



## **BOMB THREAT PROCEDURE**

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**GENERAL**

Over the years, criminal elements of our society have bombed or used the threats of bombings against "the establishment" as a method of focusing public attention on their causes. In the past, the vast majority of bomb threats have turned out to be hoaxes. However, these incidents pose a continuing, ever-present threat to life and property. A reasonable approach must be developed within the court system to deal with this problem.

**OBJECTIVE**

The primary objective in response to any bomb threat is to minimize the risk of injury to individuals, damage to property and avoid disrupting court-related activities. This can be accomplished by establishing positive lines of communications between the court, other tenants of the building and local/state response agencies trained to handle this type of emergency. An effective communication and reporting system will assist court personnel in determining whom to notify, and how, when a bomb threat is received.

**COURT RESPONSIBILITIES**

- a. The most common ways that court personnel will become aware of a bomb threat are:
  1. package through the mail;
  2. written message, delivered through the mail or by messenger;
  3. telephone call (most frequently used method);
- b. If court personnel receive a warning call that a bomb or incendiary device has been placed in or around the court facility, the individual receiving the call should attempt to ascertain the following information from the caller:
  1. Preserve the recording of the call to record the exact words of the caller. Try to keep the caller on the line as long as possible. If necessary, ask the caller to repeat the message.

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2. If the caller does not indicate the location of the bomb or the time of possible detonation, ask for it.
  3. Pay particular attention to background noises that may provide a clue to the caller's location.
  4. Listen closely to the caller's voice (male or female), voice quality (calm or excited), accents and possible speech impediments.
  5. When the caller hangs up, the person who received the call must immediately notify the applicable clerk of court, court security officer, as well as the Security manager.
- c. If court personnel receive a written bomb threat, the following actions should be taken:
1. Report the receipt of the threat to the clerk of court, court security officer, and Security Manager immediately.
  2. Save all materials, including any envelope or container as possible evidence. Fingerprints, handwriting or typewriting, paper, and postmarks can be analyzed to help identify the perpetrator.
- d. Once a bomb threat is received, evaluated, and emergency response agencies notified, the presiding justice, or clerk/deputy clerk in the absence of the presiding justice, will need to decide whether or not to evacuate the court area. This is perhaps the most difficult decision to make, as it will entail relocating all personnel from the court, including prisoner defendants. There is no magic formula to help with the proper decision. The judge/clerk/deputy clerk will need to weigh the risk of possible injury to individuals should he/she decides not to evacuate. If evacuation is ordered, prisoner defendants will be escorted by the transport officer or any attending police officers to a safe holding area until approval is given to re-enter the court area. All other individuals in the court should be taken to safety by court personnel. Routes of evacuation will differ with each building. However, court personnel should select the most direct routes out of the building to safety. Obviously, if the location of the bomb is known by court personnel, they should attempt to evacuate the building using a route out of the building that leads away from the affected area.

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e. When the response team arrives at the court facility, the clerk/deputy clerk should brief the team chief on the status of the situation. If the response team decides to conduct a search of the facility, the Court Security Officer should assist the team. Court Security Officer's involvement is needed, as they are the individuals with detailed knowledge of the area being searched. The response team will determine the search patterns they will take when searching the building.

f. When a bomb that is received in the court, please refrain from turning on lights or anything electrical, using radio transmissions or adjusting thermostats.

g. Bombs are usually found in places where the public has general access with a minimum exposure to security. These could include rest rooms, public corridors, conference rooms, and courtrooms.

h. Bombs and suspicious packages/letters:

1. Letter and parcel bomb recognition points:

- Foreign mail, air mail, or special delivery.
- Restrictive markings such as confidential, personal, etc.
- Excessive postage.
- Hand written or poorly typed addresses.
- Incorrect titles or title only and no name.
- Misspelling of common words.
- Oily stains or other discolorations.
- No return address.
- Excessive or rigid weight.
- Lopsided or uneven envelope.

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-Protruding wires or tin/aluminum foil.

-Excessive security material such as tape.

2. What to do with suspicious mail:

- Notify the clerk/deputy clerk, court security officers and the security manager immediately.

- Do not put in a confined space, such as a desk drawer or filing cabinet.

- Do not put in water.

- Isolate the item and evacuate the immediate area.

- Ventilate the area as much as possible to assist in venting potential explosive cases and to reduce the risk of flying glass.

REMINDER: Court personnel although not qualified to conduct searches for bombs, are familiar with their work area(s). It would be extremely helpful to the search team if you could look for suspicious items around your area. If such items are discovered, DO NOT TOUCH, call the court security officer immediately.

**REPORTING**

In the event this procedure is used, the court security officer or clerk/deputy clerk of court will notify the Administrative Office of the courts once the situation is under control. The court security officer is responsible for forwarding a completed copy of the Incident Report to the Administrative Office of the Courts, Attn: Security Manger, within seven (7) working days of the incident.

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**REVISIONS**

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