

Procedures for handling bomb threats

Most bomb threats are made over the phone and the overwhelming majority are hoaxes, often the work of malicious jokers, although terrorists do make hoax calls with the intent of causing alarm and disruption. Any hoax is a crime and, no matter how ridiculous or unconvincing, must be reported to the police.

Calls may be of two kinds:

- Hoax threats designed to disrupt, test reactions or divert attention
- Threats warning of a genuine device – These may be attempts to avoid casualties or enable the terrorist to blame others if there are casualties. However genuine threats can provide inaccurate information about where and when a device might explode.

Principles

Base bomb threat procedures on the following principles:

Ensure that all staff who could conceivably receive a bomb threat are trained in handling procedures or have ready access to instructions. This applies particularly to courts, banks, hotels, hospitals, news agencies, public transport organisations and those offering any sort of emergency service.

Switchboard operators should be familiarised with procedures.

Draw up a clear list of actions to follow upon receipt of a call. Even though staff may be unable to assess a threat's accuracy or origin, their impressions of the caller could be important. A suggested bomb threat checklist is available under Related Documents.

Consider that the member of staff who receives the threat may not be prepared – receiving such a threat may be the closest that many people ever come to acts of terrorism – so offer some basic advice for staff on handling a threat, for example:

1. Stay calm and listen.
2. Obtain as much information as possible – try to get the caller to be precise about the location and timing of the alleged bomb and whom they represent. If possible, keep the caller talking.
3. Ensure that any recording facility is switched on.
4. When the caller rings off, dial 1471 (if that facility operates and you have no automatic number display) to see if you can get their number.
5. Immediately report the incident to the relevant manager or security team to decide on the best course of action and notify the police. If you cannot get hold of anyone, and even if you think the call is a hoax, inform the police directly. Give your impressions of the caller and an exact account of what was said.
6. If you have not been able to record the call, make notes for the security staff or police. Do not leave your post – unless ordered to evacuate – until the police or security arrive.

- See more at: <http://www.cpni.gov.uk/security-planning/business-continuity-plan/bomb-threats/#sthash.lBp9Px8R.dpuf>