most likely to be used by the extortionist, seldom giving more information than that a device has been placed. However non-specific threats must be taken seriously until proven to be false.

*Specific threat:* is less common, but more likely to involve an explosive device. It is most likely to be adopted by terrorists. The threat normally includes information regarding the device, its placement and the rationale for the attack and explosion timing.

However, there can be an overlapping of these two categories.

### *Factors to consider when evaluating the threat*

- Type of threat received;
- Perpetrator of the threat:
  - a) terrorists usually select their targets according to the potential publicity and political or psychological advantage that can be gained.
  - b) criminals select targets for a variety of reasons - extortion, intimidation and revenge are the most likely
  - c) crank calls or mischief-makers are the most likely perpetrator of a hoax call
- Majority of the calls in the UK are made by persons other than terrorists, and 99% of these are hoaxes, i.e. the perpetrator wishes to create local disruption
- Almost all calls that relate to a real device are made by terrorists
- Consider whether this is the first threat of its kind received to the Authority, and the action taken on receipt of a previous threat
- Consider whether similar incidents have recently occurred affecting neighboring properties or other local authorities'. In all cases the threat must be taken seriously and reported to the Police.

The Bomb Threat Report Sheet (Appendix 1) can be used to assist the senior manager in assessment of the threat.

## Identifying Suspicious Packages or Items

To confirm whether or not the item exhibits recognisably suspicious characteristics, the HOT protocol may be used to inform your judgement

Is it **HIDDEN**? – has the item been deliberately concealed or is it obviously hidden from view?

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**OBVIOUSLY** suspicious? – does it have wires, circuit boards, batteries, tape, liquids or putty like substances visible?

Do you think the item poses an immediate threat to life?

**TYPICAL** is the item typical of what you would expect to find in this location? – most lost property is found in locations where people congregate. Ask if anyone has left the item

## Possible Actions to take:

- Call the Police but not evacuate  
This action will be decided upon if it is felt that the threat is a hoax. However, if there is any doubt that the threat is not a hoax, the decision to evacuate should be taken.
- Search without immediate evacuation  
Employees will remain while a search of the area is carried out. If something suspicious is found, then an evacuation is necessary. If no suspicious object is found, the senior manager may feel able to declare the area safe. This course of action is to be taken if the senior manager considers the threat to be of low risk.
- Search with partial evacuation  
Everyone apart from the senior manager or Chief Fire/Bomb Marshal will be evacuated from a suspected area. A full evacuation will only take place if a suspicious object is found. This course of action is to be taken if the senior manager considers the threat to be of medium risk and there is no reason to believe that an explosion is imminent.
- Immediate evacuation without a search  
To be taken if the senior manager considers the risk to be high and potential explosion could be imminent.

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## Appendix 5 – Searching for Suspicious Items

### POLICE POLICY

It is helpful for you to know and understand police policy on search and evacuation and the police role in dealing with bomb threats. Normally, the police will not themselves search a building following 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. You and your 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.

### Initiating a Search

The senior manager or Chief Fire Marshal with assistance from the police can initiate a search by communicating with fire/bomb marshals for the specific area under threat or for the whole building.

The senior member of staff or Chief Fire/Bomb Marshal in the building will decide whether or not to evacuate and provide instructions. If the decision is made to evacuate, all staff will make their way to the bomb threat assembly point unless instruction is given to assemble at the alternative location. Fire/Bomb Marshals will check that no one is left in the building, checking for any suspicious items, device or package that looks out of place, focusing on areas that are open to the public, and enclosed areas such as cloakrooms, stairs, corridors and lifts etc. Any suspicious items identified will be reported to the Chief Fire Marshal who will report this to the Police or bomb disposal team.

### If a suspicious object is found during the Search:

- DO NOT TOUCH OR MOVE IT
- Do not use a mobile phone or radio within 15 metres of the object.
- If possible leave a distinctive marker near (not touching) the device.
- Move away from the device to a designated predetermined safe control point.
- Inform the senior manager or Chief Fire Marshall dealing with the search and leave for the police to investigate further.
- The senior manager dealing with the situation should implement the evacuation plan.
- Stay at the predetermined safe control point and draw an accurate plan of the location of the suspicious package or device.

The person finding the object should be immediately available for interview by the police and potentially to assist in locating the object.