

PERSONNEL NOTEBOOK

For Your Most Important Resource—The Human Resource

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BOMB THREAT: **A MESSAGE YOU CAN'T IGNORE!**

In 1986, a client company received a telephone bomb threat on a Friday afternoon, and on *every* Friday afternoon, *every week, all summer long*. How long do you think this went on before they finally decided to ignore the calls?

The answer is that they never ignored a single one of these telephoned bomb threats. They accepted every call as an emergency and evacuated the building *every* time! Whether there are 10 employees or 1,000, the answer would still be the same. This, then, is the first rule in dealing with bomb threats. Treat every one as if it were real!

By now practically everyone in the U.S.A. has been affected by such threats or knows someone who has. Fortunately, very few are authentic, but how can you differentiate the political terrorist from the idle prankster? You can't! You must act to protect yourself and your employees whenever such a threat occurs. But there are procedures that can minimize the risk to you and your employees and maximize the possibility of catching the caller.

I. A Typical Bomb Threat.

The call is usually received by the receptionist (or guards during non-working hours) on a publicly listed phone number. The caller is almost always a male.

The receptionist sometimes panics and remembers very little beyond the initial threat. He or she may become disoriented and confused, sometimes leaving the building without warning other employees. Most, however, will report the call to their supervisor, who often believes the threat to be a hoax and transfers the message up the chain of

command where someone will determine that the police should be notified.

The police will recommend evacuation in most cases, and will arrange for a search of the premises. The evacuation takes place, but once outside, no one is able to tell if any employees are still in the building but may find that one or two employees were injured in the evacuation and others may have gone home.

The police arrive, but are unable to gain much useful information about the caller from the receptionist. The fact is, threatening callers are seldom caught, but often call more than once.

II. What Can I Do To Prepare For A Bomb Threat?

Contact your local police and fire departments to give instructions to your supervisors in the best evacuation methods for your building. Appoint someone as the emergency coordinator (also a replacement, and don't forget night shifts) to be in charge of all emergency evacuations. The key points to remember in preparing an evacuation plan are:

- Everyone must be shown how to evacuate the building safely.
- Everyone must know an evacuation is occurring (fire alarm, a loud buzzer, a bell).
- Calmly and quickly evacuate the building.
- No elevators. You could get stuck in one and more important, the police and fire department will need them immediately.
- Everyone should know where to congregate.
- Everyone must report to their supervisor for a nose count. (Remember new employees, temps and visitors, as well as who is absent today).

- Report immediately anyone not at the designated area.
- The person receiving the call must be immediately available to the arriving emergency team (police or firefighters).

Two other points should be considered. In a bomb threat, all two way or citizens band radios should be turned off! Such devices can trigger an explosive. Some consideration should also be given to installing a tape recording device on your phones in order to record a threatening call.

III. How Should I Handle The Call Itself?

The attached check list should be duplicated and a copy given to everyone who is designated to receive incoming calls. The help sign on the opposite side of this article should also be duplicated on a separate sheet of paper. (Keep these 2 sheets handy near the phones at all times, but out of site). Ideally, someone else should try to trace the call and/or listen in on the line so that two people can now provide information to the police. The call receiver should:

- Assume that the threat is real!
- Show the help sign to whomever is in site to try to get the call traced.
- Keep calm. Do not antagonize the caller, express complete cooperation. Conversation should be gently encouraged. Do not get upset or panic. Do not hang up.
- Write as much information as possible on the check list.
- Above all, write down:
 - A. the expected time of the explosion.
 - B. the location of the bomb.
- Keep the caller on the phone for as long as possible (unless, of course, the caller says it's going to go off immediately).

IV. What Do I Do After The Call?

- After the caller hangs up, notify your supervisor or the person in charge of evacuation.
- Call the police. Tell them:

- that you have just received a bomb threat by phone.
- the name of your company.
- the address.
- the floor number.
- the phone number.
- your name.
- Notify all employees of the evacuation (sound alarm, bell, etc.).
- Leave the building! Now! (Take the check list with you).
- Do not look for the bomb. Do not move, touch, kick, peek inside or in anyway disturb any suspicious objects.
- Congregate at the designated place and take a nose count.
- The person who received the call should connect with the police or firefighters to give them information about the call.

Along with the check list and your recall of the events, the following information should be considered in trying to identify the caller:

- Recently terminated employees.
- Recently disciplined employees.
- Disgruntled ex-employees.
- Recent pranks or vandalism.
- Recent fights.
- Trespassers.
- Repair visits.
- Rejected job candidates.
- Government or other facility inspectors.
- Sales people calling.
- Union organizing.
- Temporary employees.
- Requests for personal tours.
- Phone calls asking information about the facility.
- Buyouts, takeovers.

V. Review.

Preparation:

- Appoint an emergency coordinator.

Background noise:

Is voice familiar?

Who does it sound like?

Time caller hung up:

Line on which call was received:

Your name:

Phone Number:

- Train employees to evacuate.
- Instruct incoming call receivers in these procedures.
- Keep attendance records and visitor sign-in sheets.

Handling The Call:

- Assume all threats are real.
- Use the check list to record pertinent information particularly--when is the bomb going to go off and where is it?
- Use the attached help card to notify someone to trace the call.
- Stay calm, encourage the caller to talk. Ask the questions on the check list.

After The Call:

- Notify supervisor or emergency coordinator.
- Call police.
- Evacuate (take check list with you)!
- Account for all employees.
- The call receiver should connect with police or firefighters when they arrive.
- Consider possible callers.

If you should decide to set up a more formalized and structured program, you can get a bomb threat manual free of charge by writing to:

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms
Arson and Explosives Program Division
800 K Street, N.W.
Tech World Suite 710
Washington, DC 20001

They no longer provide this information on their website, so you must submit your request in writing. Ask for Publication ATF P 7550.2

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H E L P

**I HAVE RECEIVED A THREATENING
CALL ON LINE:**

PHONE OR LINE NUMBER:

**CALL THE TELEPHONE COMPANY
OPERATOR QUICKLY AND QUIETLY**

**REQUEST AN IMMEDIATE
LINE TRACE**