

# BOMB THREATS

## The Telephone Call

Most bomb threats are received by telephone. Any city employee who regularly answers the telephone could be the initial point of contact. It's important to collect as much information as possible during these first few seconds. Appropriate questions to ask the caller might be:

1. Where is the bomb, exactly?
2. What does it look like?
3. What kind of device is it?
4. When will it explode?
5. Why are you doing this?
6. What do you want?
7. Who are you?

It is also important to listen to other things while talking to the caller:

1. Is the caller male or female?
2. How old does the caller sound?
3. Is there anything distinctive about the caller (accent, unusual language, anger, etc.)?
4. Is there any identifiable background noise?
5. Does the caller sound credible?

## First Response

The first thing any employee should do who receives a bomb threat is notify a supervisor. The supervisor should: (a) listen to the information provided by the employee taking the call; (b) notify the police communications center at x7300; and (c) determine if an evacuation of the workplace is feasible. A police officer and patrol sergeant will respond and make contact with the employee who received the call and his or her immediate supervisor.

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## Evacuation

Evacuations are not automatic in bomb threat situations. Many schools, for example, choose not to evacuate every time someone phones in a bomb threat simply because in most situations the caller's motive is disruption and evacuation. Supervisors should make an assessment of the threat. Would the evacuation affect a small number of people or a large number? Is the information specific or general as to the location of the bomb? Is there a stated time frame?

If, for example, a caller simply states, "There is a bomb in City Hall," and then hangs up, an evacuation is probably not indicated. We would have to evacuate all of City Hall and close it to public access for an indefinite period of time, which is not practical. On the other hand, if the caller were to say, "There is a bomb in the first floor men's room of City Hall set to go off at noon," this information is much more specific and a limited evacuation could be accomplished without jeopardizing employee safety or disrupting city operations. Any supervisor may make the decision to evacuate his or her work unit if the threat to safety appears immediate. Normally, however, the decision to evacuate can be made after consulting with the Police Patrol Sergeant.

## Follow-Up

At some point, the area in question is going to have to be searched to see if there really is the possibility of a bomb. Police will assist with this search, but common sense dictates that there should be someone present who is familiar with the work area and could recognize anything that looks unusual or out of place. The most effective process is for an employee, or work unit supervisor, to accompany a police officer on a walk-through of the affected area. Building Maintenance personnel may also be helpful. The decision to return to work after evacuation also rests with the work unit supervisor or manager. Returning to work should be accomplished only after consultation with the police.

The police, of course, will conduct an investigation and prepare a report. The important thing is for employees not to panic or take unnecessary risk. Report any bomb threats to a supervisor and the police immediately.