

Policy Number: 1.013
Name: Bomb Threats/Suspicious Mail and Packages
Approved: April 1, 2009

BOMB THREATS

Bomb threats are sometimes reported by persons who have definite knowledge or who believe that devices have been, or will be, placed and want to minimize personal injuries or property damage. These callers/emailers/letter writers may have been personally involved in placing devices or have become aware of such information. More often, bomb threats are reported by persons who want to create an atmosphere of anxiety or panic which will probably result in the disruption of normal activities at locations where devices have purportedly been placed. Terrorist or politically motivated bombers more often select targets according to potential publicity and political or psychological gain that may be achieved by bombings. Criminally motivated bombers more often select targets for reasons related to revenge, extortion, intimidation, etc.

A. Evaluating Threat Authenticity

- Bomb threats can be classified as specific or nonspecific threats in accordance with the circumstances of individual bomb threat incidents.
- Specific bomb threats are less common, but more likely to involve actual explosive devices. Specific threats usually provide information regarding devices, their placement, rationale for attacks, and when devices are scheduled to detonate.
- Nonspecific bomb threats generally provide little additional information other than that devices have been placed in locations as stated by persons reporting threats.
- Bombers usually do not make any threats, they just bomb and take credit after bombings after they occur.
- USG personnel will **never** automatically discount specific or nonspecific bomb threat without notification to the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD).
- The presence of certain information may increase the likelihood that bomb threats are specific and valid. This information includes but is not limited to:
 1. Identifiable organizational involvement;
 2. Identifiable specific causes or reasons;
 3. Exact times when devices are to be detonated;
 4. Intimate knowledge of the type or nature of reported devices;
 5. Specific targets are named that have a high degree of sensitivity;
 6. Specific persons are targeted because of their notoriety; or
 7. Existence of suspicious packages or devices.
- Certain information may decrease the likelihood that bomb threats are specific and valid. This information includes, but is not limited to:
 1. Absence of specific threat information;
 2. If previous threats have been received and evacuations were conducted, but no devices were found;
 3. If threats would disrupt educational activities, including testing, or cause employees to be dismissed from work; or
 4. Absence of suspicious packages or devices.

B. Receiving and Reporting Bomb Threats

- USG personnel receiving bomb threats should attempt to obtain as much information as possible from persons reporting bomb threats. Personnel should obtain information and record same on the Bomb Threat Data Record Form (form “A”) that includes but is not limited to:
 1. Time devices are set to detonate;
 2. Device locations;
 3. Description of the device;
 4. Types of explosives utilized;
 5. What will cause the device to explode;
 6. If callers are responsible for placing the device;
 7. Why devices were placed;
 8. Name, addresses, and phone numbers of callers;
 9. Exact wording of threats;
 10. Time and length of calls and number(s) calls were made to;
 11. Age, gender, and voice characteristics of callers; and
 12. Background noises in calls.
- Once a bomb threat has been received USG personnel will immediately call 911 then the security desk at x6065.
- Security personnel will immediately make appropriate notifications (see Notifications policy 1.009).
- USG personnel with radio transmission networks should cease any transmissions within 100 yards of the area targeted by the bomb threat.
- The Incident Response Team will immediately convene at an appropriate location, preferably outside of the area indicated in the bomb threat.
- The Incident Response Team will assign one member, preferably the Facilities Manager, 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 or packages or specific information is present indicating the probable presence of explosive devices. If a disagreement arises the Director should defer to the MCPD Officer. All evacuations should be done in accordance with the Evacuation and Fire Policy 1.011.

- All buildings, facilities, and parking lots will be evacuated that are within 100 yards of bomb threat scenes.
- Exterior building entrances will be secured and monitored by security personnel maintaining a secure perimeter.
- Entry by unauthorized personnel into buildings, facilities, or areas under evacuation is trespassing and will not be permitted.
- 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 silence and ensure the facility manager is notified in order to encourage evacuated personnel to reenter building.

D. Searches

Security and USG personnel are not sufficiently trained or equipped to conduct a thorough, detailed building searches 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.

- 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.”
- Individual employees and occupants may be asked to search their own work areas and assist in searching common areas.
- 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 any suspicious package or device.
- When facilities or buildings have been searched and no devices are discovered, or detonation time frames have sufficiently passed without explosive detonations, and occupants are 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.

SUSPICIOUS MAIL/PACKAGES

The likelihood of ever receiving a bomb or dangerous substance in the mail is remote. Unfortunately, a small number of explosive devices and dangerous substances (Anthrax) have been mailed over the years, resulting in death, injury, and destruction of property. 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 either a parcel or an envelope. The physical appearance of a mail bomb is limited only by the imagination of the bomber. However, mail bombs have 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 suspected items can be identified.

E. Receiving of suspicious mail/packages

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 or 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 listed indicators and are unable to verify the contents with the sender should:

- Stop immediately – not opening items any further, nor 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 (x6600).
- Isolate the mailing and get 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 (see Notifications policy 1.009).
- 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.