

Bomb Threats

Definitions:

Below are important words and phrases relevant to this lesson. Each term is defined in the context of this lesson, though some words might have broader meanings. After reviewing the list, try the exercise to test your understanding.

- **To detonate:** To trigger an explosion.
- **Device:** An object created for a specific function.
- **To disrupt:** To disturb or upset a situation or process.
- **To evacuate:** To clear out people from a place.
- **To evaluate:** To assess or form an opinion about something.
- **Hoax, prank:** A deliberate trick or joke.
- **Obstacles:** Items or situations that block or hinder progress.
- **Prearranged:** Organized or set up in advance.
- **Residue:** A small remaining amount of something.
- **Threat:** An indication or promise of potential harm or danger.

Feel free to test your understanding of these terms with the provided exercises.

Bomb Threats

Bomb threats, while not frequent, must be taken seriously since any explosive device poses a significant risk to lives and property. Here's an overview of the types of individuals who might make bomb threats, though it's important to note that these examples are not exhaustive.

Types of Individuals Who Make Bomb Threats

Co-worker or Family Member: This person typically has a personal issue with someone and wants to hold that individual accountable for the distress caused to many others.

Dissatisfied Customer: An individual who believes they haven't received fair treatment or are unhappy with a product or service. For instance, a customer returns a stereo to a store and is denied a refund due to a no-return policy, feeling disrespected by the staff.

Disgruntled Employee: Someone who feels wronged by their employer and seeks revenge. For example, a terminated employee might return with a live grenade, threatening to harm everyone in the office.

Protester: A person with political or religious convictions that oppose those of the targeted organization. Such individuals may focus on government offices, clinics, or newspapers.

Prankster: Someone engaging in a joke or acting on a dare. For example, a student might call in a bomb threat to their school to see if they can get away with it or to gain some time off.

Each of these scenarios highlights the diverse motivations behind bomb threats, emphasizing the need for vigilance and preparedness.

Reasons Behind Bomb Threats

Bomb threats are motivated by various factors, with the primary reason often being the sense of power it gives the caller. Here are some insights into why individuals might make bomb threats:

Seeking Control: The caller is likely angry but lacks the courage or social skills to openly address their grievances. By instilling fear or disrupting the operations of an organization, they gain a sense of control over others. They might even observe the evacuation, deriving satisfaction from the chaos they've caused.

Preventing Harm: Another possibility is that the individual has knowledge of a dangerous device and wants to prevent injuries or property damage by alerting others.

Definition of an Explosive Device

For this section, an explosive device is defined as: "Anything used, intended to be used, or believed by the guard to be used as part of a threat or an actual attempt to cause an explosion."

This definition is broad and does not specify types of explosive devices. Explosive devices can vary from sophisticated, high-tech mechanisms to simple, homemade incendiaries like Molotov cocktails. While Hollywood often depicts bombs as sticks of dynamite with timers, real threats can involve common household items such as fertilizers.

Handling Bomb Threats

Though bomb threats are infrequent, a Security Guard may occasionally need to manage a threat or assist at a site where a threat is received. While threats can come through the mail, they are most commonly delivered by phone. To manage such situations, a bomb threat checklist should be readily accessible near telephones.

General Guidelines for Dealing with Bomb Threats

It's crucial to always treat a bomb threat as serious, regardless of whether it seems like a hoax. Lives are at risk, and failing to take appropriate action can result in significant consequences. While it's impossible to predict every scenario, quick thinking and sound judgment are vital in

preventing potential disasters. Prioritizing the protection of life over property should be the foremost consideration.

Key Points:

- Never ignore a threat.
- Always treat bomb threats as serious.
- Use quick thinking and good judgment to handle situations.
- Prioritize life over property protection.

Understanding these principles ensures that security personnel are prepared to respond effectively to bomb threats, safeguarding both lives and property.

Responding to Bomb Threats by Phone

Handling bomb threats made by phone requires a calm, methodical approach to ensure the safety of everyone involved. Here are the key steps to follow:

Remain Calm

Staying calm is crucial when responding to a bomb threat. The individual receiving the call should focus on gathering as much information as possible from the caller. It's unlikely the caller will call back to provide additional details, so every piece of information obtained during the initial call is vital.

Involve a Second Person

If possible, discreetly involve a second person to listen in on the call. This additional person can help accurately record the details provided by the caller and ensure that no critical information is missed.

Listen Carefully

Pay attention to both what the caller says and how they say it. Note the tone of voice, any background noises, and other auditory clues. These details can help authorities determine the seriousness of the threat and potentially identify the caller's location.

Take Notes

Document the caller's exact words. Recording details accurately is essential to ensure that the threat is properly understood and addressed. If the phone has caller identification, note the incoming number.

Ask Questions

Engage the caller with questions to keep them talking. Use a bomb threat checklist to guide your questions, ensuring you cover key information such as the timing of the explosion, the bomb's location, type, and reason for placement. Encourage the caller to repeat important details to confirm accuracy. If the caller indicates the building is occupied or evacuation might not be possible, they might provide more specific information to prevent harm.

Record Caller Information

The bomb threat checklist may include questions about the caller's name, address, and phone number. Sometimes, the caller might answer these questions automatically. Always let the caller hang up first.

Contact Police

Notify the police as soon as possible to initiate the call tracing process. If another phone is available, this can be done during the call. Police will assess the threat and decide on necessary actions. Inform the police even if you suspect the call is a hoax, as every bomb threat must be taken seriously.

Share Important Details

Provide the police with all relevant information from the bomb threat checklist, including any significant background noises or details the caller mentioned.

Follow Company Protocol

After informing the police, adhere to the bomb threat plan developed by the security firm and the site owner. This protocol should be established beforehand and followed meticulously during such situations.

By following these guidelines, security personnel can effectively manage bomb threats, prioritizing the safety of individuals and minimizing the risk of harm.

Bomb Threat Checklist

Be calm. Be courteous. Listen carefully. Don't interrupt.

- **Date:** _____
- **Time:** _____
- **Length of Call:** _____

Exact words of threat:

Questions to ask:

1. Are you sure you are calling the right building?
2. When will the bomb go off?
3. Where is it?
4. What floor?
5. What side of the building?
6. What does it look like?
7. What sort of explosives were used?
8. How powerful is the bomb?
9. How was it placed?
10. What is the reason for the bomb?
11. What is your name?

Caller Information:

- **Sex:** ____
- **Estimated age:** _____
- **Accent (describe):** _____

Voice:

- loud / soft
- high pitched / deep
- raspy / nasal
- familiar (details) / lisp

Speech:

- fast / slow
- clear / distorted
- muffled / slurred
- stutter / incoherent

Manner:

- angry / calm
- emotional / disguised
- crying / laughing
- abusive / vulgar
- intoxicated

Call display number? _____

Background sounds:

- street noises
- voices
- motor vehicles
- planes / trains
- music / party
- recorded message
- static
- animals
- equipment

Receiver Information:

- **Call taken by:** _____
- **Ph:** _____
- **Reported to:** _____
- **Action taken:** _____

Written Bomb Threats

Handling Written Bomb Threats

When a bomb threat is received through the mail system, it is crucial to preserve all materials, including envelopes, folders, or containers that the message came in. These items should be handled minimally and placed in a fresh plastic bag to maintain any potential evidence.

Efforts should be made to retain evidence such as fingerprints, explosive residue, handwriting, typing, and postal marks. This evidence will be vital for the police to trace and assess the threat.

Steps to Take When Receiving a Written Bomb Threat

1. **Preserve Materials:** Save all related materials, touching them as little as possible, and place them in a clean plastic bag.
2. **Minimize Handling:** Minimize handling to preserve fingerprints, powder residues, handwriting, and postal marks, which may provide crucial information to the police.

Responsibilities After Receiving a Bomb Threat

- **Information Sharing:** Provide detailed information to management and police to help them decide on necessary actions, such as evacuation.
- **Decision Making:** The responsibility for making decisions about evacuation lies with the authorities, not with the individual who received the threat.

If an Immediate Evacuation is Ordered

In the event of an immediate evacuation, the following responsibilities must be carried out:

1. **Control Entry:** Manage access to the building.
2. **Search Public Areas:** Search entrances, stairways, elevators, washrooms, hallways, loading docks, parking areas, and outdoor assembly areas.
3. **Clear Exits:** Ensure exits and evacuation routes remain unobstructed.
4. **Maintain Order:** Facilitate a swift and calm evacuation, ensuring no one is left behind.
5. **Assist with Re-entry:** Assist in the search before allowing people back inside.
6. **Communicate:** Stay in close communication with those in charge.

If a Search is Conducted Before Evacuation

When authorities decide to conduct a search before evacuation, follow these steps:

1. **Lead the Search:** The person named in the emergency plan should lead the search, informing employees about the threat and having them search their work areas.
2. **Clear Public Areas:** Focus on ensuring all public areas are clear.
3. **Search Strategically:**
 - Start searching from the main floor and work up or down, ensuring only searched areas are between you and the exit.
 - Prioritize searching public areas as they are easily accessible to a bomber.
 - Listen for unusual sounds and visually scan for out-of-place objects.
 - Pay attention to potential hiding spots such as rugs, furniture, drapes, and vents.
4. **Mark Searched Areas:** Use notes, tape, or chalk to indicate areas that have been searched.
5. **Communicate Closely:** Maintain close communication with those in charge.

If a Suspicious Object is Found

1. **Do Not Touch:** Avoid touching the object, as manipulating it could cause an explosion.
2. **Do Not Change the Environment:** Avoid changing the environment (e.g., temperature, light) around the object. Record any changes made.
3. **Avoid Electronic Devices:** Do not use radios or telephones near the suspected bomb. Move at least 150 feet away before using any communication device.
4. **Clear the Area:** Secure the area to ensure no one enters.
5. **Report Immediately:** Report the discovery of a suspicious object to the designated person, including:
 - A complete description of the object.
 - The exact location, noting proximity to gas, water lines, or electrical panels.
 - Any obstacles present.
 - Safe access routes.
 - The time the object was found.

6. **Stay Alert:** Remain vigilant for other potential devices and be prepared to follow further instructions from authorities.
7. **Avoid Media Interaction:** Do not make statements to the media. Leave this to trained management or police personnel. It is not your responsibility.

By following these procedures, security personnel can effectively handle written bomb threats and ensure the safety of everyone involved.

What Does a Bomb Look Like?

Bombs can take on numerous forms and sizes, ranging from sophisticated, professional devices to simple, homemade contraptions. The Internet offers instructions on bomb-making, and the necessary components can be easily sourced from homes and drugstores. Bombs can be disguised as everyday items such as envelopes, pens, telephones, briefcases, shoeboxes, pipes, or even gifts. Since no two bombs look alike, it's essential to be wary of anything that appears out of the ordinary.

Letter and Package Bombs

Bombs can also be sent through the mail. Here are some warning signs to watch for:

- **Balance and Feel:** Letters that feel stiff or unbalanced might contain more than just paper. They might be thicker or heavier than usual, and parcels might produce sloshing or clunking sounds.
- **Writing:** The handwriting might appear disguised, poorly written, or typed.
- **Place of Origin:** Note where the package originates and the sender's name. Is it familiar or expected? Has the return address or sender's name been omitted? Does it come from an unusual place, such as a foreign country?
- **Special Instructions:** These may include phrases like "Personal," "Private," "Confidential," "Only to be opened by _____," "Fragile," "Handle with Care," "Urgent," "Rush," or "Special Delivery."
- **Name of Receiver:** The letter might be addressed to a title like "President" without a name, have a misspelled name, or be sent to someone who usually doesn't receive mail or parcels.
- **Smell:** An unusual odor, such as the scent of almonds, might indicate the presence of explosives.
- **Protruding Objects:** Look for wires, tinfoil, strings, or anything sticking out of the package. Small holes might indicate where wires have been removed.
- **Packaging:** The wrapping might appear reused, with wrinkled paper, glue, tape or label marks, or crossed-out writing. The package might be wrapped with excessive tape or string, have an irregular shape, soft spots, or bulges, and show oily marks on the wrapping. Excessive postage is also a red flag.
- **Sound:** Any sound or noise coming from the package should raise suspicion.

By staying alert to these warning signs, you can help identify potential letter and package bombs and take appropriate action to ensure safety.

Decisions Regarding Bomb Threats

The decision to evacuate a building after receiving a bomb threat is one of the most critical decisions management faces. If a bomb threat plan has been developed, the decision process may be more straightforward. Many building owners have a policy of total evacuation in the event of a bomb threat, though some may have different policies or none at all.

Evaluation Process

Typically, all aspects of the situation are thoroughly evaluated before making a decision. The circumstances surrounding the threat must be carefully reviewed. This is why it's essential to record as much information as possible when receiving the threat. Details like background noise or fingerprints on written threats can provide crucial clues about the threat's authenticity. Management, in consultation with the police, must review and analyze all available information.

Alternatives Upon Receiving a Bomb Threat

There are three primary options to consider upon receiving a bomb threat, each with its own set of advantages and disadvantages:

1. **Do Nothing**

- **Advantages:** Minimizes disruption and avoids panic.
- **Disadvantages:** Many bomb threats are not real, but some are. Ignoring a threat could lead to real harm if the threat is genuine. Additionally, a person whose threat is dismissed might escalate their actions.

2. **Evacuate Immediately**

- **Advantages:** Prioritizes the safety of individuals and demonstrates a serious approach to threats. Evacuation routes are usually accessible.
- **Disadvantages:** This option can result in significant disruption, loss of time, and resources. It may encourage more threats if the caller's objective is to cause disruption. There is also a risk that a bomber might plant a device along evacuation routes to cause maximum harm during an evacuation.

3. **Search, Then Evacuate if Required**

- **Advantages:** Less disruptive than immediate evacuation and shows concern for safety. It allows for a measured response based on actual findings.
- **Disadvantages:** There is a risk to untrained individuals conducting the search, and there is no guarantee that the search will uncover the explosive device. Familiarity with the premises is crucial for an effective search.

Conducting a Search

When opting to search the premises, it is essential that someone familiar with the site performs the search. An outsider may not recognize what is out of place and might overlook potential threats. Someone who works at the site is more likely to notice items that do not belong and can access concealed or hard-to-reach areas where a bomb might be hidden.

Key Points for Conducting a Search:

- Familiarity with the premises is crucial.
- Outsiders may not effectively identify suspicious items.
- Trained individuals should conduct the search to minimize risk.

By carefully considering these alternatives and following a well-prepared plan, management can make informed decisions to ensure the safety of everyone involved while minimizing unnecessary disruptions.

Conducting a Search of the Premises

Responsibility

The decision on how to respond to a bomb threat should be made by management and the authorities overseeing the premises, in consultation with the police. These parties should develop a comprehensive bomb threat plan that outlines:

- Who will conduct the search.
- The circumstances under which a search will be initiated.
- Conditions for evacuation.

Decisions on the specifics of the search, such as its scope, timing, and sequence, should be based on a thorough analysis of the threat and any emerging information. Similarly, decisions to discontinue a search, terminate an evacuation, or authorize re-entry into the premises should be made by the same authorities.

Coordination of the Search

Time is often limited between the receipt of a bomb threat and the potential detonation. Efficient and well-coordinated searches are crucial. Here's how to conduct a thorough search:

1. **Planning and Control:** Effective searches require meticulous planning, control, and communication. Hasty searches are less effective and may overlook crucial details.
2. **Establish a Control Center:** A control center should be established to coordinate the search. This center will:
 - Prevent duplicate searches of the same area.
 - Keep the search organized and efficient.

- Ensure continuous communication among searchers.
 - Track search progress and address any issues encountered.
 - Monitor the location of all searchers to ensure their safety.
3. **Update Authorities:** The control center should continuously update the authorities in charge about:
- Search developments.
 - Progress made.
 - Problems encountered.

By following these guidelines, the search can be conducted systematically and safely, ensuring that all areas are thoroughly checked and that no time is wasted. This approach maximizes the chances of locating any potential threat while maintaining the safety of all involved.

Who Should Conduct a Search

The most qualified individuals to perform a thorough search are those most familiar with the premises—the employees or occupants. These individuals have an intimate understanding of what typically belongs in the area and can more easily identify items that seem out of place.

Role of Security Guards

While security guards may not have the same level of familiarity with the premises as the employees, they can still play a crucial role in the search process. Security guards may be asked to:

- Assist employees or occupants in conducting the search.
- Search common or public access areas, which include:
 - **Outside Areas:** Sidewalks and parking lots.
 - **Building Entrances:** Areas where people enter and exit the building.
 - **Public Areas Within Buildings:** Foyers, hallways, washrooms, stairways, and elevators.
 - **Unsecured Cleaning Material Closets:** Storage areas that are not secured and may be accessed by the public.

Increased Risk Areas

Public access areas and common spaces are the most accessible to both the public and potential bombers. These areas pose an increased risk of containing explosive devices due to their accessibility. Additionally, these are the areas through which evacuating individuals must pass to reach safety, making their thorough inspection crucial.

By leveraging the familiarity of employees and the support of security guards, the search can be conducted more effectively, ensuring that all potential threat areas are thoroughly checked.

Tactics in Conducting a Search

Team Organization

If feasible, divide searchers into teams to enhance efficiency. Here are the different methods for organizing search teams:

1. **Supervisory Personnel:** Using supervisory staff allows for a quick, basic search but may not be as thorough as involving employees familiar with their specific areas.
2. **Employees from Each Area:** Employees familiar with their workspaces can conduct more detailed searches.
3. **Trained Explosive Experts:** While this is the most thorough and safe method, it is also the most time-consuming as every item will be scrutinized.

Search Strategy

1. **External and Public Access Areas First:**
 - Begin by searching external areas and those most accessible to the public.
 - Once these areas are cleared, proceed to search from the lowest level (basement, sub-basement, or crawl space) upward.
2. **Marking Cleared Areas:**
 - Mark cleared floors or rooms with tape or chalk to indicate that they have been examined.

Room Search Procedure

1. **Initial Entry:**
 - Upon entering a room, stand quietly to listen for any unusual background noise such as clicking, ticking, buzzing, or beeping.
 - Repeat this action at several points if the area is large or if there is significant background noise.
2. **Visual Scan:**
 - Start scanning the room from floor level to waist level.
 - Continue scanning from waist level to eye level.
 - Finally, scan from eye level to the ceiling.
3. **Physical Search:**
 - After the visual scan, conduct a physical search following the same pattern.
 - Exercise caution when moving items like drapes, furniture, or pictures, as movement could trigger a device.
4. **False Ceilings:**
 - Check false ceilings or tiled ceilings carefully to ensure no devices are hidden there.

By following these tactics, the search process can be methodical and thorough, ensuring that all potential hiding places for explosive devices are examined while maintaining the safety of the searchers.

Spotting Suspicious Items

When discovering a suspicious item, follow these critical rules to ensure safety:

Rule 1: Do Not Touch

Do not touch any suspicious items. Moving or disturbing the device or objects attached to it may trigger a bomb, especially if it has mercury switches. Lids, flaps, zippers, buttons, and other fastenings can be rigged to cause an explosion when manipulated.

Your Role:

- Spot items that look out of place or suspicious.
- Let the police bomb disposal unit handle the investigation and potential disarming of the device.

Rule 2: Do Not Change the Environment

Avoid changing the conditions around the suspicious item. If you must change something, document it and inform someone in authority.

Key Points:

- Environmental changes can affect the stability of the explosive.
- Avoid altering heat, light exposure, or other conditions that might cause detonation.
- Record any changes you made (e.g., opening/closing doors or windows, turning lights on/off).
- This information is vital for the bomb disposal unit and can save lives.

Rule 3: Inform Authorities

Immediately inform someone in authority about the suspicious item. This can be the control center, a supervisor, the manager or owner of the building, or the police.

Information to Provide:

- Exact location of the suspicious item.
- Size of the item.
- Obstacles in reaching the item.
- Presence and status of doors or windows in the area, noting any you opened or closed.

- Safe access routes.
- Exact time the item was discovered and by whom.
- If known, who placed the item there.

Additional Actions

- **Cordon Off the Area:** Prevent unauthorized access to the area to avoid accidental detonation.
- **Assume Multiple Devices:** Do not assume the suspicious item is the only device. There could be multiple devices set in the area.

Reminder: The bomb disposal unit may find that the suspicious object is not a bomb, but always proceed with caution and follow these guidelines to ensure everyone's safety.

Statements to the Media

A Security Guard should refrain from making any statements to the media about a bomb threat or incident unless explicitly directed by their employer and the client or owner of the premises.

Key Points:

1. **Professional Spokespersons:** Management or the police typically have trained spokespersons to handle media inquiries and provide accurate information about the incident.
2. **Publicity for Terrorists:** The primary goal of terrorists making threats and setting bombs is often to gain publicity for their cause. Untrained individuals speaking to the media can inadvertently aid this goal.
3. **Role of Security Guards:**
 - Focus on the immediate task of ensuring safety and following protocol.
 - Direct any media inquiries to the designated spokesperson or authority.

By adhering to these guidelines, Security Guards help maintain control over the information being released and ensure that communications are handled by those trained to deal with such sensitive matters.

Practice Exercise

Read each sentence and fill in the blanks with the best word from the Definitions list found at the beginning of this lesson. You may need to change the form of the word to fit the sentence (for example, add –ed or -ing to the end of the word).

1. They _____ the building because someone saw a package that looked suspicious.

2. The caller _____ to _____ a bomb if the Security Guard didn't follow his orders.
3. An _____ blocked the entrance to the building.
4. Work at the factory was _____ by the caller's _____ .
5. It is up to the police to _____ whether or not a threat is a _____ .
6. The procedure for the guard to follow was _____ by the company and explained in the post orders.
7. The guard followed a trail of white _____ and soon found a _____ that looked like a bomb.