

You might need to evacuate your premises because of:

- a threat aimed directly at the building
- a threat received elsewhere and passed on to you by the police
- discovery of a suspicious item in the building (perhaps a postal package, an unclaimed holdall or rucksack)
- discovery of a suspicious item or vehicle outside the building
- an incident to which the police have alerted you.

Whatever the circumstances, you should tell the police as soon as possible what action you are taking.

The biggest dilemma facing anyone responsible for an evacuation plan is how to judge where the safest place might be. For example, if an evacuation route takes people right past a suspect device outside your building, or through an area believed to be contaminated, evacuation may not be the best course of action. You might have to consider the use of protected spaces.

A general rule of thumb is to find out if the device is external or internal to your premises. If it is within the building you may consider evacuation, but if the device is outside the building it may be safer to stay inside.

The decision to evacuate will normally be yours, but the police will advise. In exceptional cases they may insist on evacuation, although they should always do so in consultation with your Security Co-ordinator.

Planning and initiating evacuation should be the responsibility of the Security Co-ordinator. Depending on the size of your business and the location of the building, the plan may include:

- full evacuation outside the building
- evacuation of part of the building, if the device is small and thought to be confined to one location (e.g. a letter bomb found in the post room)
- full or partial evacuation to an internal safe area, such as a protected space, if available
- evacuation of all staff apart from designated searchers
- retreat to protected spaces.

Evacuation instructions

Evacuation instructions must be clearly communicated to staff and routes and exits must be well defined. Appoint people to act as marshals and as contacts once the assembly area is reached. Assembly areas should be at least 500 metres away from the incident. In the case of most vehicle bombs, for instance, this distance would put them beyond police cordons - although it would be advisable to have an alternative about 1km away. Car parks should not be used as assembly areas.

Disabled staff should be individually briefed on their evacuation procedures. Many organisations advise the use of firefighter lifts for evacuating disabled staff in the event of an incident.

Suspected letter or parcel bombs

In the case of suspected letter or parcel bombs - evacuate the room and the floor concerned along with the two floors immediately above and below.

CBR incidents

Responses to chemical, biological radiological (CBR) incidents will vary more than those involving conventional or incendiary devices, but the following general points should be noted:

- the exact nature of an incident may not be immediately apparent. For example, an improvised explosive device (IED) might also involve the release of CBR material;
- in the event of a suspected CBR incident within the building, switch off all air conditioning, ventilation and other systems or items that circulate air (e.g. fans and personal computers). Do not allow anyone, whether exposed or not, to leave evacuation areas before the emergency services have given medical advice, assessments or treatment;
- if an incident occurs outside the building, close all doors and windows and switch off any systems that draw air into the building. Agree your evacuation plan in advance with the police and emergency services, the local authority and neighbours. Ensure that staff with particular responsibilities are trained and that all staff are drilled. Depending on the type of incident, you may need to agree with the police what action you take. Building managers should ensure that they have a working knowledge of the heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems and how these may contribute to the spread of CBR materials within the building.

Protected Spaces

Evacuation is never advisable if there is a general threat and the building has a protected space.

- See more at: <http://www.cpni.gov.uk/Security-Planning/Business-continuity-plan/Evacuation-planning/#sthash.bxoaYR3d.dpuf>