

Bomb Threats

Objective

A good safety plan takes into account the many incidents that can affect the health and safety of workers. Bomb threats have become all too common in the workplace and every business needs to pre-plan their response to a bomb threat. Let's look at bomb threats, procedures to follow, evacuation considerations, and search techniques.



Bomb Threats

Bomb threats are made to warn people to leave a location where an explosive device may have been planted. The caller probably has knowledge of the device and does not want people to get hurt. The more specific the information about the device, the more likely there really is one. Another reason for making a bomb threat is to cause alarm, panic and to get a response. These callers feel powerful when they can cause a business to close down, costing the employer money and forcing employees to leave the workplace. One other reason for a bomb threat is the prank call which typically happens so that the caller can leave work early. One company found bomb threats were being called in on the Friday afternoon prior to hunting season. Whatever the reason for the bomb threat, all threats must be taken seriously. Threats must be documented either on a bomb threat response card or, if the threat is written, the materials must be handled as little as possible and saved for police investigation.

Procedures

It is important to determine who would be most likely to receive a bomb threat. The identified people must be trained to:

- respond to the caller with appropriate questions;
- detail the conversation and the exact words of the threat made by the caller; and
- report the threat to the appropriate authority.

Preparation and training will help the employee handle the incident without panic.

A major decision to be addressed in the development of the company's policy is whether or not to evacuate the building. This decision has to take into consideration the liability of remaining in the building following a threat or leaving the building. The police or bomb squad will not make the evacuation decision for you. Your response needs to be determined ahead of time and written in the company policy.

Bomb Search Techniques

What does a bomb look like?

Almost anything you can think of could be a bomb. The important questions to ask are:

Is it unusual?

Is it out of place?

Is it suspicious?

If the answer is "yes" to all three questions,

DO NOT MOVE OR TOUCH THE OBJECT.

Always move people away from the suspicious object or package.

If the police or the bomb squad come to your place of business, they will not search for a bomb since they do not know what is unusual, suspicious or out of place. Only the people working in an area familiar to them will know this. One person familiar with each area should be designated to look for any object or package that is unusual, suspicious or out of place. For common areas (break rooms, bathrooms, etc.), a search team of two or three people familiar with the areas should be designated. The team will search in the following way:

LOOK, LISTEN, and SMELL before entering the room; divide the room into high, low and waist level areas; use a grid or spiral pattern to conduct the search; if lights are on or off, leave them that way. Remember a bomber has only a limited time to plant a bomb. Search areas in priority order: outside the building first; common areas open to the public; private areas last. Once the area has been searched, the area must be secured. If a suspicious object/package is found, either evacuate all personnel within 300 feet, or evacuate the building, depending on the size of the bomb found.

With pre-planning and bomb threat response training, businesses can help reduce panic and be assured of a quick response should a threat be made.

Review

1. In general, the more specific description a caller gives of a bomb, the more likely it is a real threat.

True or False?

2. A bomb threat is made:

- because the caller doesn't want anyone to get hurt
- to give the caller a feeling of power over the employer
- because the caller wants to leave work early
- all of the above

3. Not all bomb threats need to be taken seriously.

True or False?

4. The police or bomb squad will not search for a bomb in your place of business because they are not familiar with its contents. True or False?

5. In trying to spot a bomb, a searcher should be a person who is familiar with the area being searched. He or she should look for anything:

- unusual
- out of place
- suspicious
- a, b and c

Answer Key

1. True 2. d. 3. False. All threats must be taken seriously.

4. True 5. d.

Telephone Bomb Threat Report Form

BE CALM, COURTEOUS;

LISTEN AND DO NOT INTERRUPT!

Exact words of the threat:

Date/Time:

Questions to Ask:

- When will the bomb go off?
- Where is the bomb?
- What kind of bomb is it?
- What does it look like?
- Where is the caller now?
- What is the caller's name?

Try to determine: sex, race, age, accent, background noises, manner (angry, calm, intoxicated, irrational, etc.)

- Call 911
- Notify supervisor and report:
 - name of person receiving call;
 - telephone number where call was received;
 - and whether the caller's voice was recognized.



Resources

The Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation (TDI/DWC) Resource Center offers a workers' health and safety video tape library. Call (512) 804-4620 for more information or visit our web site at www.tdi.state.tx.us.

Disclaimer: Information contained in this training program is considered accurate at time of publication.

The Texas Department of Insurance,
Division of Workers' Compensation (TDI/DWC)
E-mail resourcecenter@tdi.state.tx.us
or call 1-800-687-7080 for more information.

Safety Violations Hotline
1-800-452-9595
safetyhotline@tdi.state.tx.us