



The Universities

AT SHADY GROVE

Bomb Threats and Suspicious Packages Procedure

USG Procedure | Approved April 2009, Amended October 2022

I. Purpose and Applicability

This procedure provides individuals with information on how to respond to bomb threats and suspicious mail or packages.

II. Definitions

A. Specific Threats: usually provide information regarding devices, their placement, rationale for attacks, and when devices are scheduled to detonate.

B. Nonspecific Threats: threats generally provide little additional information other than that devices have been placed in locations as stated by persons reporting threats.

III. Procedure

A. Evaluating Threat Credibility

- a. USG personnel will never automatically discount specific or nonspecific bomb threat without notification to the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD).
- b. The presence of certain information may increase the likelihood that bomb threats are specific and valid. This information includes but is not limited to:
 - i. Identifiable organizational involvement;
 - ii. Identifiable specific causes or reasons;
 - iii. Exact times when devices are to be detonated;
 - iv. Intimate knowledge of the type or nature of reported devices;
 - v. Specific targets named that have a high degree of sensitivity;
 - vi. Specific persons are targeted because of their notoriety; or
 - vii. Existence of suspicious packages or devices.
- c. Certain information may decrease the likelihood that bomb threats are specific and valid. This information includes, but is not limited to:
 - i. Absence of specific threat information;
 - ii. If recent/similar previous threats have been received and evacuations were conducted, but no devices were found;
 - iii. If threats would disrupt educational activities, including testing, or cause employees to be dismissed from work; or
 - iv. Absence of suspicious packages or devices.

B. Receiving and Reporting Bomb Threats

- a. USG personnel receiving bomb threats should attempt to obtain as much information as possible, and ask questions in a polite and non-threatening manner. The USG Bomb Threat Checklist should be used to obtain and record information that includes, but is not limited to:
 - When is the bomb going to explode?
 - Where exactly is the bomb?
 - What does the bomb look like?
 - What type of explosives were utilized?
 - What will make the bomb explode?
 - Did you place the bomb?
 - Why did you place the bomb?
 - When did you place the bomb?
 - Exact wording of threats
 - Name, address and phone numbers of caller
 - Caller ID information and phone number the call was received on
 - Age, gender and voice characteristics of callers
 - Background noises in calls
- b. Once a bomb threat has been received, USG personnel will immediately call 911 and then the security desk at ext. 6065
- c. Security personnel will immediately make appropriate notifications (see Notifications Policy).
- d. USG personnel with radio transmission networks should cease any transmissions within 100 yards of the area targeted by the bomb threat.
- e. The Incident Response Team will immediately convene at an appropriate location, preferably outside the area indicated in the bomb threat.
- f. The Incident Response Team will assign one member, preferably the Safety & Security Manager or Director of Facilities & Planning, to be a liaison with the responding Montgomery County Police Officers. This person should be prepared to brief the responding officers with full and complete information on the bomb threat.

C. Evacuations

The decision to evacuate any building should be made jointly between the Executive Director (or his/her designee) and the ranking Montgomery County Police Officer. Normally, evacuations should only be conducted when threats involve confirmed explosive devices/packages or specific credible information is present indicating the probable presence of explosive devices. If a disagreement arises, the Executive Director should defer to the MCPD Officer. All evacuations should be done in accordance with the Evacuation and Fire Procedure.

- a. All buildings, facilities, and parking lots will be evacuated that are within 100 yards of bomb threat scenes.

- b. Exterior building entrances will be secured and monitored by security personnel maintaining a secure perimeter.
- c. Entry by unauthorized personnel into buildings, facilities, or areas under evacuation is trespassing and will not be permitted.
- d. When building evacuations have been initiated by citizens as the result of non-specific bomb threats, security personnel will ensure notifications are made to have any sounding alarms reset or silenced and will ensure that the facility manager is notified in order to discourage evacuated personnel from reentering buildings.

D. Searches

Security and USG personnel are not sufficiently trained or equipped to conduct a thorough, detailed building search for explosive devices. Building searches will be conducted at the direction of responding emergency personnel. At the direction of emergency personnel, a bomb dog may be requested to assist in a building search.

- a. USG personnel may be asked by emergency personnel to assist in a building search. This assistance is usually limited to opening secured areas and identifying anything that is out of place.
- b. Individual employees and occupants may be asked to search their own work areas and assist in searching common areas.
- c. If you are asked to assist in a search do not disturb any suspected devices that may be located. Immediately notify an emergency responder if you do locate a suspicious package or device.
- d. When facilities or buildings have been searched and no devices are discovered, or detonation time frames have sufficiently passed without explosive detonations, occupants may be allowed by MCPD to re-enter facilities. USG personnel should be told that searches did not reveal any explosive devices. This does NOT mean explosive devices were definitely not present, but simply that none were located.

E. Receiving Suspicious Mail/Packages

When a bomb is mailed, its particular form varies in size, shape, and components. Mail handlers and employees should be alert to recognize suspicious looking items. Keep in mind that a bomb can be enclosed in a parcel or even in an envelope. Mail bombs have often exhibited unique characteristics, which should be helpful in identifying a suspected item. It is important to know the type of mail you normally receive so that suspicious items can be identified.

Anyone receiving mail and packages should regularly examine those materials before opening them. Indicators or characteristics that should cause the materials to be treated as suspect include, but are not limited to:

- Letters and packages delivered by someone other than regular carriers;
- Packages wrapped in string;
- Excess use of securing material, i.e., tape;

- Packages that are lopsided, heavy sided, have lumps, bulges, or protrusions;
- No postage or excessive postage;
- Handwritten notes;
- Packages or letters that have no return addresses or nonsensical return addresses;
- Letters of packages arriving before or after phone calls asking if the items were received;
- Improper spelling of common names, places, or titles;
- Leaks, stains, or protruding wires, foil, string, tape, etc.
- The addressee normally does not receive personal mail at the office;
- Address is prepared to ensure anonymity of sender;
- Mailing emits a peculiar odor;
- Mailing appears to be dissembled or re-glued;
- Handwriting appears distorted or foreign;
- Several combinations of tape are used to secure the parcel;
- Packages make a buzzing or ticking noise; and
- Contents of parcel make a sloshing sound.

F. Responding to Suspicious Mail/Package

Persons who find articles with the indicators listed above and are unable to verify the contents with the sender should:

- Stop immediately – avoid opening items any further. Avoid moving items or putting them in water or confined spaces such as desk drawers or filing cabinets;
- Ensure the Montgomery County Police (911) are notified as well as the security desk (x6065).
- Isolate the mailing by getting people out of the immediate area; and
- Meet with responding emergency personnel.

G. Security Response

- When receiving the report of a suspicious mail/package USG security should first ensure the Montgomery County Police have been notified.
- Security personnel will then make appropriate notifications.
- Be prepared to secure area where suspicious mail/package was found until emergency responders have arrived.
- Meet with emergency responders and provide them with the support and information they request.