





# **Bomb Threat & Suspicious Item, Policy and Procedure.**

# BOMB THREAT & SUSPICIOUS ITEM POLICY & PROCEDURE *(December 2019)*

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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 always observed. Managers are required to take a lead role in promoting and developing a security conscious environment.

## **BOMB THREATS**

### **Bomb threat overview**

Most bomb threats are hoaxes designed to cause alarm and disruption. As well as the rare instances of valid bomb threats, some individuals may also 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 applications.

No matter how unlikely a threat being made may be or how ridiculous or implausible any threat made may seem, it is important that we prepare and that all staff treat threats made seriously and are aware of what to do in the event of such an incident. All such communications are a crime and should be reported to line management and then subsequently to the Police by use of the 999 system.

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

## **SENIOR MANAGERS RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Preparatory responsibilities**

- Ensure that appropriate plans exist to handle, process and action information contained in a bomb threat and that they are event and location specific.
- Ensuring that appropriate Bomb threat evacuation plans are in place for sites they are responsible for
- Ensure that staff familiar with the site, routes out of the building and assembly (rendezvous) points, are appointed to act as Bomb Marshals.
- Ensure that at least two, if feasible, assembly points are identified in opposing directions, and at least 500 metres from the site or venue that could be subject of a threat. Where possible the assembly point should not be a car park.
- Ensure plans identify a location in their building where any incident can be initially managed from and, in the event of an evacuation being decided upon, an external location where the incident, business continuity, and communications with staff can be managed from if required.
- Ensure plans are in place to carry out an effective search in response to a bomb threat, what staff will carry out such searching and that they are aware of what to look for. A guide to such plans can be found at Appendix 1
- Ensure that regular drills or exercises are carried out to ensure all are familiar with bomb threat procedures, routes and rendezvous points. The frequency of these should be dependent on the current threat level.
- Disabled staff should have personal evacuation plans and be individually briefed on their evacuation procedures. Similarly, arrangements to evacuate visitors should also be in place.

### **Responsibilities on receipt of a Bomb Threat: (Senior Managers)**

- Assessing and evaluating any threat and deciding on the best course of action to be taken based on the information available, for example evacuate, invacuate, search, or perhaps treat as a hoax and take no overt actions.

**Evaluating** the credibility of a threat is a **critical task**, particularly if the attack being threatened is imminent. This is a tactic used to place additional pressure on decision makers. Police will need to assess the threat at the earliest opportunity and give appropriate advice. When specific intelligence is known to police, advice to site managers/senior staff will also be issued accordingly; however, in the absence of detailed information, it will be necessary for senior management with Police assistance to collate and evaluate all available information, such as:

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- Is the threat part of a series? If so, what has happened elsewhere or previously?
  - Considering the hoaxer's desire to influence behaviour; is there any reason to believe their words and that the threat is real?
  - Has there been a recent incident on site which could give rise to someone making a hoax call?
  - What is the current threat level?
  - Can the location of the claimed bomb(s) be known with precision? If so, is a bomb visible at the location identified?
  - Have the Police, or the staff at the site threatened, any other specific information or intelligence relating to the threat?
- 
- Initial decision making; Do not delay your decision-making process waiting for the arrival of police
  - Liaising with the police, other emergency services and other senior colleagues in the Council
  - Ensuring relevant other services within the Council are aware of any incident.
  - Deciding on the method of informing staff of any evacuation or searching decisions made following the assessment of the threat.
  - To consider whether any alarm should be sounded immediately on receipt of a bomb threat or whether it should **only** be sounded if at all, once the credibility of the threat has been assessed, an evacuation decision made by senior staff, and measures put in place to ensure a managed evacuation takes place so as to avoid undue panic and ensure an orderly evacuation via the safe route.
  - Give direction on what specific actions Fire/Bomb Marshalls and other staff should take whilst evacuating the site. For example:
    - That staff ensure that they take laptops, car keys, coats and any bags belonging to them with them as they leave.
    - That staff check their immediate working areas for any suspicious items as they prepare to evacuate and report any concern to a Fire/Bomb Marshall once outside the building.
    - Give direction on whether staff should remove their motor vehicles as they leave the site.
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- Confirming the bomb assembly point and the evacuation route to be taken and communicating this, via Fire/Bomb Marshalls if practical, to all staff if an evacuation decision is made.
  - Put adequate steps in place to ensure no one else enters the area once an evacuation has been initiated
  - Co ordinating any pre, or post, evacuation site search. (see Appendix 1)
  - Assess and decide on the course of action in the event of a suspicious device being found during any site search (refer to any suspicious item or package procedures)
  - Deciding when to re-occupy the building, with the advice of the police.

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- Organising a review meeting or debrief 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

## **FIRE/BOMB MARSHALLS RESPONSIBILITIES.**

### **Preparatory responsibilities**

- Be familiar with the area in your building you're responsible for
- Know where the Bomb assembly point is
- Be aware on who in your building will be responsible for decision making in the event of a bomb threat
- Know how to access the bomb threat form.
- Dependant on the site be able to act in the absence of a senior member of staff.

### **Responsibilities in the event of a Bomb threat incident. (Fire Marshalls)**

- Give clear direction to staff members, service users and contractors; dependant on what course of action has been decided upon, and instructions given, by the Senior manager.
- If an evacuation is directed by the senior manager following the threat assessment, ensure that your designated area of the building is clear of all persons, checking for any suspicious items, devices or packages that look out of place as you conduct this evacuation if requested to do so.
- If a suspicious item is discovered do not touch it but report this immediately to the senior manager or Chief Fire/Bomb Marshal who will then follow the Suspicious item and package policy and guidance.
- Where safe to do so, ensure, as far as practicable, 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.
- Give feedback to senior management post incident

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## **ALL STAFF MEMBERS RESPONSIBILITIES.**

### **Preparatory responsibilities**

- Always remain vigilant and adhere to all security procedures in place at your workplace
- Attend any relevant training sessions and evacuation drills
- Any member of staff with a direct telephone line, mobile phone, computer or tablet etc., could conceivably receive a bomb threat. We should all, therefore, understand the actions required as the potential first response to a threat message.

### **Responsibilities in the event of a Bomb threat.**

#### **If you receive a telephone threat, you should:**

- Stay calm and listen carefully
- Make notes to allow you to subsequently complete the bomb threat form
- Complete the bomb threat form with the key information that is needed by senior managers and Police to properly assess the threat. See Appendix 3 for the Bomb threats form.
- If practical, keep the caller talking and alert a colleague to inform the site being threatened and the Police.
- 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 received via text message do not reply to, forward or delete the message. Follow the below notification procedure.
- Know who to initially contact in your organisation upon receipt of any threat; the building security/senior manager at the site threatened must also be informed as soon as practicable either in person or by telephone and then by means of you emailing the Bomb threat form to them or their nominated representative. The building security/senior manager at the site threatened will need to assess the threat, in liaison with the Police, and decide on its credibility and what action to take.



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## **If the threat is delivered face-to-face:**

- Try to remember as many distinguishing characteristics of the threat-maker as possible and write down what was said as soon as is practicable. Then follow the previously described procedure to fully communicate the threat to appropriate staff.

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

- treat as police evidence and stop other people touching the item. Then follow the previously described procedure to communicate the threat to appropriate staff

## **If the threat is received via email or 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, 7 days prior to the threat message and 48 hours after)

## **General Actions on receipt of a threat**

- Communicate details of the threat regardless of what medium it is received on to the appropriate staff at the site threatened. **Once you have done this:**
- Comply with any evacuation, search or associated instructions given by senior managers and or Fire/Bomb Marshalls.
- 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 at any time, but particularly during any bomb threat incident.
- Be prepared to deal with the situation yourself as far as is practicable and wherever possible in accordance with this policy, if a more senior member of staff is not on site for example out of the normal working hours.
- Where safe to do so, ensure, as far as practicable and if relevant, that as you evacuate, windows and doors are not locked, particularly in the area close to any suspicious device you see during a bomb threat incident.
- Give feedback to Bomb Marshalls/Senior Management post incident

## **SUSPICIOUS ITEMS**

### **Identifying Suspicious Packages or Items**

To confirm whether 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

**If what you believe to be a suspected bomb or suspicious package is found at any time, but particularly following a bomb threat:**

- Do not touch it
- Report to your line manager or other senior staff present
- Move yourself and others away from the device or item and prevent others from approaching it.
- If possible, draw a rough sketch of what the device looks like and exact location.
- 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 necessary
- Complete the device or item description form as at Appendix 2
- Follow any other guidance as set out in this policy.

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

**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
- An unusual item to be found in that location or the item is hidden or disguised
- It is near a vulnerable structure or building or at the site of an important event

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- 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 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 the threat assessment, 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 suspicious package or device and its exact location.
- 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

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

- You should stay as calm as possible and complete the questions on the form found in (Appendix 3).

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- Inform the senior member of staff or Chief Fire/Bomb Marshall. They will make a threat assessment 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 your 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 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.

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

Re-entry to the building or any part of it following any evacuation 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 or 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**

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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.

## **Media and communication**

Avoid revealing details about specific incidents to the media or through social media without prior consultation with police. Do not provide details of the threat, the decision-making process relating to evacuation (internal or external) or why a decision not to evacuate was taken.

Releasing details of the circumstances may:

- be an objective of the hoaxer and provide them with a perceived credibility
- cause unnecessary alarm to others
- be used by those planning to target other venues
- elicit copycat incidents
- adversely affect the subsequent police investigation

## **Review**

The policy will be reviewed regularly considering 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 – 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 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 obviously suspicious item, 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.

Regular searches of your site, proportionate to the risks faced, will enhance a good security culture and reduce the risk of a suspicious item being placed or remaining unnoticed for long periods. Additionally, if you receive a bomb threat and depending upon how credible it is following an assessment, you may decide to conduct a 'search' for suspicious items, either prior to or following any evacuation and dependent on Police advice. If such a search is decided upon:

Divide your venue into areas of a manageable size for 1 or 2 searchers. Ideally staff should follow a search plan and search in pairs to ensure nothing is missed

Ensure that those who will be conducting searches are familiar with their areas of responsibility. Those who regularly work in an area are best placed to spot unusual or suspicious items

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Focus on areas that are open to the public; enclosed areas (e.g. cloakrooms, stairs, corridors, lifts etc.) evacuation routes and assembly points, car parks, other external areas such as goods, post rooms and loading bays

Develop appropriate techniques for staff to be able to routinely search public areas without alarming any visitors or customers present

Under no circumstances should any suspicious item be touched or moved in any way. If a such a device be found during a search, follow the suspicious package or item procedures.

Ensure all visitors know who to report a suspicious item to and have the confidence to report suspicious behaviour

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## **Appendix 2 - Useful information to inform the Police of a Suspicious Package or Suspected Postal Bomb. Complete where relevant**

- 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 3 Bomb threat form.**

<http://wightnet.iow.gov.uk/documentlibrary/view/bomb-threat-checklist>