



Loss Control TIPS

Technical Information Paper Series

Innovative Safety and Health SolutionsSM

Preparing for and Responding to Bomb Threats and Letter Bombs

Introduction

While bombings instigated by terrorists, vandals, or disgruntled employees are not a new phenomenon, an increased number of bombing incidents in recent years has heightened awareness of this threat to individuals, businesses, and the public well-being. Since it is impossible to predict if, when, where, or how a bomb or bomb threat might affect your facility, you must be prepared at all times to respond to a real bomb or a bomb threat.

About 5-10 percent of bomb threats involve real bombs. Targets include individuals, businesses, schools, and public or government facilities. Perpetrators may be motivated by revenge, vandalism, political or religious convictions, or mental illness.

The information presented here is intended to be used as a guide. For maximum protection, develop detailed emergency preparedness policies and procedures tailored to your facility. Work with police and other local officials to make best use of the resources in your community.

About Different Kinds of Bombs

A bomb is an explosive device capable of injuring and killing people and of damaging or destroying property and buildings when it is detonated or ignited. Most bombs are homemade and will likely be one of three types: explosive, letter, or incendiary.

Explosive Bombs

Explosive bombs cause damage through fragmentation (like shrapnel), heat, and blast waves. Shrapnel may cause injuries or death to people nearby. Heat may also cause secondary fires. Blast waves can damage or destroy buildings or vehicles and kill or injure people. Explosive bombs may be planted in buildings or in vehicles.



Letter Bombs

Letter bombs (also called mail bombs or package bombs) are explosive devices in containers designed to look like letters or packages. The U.S. Postal Inspection Service reports that of 170 billion pieces of mail processed in a typical year, only a very few letter bombs—an average of 16—are reported or investigated. However, this number is on the increase. Because it is impossible for the Postal Inspection Service to inspect each piece of mail, mail recipients must assume a large share of the responsibility for protecting themselves against letter bombs. Letter bombs can often be identified by their odd shape or packaging, by the way in which the package is addressed, or by odd characteristics such as protruding wires or a strange smell (see letter bomb checklist in the appendix).

Incendiary Bombs

Incendiary bombs (also called fire bombs or “molotov cocktails”) cause fire without substantial explosion or blast. They generally consist of a fragile container (such as a glass bottle) filled with a flammable liquid (such as gasoline) with a source of ignition (such as a rag stuffed in the bottle to serve as a wick). They are easily and cheaply made, difficult to trace, and a favorite weapon of rioters and vandals.

Straight vs. Concealed Bombs

A bomb may be a *straight bomb*, in which no attempt has been made to make the bomb look anything different than what it is; or it may be a *concealed bomb*, one that has been disguised to resemble some other object (such as a briefcase or package).

Time Delays and Remote Controls

Bombs may be triggered by *time delay mechanisms* (can delay detonation from a few seconds to several months), *remote controls* (radio transmitter and receiving device), or *target (victim)-activated devices*, which rely on some action by the intended victim (e.g., opening a letter bomb).

Be Prepared for Bomb Threats at Your Facility

Take a proactive approach: be prepared. Do all you can to protect your employees, facilities, and other assets from damage caused by a bomb and from the loss of productivity caused by panic, evacuations, and media attention.

Develop an Emergency Preparedness Plan

Develop an Emergency Preparedness Plan (EPP), which includes policies, procedures, and resources for preparation, response, and recovery from real and threatened emergencies. Include provisions for bombs and bomb threats. Appoint an Emergency Coordinator and an Emergency Response Team. Train security personnel to respond to bomb threats and situations. Keep employees, emergency responders, and community officials informed of your emergency preparedness plans so that affected individuals and organizations can act effectively should the need arise.

Develop a Procedural Flow Chart

Develop a flow chart or procedure for how to deal with a bomb threat (see sample flow chart). For example, suppose that a bomb threat call is made to your facility's switchboard operator. Following the predetermined plan, the operator gathers appropriate information (e.g., time of call, exact words of caller) and asks appropriate questions (e.g., "Where is the bomb? What does it look like?"). (See sample checklist.) The switchboard operator immediately notifies the Emergency Coordinator and the police department; the Emergency Coordinator activates the Emergency Preparedness Plan.

Develop Evacuation Procedures

Establish procedures to authorize, initiate, and accomplish evacuation, sheltering, and personnel accountability. Hold evacuation drills regularly so that all occupants will be familiar with evacuation routes and routines.

Review Security Policies and Procedures

Review security policies and procedures to ensure that bomb situations are taken into consideration. Establish effective security against bombs and bomb situations.

Review Building Security

Review security against building and car bombs. Follow standard recommendations for physical and access security. Do not allow parking within 300 feet of the building. If this is not possible, allow only properly identified company or employee vehicles to park closest to your facility. Control traffic access to loading docks, etc. Screen all individuals entering the facility. Keep doors, windows, and other entrances shut and locked when not in use. Screen all packages and bags brought in by visitors and employees. Instruct all employees to report any suspicious individuals, behavior, vehicles, or packages.

Review security against letter bombs. Centralize mail facilities, and locate them away from other work areas. Train mailroom personnel to recognize and respond to suspicious packages. Provide training to non-mailroom staff in other departments who screen, sort, or distribute mail. Get a portable x-ray machine to screen suspicious packages. Instruct all employees to report any suspicious mail or packages, including special deliveries.

Review Fire Prevention and Protection Plans

Ensure that your facility has an effective fire prevention and protection program. Practice good housekeeping to reduce fire risk; keep the facility clean and free from flammable and combustible materials.

What to Do When A Bomb Threat is Received

Assume that every threat is a real one, but don't overreact. Terrorists *want* to disrupt operations and cause panic.

Telephoned Threats

Telephoned Threats. The person who takes the call and speaks to the caller should record as much information as possible. Use a bomb threat call checklist (see sample). Make every effort to keep the caller talking and on the line (so that the call might be traced). Notify a supervisor or co-worker that a bomb threat is in progress. Keep calm, listen to the caller, do not interrupt, and remain courteous. Ask the caller to repeat information, as a means of prolonging the conversation. Record all information gathered during the call, as well as any impressions of a qualitative nature.

Written Threats

Written Threats. Notify appropriate officials immediately. Save all materials from written bomb threats (envelopes, containers, phone notes, etc.). Do not handle these materials more than necessary, to preserve fingerprints or other evidence.

Responding to a Real Threat

If a Threat Appears to Be Genuine. Engage the Emergency Preparedness Plan. Deploy the facility's Emergency Coordinator and the Response Team to their appropriate roles and responsibilities. Notify security, supervisors, and building management personnel, but no one else. Let the appropriate people contact the police, bomb squad, media, etc. The Emergency Coordinator will make decisions about what actions to take immediately (ignore the threat, evacuate immediately, search the facility, delay evacuation, etc.).

What to Do When a Suspicious Package is Received

- Notify supervisor and internal security.
- Call the Postal Inspection Service, who will send technicians to examine and possibly dispose of the item.
- Call the police.
- Photograph or videotape the item, or make a written description.
- Handle it as little as possible, both to prevent detonation and to preserve evidence.
- Store it in a remote but open place until officials arrive. Do not put it into an enclosed space (such as a drawer or cabinet) or under water.

Bomb Searches

Let the local bomb squad supervise and conduct any bomb search, accompanied by someone who is familiar with the building. Do not use radio communications during the search, as the radio signal might set off a bomb.

If a Bomb is Found

- Do not touch, move, tamper with, or attempt to detonate any bomb or suspicious object or package.
- Identify its exact location, and report this information to the appropriate personnel.
- Run a string or piece of tape from the bomb to the nearest building entrance so that bomb technicians can get to the bomb quickly and unaided.
- If necessary, place sandbags or mattresses *around*, never on, the suspicious object. Do not cover the object.
- Block off the danger zone, with a clearance of at least 300 feet around the suspicious object (this includes floors above and below).
- Open all doors and windows to minimize blast damage.
- Evacuate the building.
- Do not permit re-entry until the object has been disarmed or removed and until the building has been declared safe.

If a Bomb Explodes

- Activate the Emergency Response Plan.
- Evacuate survivors and injured people. Search for injured and dead. Account for everyone.
- Get medical attention for injured people.
- Initiate other emergency services (fire suppression, security cordon, etc.).
- Be alert for gas and water leaks, electrical hazards, falling materials, etc.
- Be extremely cautious entering a damaged building; collapse could occur.
- Notify proper authorities.
- Remember that there could be a second bomb in the area, set to go off where evacuees or emergency personnel may be congregating. Conduct a careful and thorough search for more bombs. Be alert for additional threats or other communication from the perpetrator(s).
- Preserve evidence. Take pictures, use a video camera, and make notes.
- Make sure that evacuees and survivors are kept available for interviews by appropriate authorities.
- Maintain security at the site to prevent looting and vandalism.

Evacuation Planning

Evacuation of employees and visitors from the facility is the first priority during an emergency. A bomb or bomb threat situation may require the evacuation of all or part of the facility.

Decisions about evacuation must be made only by a person who is authorized to do so, according to the facility's Emergency Preparedness Plan. This will probably be the Emergency Coordinator or his or her designate. To control panic, an evacuation must be carried out in a controlled manner under the direction of authorized personnel.

Evacuation and sheltering procedures should include information about conditions under which an evacuation is ordered, individuals responsible for ordering the evacuation, evacuation routes and maps, etc. Be sure to consider needs for transportation, shelter, water, and food.

Personnel accountability procedures should designate an assembly area (and alternate area) where personnel should gather after an emergency; include a head-count system; and establish procedures for accounting for visitors, customers and vendors.

Do not use elevators during a bomb threat evacuation, as elevators are likely places for bombs.

What NOT to Do in a Bomb Situation

Do not panic. Do not touch, move, tamper with, or attempt to open or detonate any suspicious package. Do not discuss what is going on; leave this to the person designated to communicate with the public and the media. Do not contact the media.

Communicating with Employees, the Public, and the Media

Your facility's Emergency Preparedness Plan should include procedures to alert and warn employees of emergencies. Employees should understand the types of communication methods that are in place within their organization (e.g., public address system). Each employee should know how to operate the equipment (e.g., how to activate alarms and fire extinguishers).

Your EPP should also include a notification flow chart for the Emergency Response Team and other EPP members. The notification chart can include:

1. Emergency Coordinator
2. Response Team
3. Senior management
4. Outside response organizations
5. Neighboring businesses
6. Employees' families
7. Customers
8. Media

Appoint a single person (with backup) to serve as your organization's spokesperson for dealing with the media and the public. No one else should discuss the situation with outsiders or the media. This policy ensures that only accurate, consistent information will be issued to the media and to the public.

Conclusion

Every individual, business, school, and public or government facility is vulnerable to bombs and bomb threats. Because bomb incidents are rare and unpredictable, it's tempting to regard the threat as one unlikely to affect your facility. However, effective planning and preparation could make all the difference in preventing or mitigating a disaster for your employees, your business, your property, and your community.

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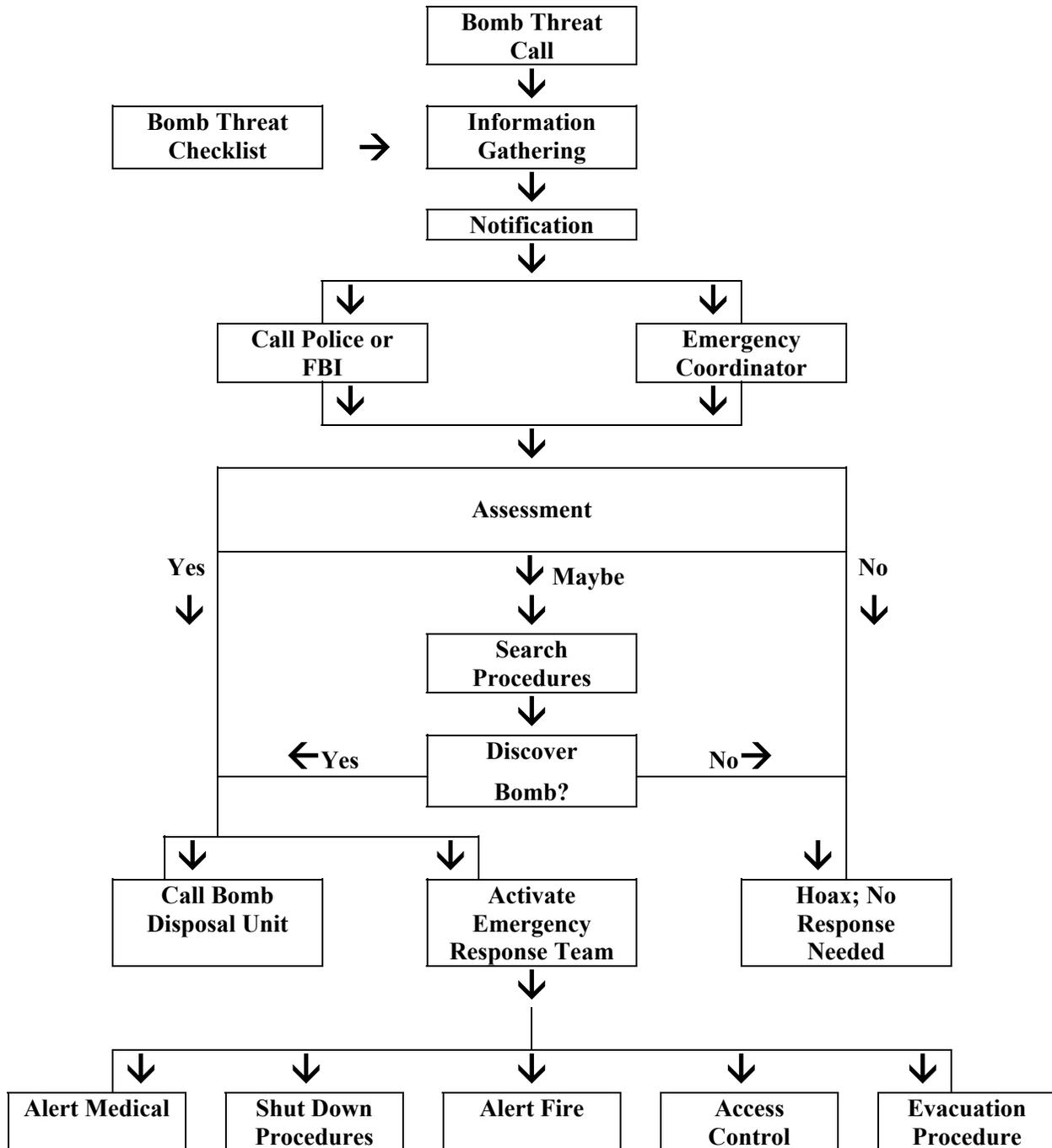
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Other information, especially about letter and mail bombs, was provided by the United States Postal Service and the Department of the Treasury (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms). Detailed information is available at the ATF's home page on the World Wide Web (<http://www.atf.treas.gov>)

For more information, contact your local Hartford agent or your Hartford Loss Control Consultant. Visit The Hartford's Loss Control web site at <http://www.thehartford.com/corporate/losscontrol/>

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Flow Chart for Response to a Bomb Threat



Source: *Planning for Emergencies*, American Insurance Services Group



Bomb Threat Checklist

**Keep calm. Listen. Do not interrupt. Be courteous. Keep the caller talking.
Ask the caller to repeat information. Record information.
Notify a supervisor or co-worker that a bomb threat is in progress.**

Exact time of call: PM AM	Date:	Day of Week: Mon Tue Wed Thur Fri Sat Sun
Exact words of caller:		

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

1. When is the bomb going to explode? _____
2. Where is the bomb? _____
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. Where are you calling from? _____
9. What is your address? _____
10. What is your name? _____

CALLER'S VOICE SOUNDED LIKE: (check all that apply)

Voice Qualities <input type="checkbox"/> Normal <input type="checkbox"/> Soft/Quiet <input type="checkbox"/> Loud <input type="checkbox"/> Slow <input type="checkbox"/> Rapid <input type="checkbox"/> Squeaky/High <input type="checkbox"/> Deep <input type="checkbox"/> Whispering <input type="checkbox"/> Shouting <input type="checkbox"/> Broken <input type="checkbox"/> Calm <input type="checkbox"/> Excited	<input type="checkbox"/> Nasal <input type="checkbox"/> Ragged <input type="checkbox"/> Raspy <input type="checkbox"/> Breathy <input type="checkbox"/> Cracking <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Caller is: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Adult <input type="checkbox"/> Child	Demeanor <input type="checkbox"/> Sincere <input type="checkbox"/> Disguised <input type="checkbox"/> Angry <input type="checkbox"/> Stressed <input type="checkbox"/> Sincere <input type="checkbox"/> Crying <input type="checkbox"/> Giggling <input type="checkbox"/> Laughing <input type="checkbox"/> Intoxicated <input type="checkbox"/> Righteous <input type="checkbox"/> Clears throat <input type="checkbox"/> Irrational	Accent <input type="checkbox"/> Accented <input type="checkbox"/> Local Accent <input type="checkbox"/> No Accent <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign: Describe accent? <input type="checkbox"/> Distorted <input type="checkbox"/> Familiar? Sounds like who?	Language <input type="checkbox"/> Uneducated <input type="checkbox"/> Educated <input type="checkbox"/> Distinct <input type="checkbox"/> Slurred <input type="checkbox"/> Stuttering <input type="checkbox"/> Lisp <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign Lang? <input type="checkbox"/> Foul Message <input type="checkbox"/> Spoken <input type="checkbox"/> Taped <input type="checkbox"/> Read
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BACKGROUND NOISE SOUNDED LIKE: (check all that apply)

Surroundings <input type="checkbox"/> Office <input type="checkbox"/> Construction <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic <input type="checkbox"/> Party <input type="checkbox"/> Household <input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen <input type="checkbox"/> Factory <input type="checkbox"/> Street	Noises <input type="checkbox"/> PA System <input type="checkbox"/> Music <input type="checkbox"/> Machines <input type="checkbox"/> Bells <input type="checkbox"/> Static <input type="checkbox"/> Siren <input type="checkbox"/> Quiet <input type="checkbox"/> Voices <input type="checkbox"/> Laughter <input type="checkbox"/> Animals <input type="checkbox"/> TV	Telephone Call <input type="checkbox"/> Internal call <input type="checkbox"/> External call <input type="checkbox"/> Phone booth <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/> Long distance <input type="checkbox"/>
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Bomb Threat Checklist, continued

Name and position of the person who received and/or handled the call: _____

Call received at (location): _____

Call received at phone number: _____

Caller ID or similar ability? _____

Call reported to: _____

Call reported at (date and time): _____

Additional remarks _____

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS:

POSITION OR AGENCY	PERSON TO CONTACT	PHONE NUMBER
Emergency Coordinator		
Emergency Coordinator Backup		
Security		
Local FBI Office		
Local US Postal Inspection Service		
Local Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms		
Police		
Local Bomb Squad		
Fire Department		
Ambulance		
Mayor or other local official		
Hospital		



Responding to Letter and Mail Bombs

How to Recognize a Letter or Mail Bomb

Letter bombs, also called mail bombs or package bombs, might display one or more of these elements, although not all may apply to every suspicious package:

- mailed from a foreign country
- excessive postage; stamps versus metered mail
- no return address, or false return address
- postmark differs from return address
- restrictive or special handling instructions (“special delivery,” “air mail,” or “foreign mail”)
- misspelled words; poorly written or typed; poor handwriting; labels of cut-and-paste letters
- addressed to a specific individual
- wrong title with name of addressee, or addressed to a title but without a specific name
- restrictive instructions (“to be opened by addressee only,” “personal,” “confidential,” or “private”)
- addressee is not familiar with name and address of sender
- visual distractions (drawings, unusual statements, hand-drawn postage)
- letter-sized or larger package
- rigid, lumpy, or bulky envelope; stiffer or heavier than normal
- irregularly shaped or unevenly weighted package
- lopsided weight; soft spots or bulges
- messily wrapped package; different types of tape; excessive wrapping or taping; string
- marked “fragile,” “rush,” “handle with care,” or “do not delay”
- protruding wires, aluminum foil
- odd smells
- oily stains or discolorations

What to Do When a Suspect Package or Letter is Received

- Do not open any suspect letter or package.* Letter bombs may be triggered by a pressure release activated when the package is opened or when a string is cut.
- Isolate the suspect package, but do not put it into an enclosed space (such as a drawer or cabinet) or under water.
- Open windows in the immediate area.
- Contact police and other security officials immediately (bomb disposal unit, fire department, hospital, municipal officials, etc.).
- Activate the response team of the Emergency Preparedness Plan
- Make decisions about evacuation.

Security Against Letter Bombs

- Centralize mail facilities, and locate them away from other work areas.
- Train mailroom personnel to recognize and respond to suspicious packages
- Provide training to non-mailroom staff in other departments who screen, sort, or distribute mail.
- Get a portable x-ray machine to screen suspicious packages.
- Instruct all employees to report any suspicious mail or packages, including special deliveries.