



BULLETIN

BOMB THREATS

It is one thing to fear mail bombs. It is another to receive a phone call that a bomb is already planted on premises. Every bomb threat must be respected as something designed and intended to explode with harm. Bombs can be constructed to look like almost anything and can be placed or delivered in various ways. The call could come into anyone. Action is required, but not initially to search. The probability of a non-expert finding a bomb, let alone disarming it, is essentially non-existent. Leave that to the "proper authorities". Do you know who that would be and how to reach that person?

Receiving the Call

Be prepared to note the exact time of the incoming call and alert a colleague that you have received a bomb threat without alerting the bomber you have done so. While someone is attempting to notify whomever is the "proper authority", make every effort to keep the bomber on the line and conversive. Speak with respectful curiosity, writing down exactly whatever the bomber tells you.

- Ask leading questions such as "Where is it right now?" "When will it explode?" "What will make it explode?" "What does it look like?" "Did you place it?" "Why?" "Where are you now?". Be calmly persistent until the bomber hangs up.
- Jot down any background noise as well as your impressions of the bomber's gender, age, style of speaking, mannerisms, things that irritated, and things that scratched his/her ego.

Acting on the Call

Not only are the proper authorities to be notified but "proper consideration" must be given one's patrons and employees who are in danger - - not merely from the bomb but from each other if a panic exodus results. It is at this point that one is either ready from advance planning, or at a total loss for appropriate action.

Advance Planning

A lot of "little things" must come together for an emergency evacuation to happen. The first is to recognize that the need is rare, and because of that, readiness must come from pre-planning, whether it be for a bomb threat or other cause. If a NFL Club can successfully evacuate its stadium, as one did in 1991 to avoid their fans' exposure to an oncoming electrical storm, any circumstance can be planned out if done in advance.

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Insuring the world's fun.

The details within a plan can be extensive or relatively brief. Everyone has their own circumstances, needs, and preferences. However, there are six considerations in any plan:

Decision-Making

- Who is the point-person needed to make that decision of whether and when the evacuation is “go”? Who is his/her backup?
- Who are the others needed to share in the pre-decision process, coordinating the major steps within the evacuation process, communicating with the community’s fire/police and press, etc?
- Are all people with responsibility known and readily accessible?

Information-Authorities

- Who are the appropriate experts and authorities in your community? “Experts” are those who can help in your planning and training. Authorities are those with law enforcement responsibilities who would respond to an actual bomb threat.
- Selected staff can be trained to assist in the search process. How are these people assigned, notified and directed to function?

Egress Preparation

- How can the decision maker best alert the ushers, security, and related entrance/exit personnel that a decision to evacuate is being considered? A worst-case scenario in evacuations is having the patrons ahead of the plan. Planning provides readiness for the routes of egress that best serve the number and preferred destinations of patrons/employees, including (a) the opening of buses in the parking area as temporary shelters, and (b) keeping inbound lanes open for police, firetrucks, and ambulances.

Egress Process

- Is the decision to “go” after alerting the staff followed immediately by an announced set of directions to guide the evacuation? Pre-planned announcements, given succinctly and calmly, repeating the message several times, can do much to minimize panic or disorderly egress. The same information can have been printed in programs and posted at strategic locations.
- Are there planned “Sweeps” to check for persons with disability, lingerers in restrooms, and patrons injured during egress?
- Is there “contingency planning” for those occasions in which an egress route is blocked? Alternative routes may be needed.

Return Process

- Does planning allow for emergency evacuation that is considered precautionary and potentially temporary? How and when is the “all-clear” to be given? Do the patrons return to their same seats or open seating?
- How is this communicated first to the same staff who handled egress preparation?

Evaluation Process

- Is there a written detailed document for common reference and training, and common understanding of its contents? Are there periodic communication drills and refinements from the experience? Any plan can be improved if reviewed and tested, both by the experts and by the staff on which the plan relies.