

School Bomb Alerts & Emergency Procedures Policy



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Responsible Directorate/Division	Risk and Emergency Planning Division	
Supporting documents, procedures & forms of this policy	Emergency Procedures (App.A “ Checklist for dealing with a telephone bomb threat (App. ‘B’) Warning letter/parcel bombs and suspect packages (App. ‘C’) Letter to parents (App. ‘D’)	
References & Legislation	Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 Bombs Protecting People and Property 4th Edition (Home Office) Counter Terrorism Protective Security Advice (NaCTSO)	
Schools Consultation Audience	Andy Priest – Police Security Advisor	
Headteachers checklist	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Head teachers to develop procedures as per the Policy; 2. Staff to familiarize themselves with bomb alert and evacuation procedures; 3. Managers and staff to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities, as per the plans, during bomb alerts and subsequent evacuations; 4. Head teachers to identify Evacuation and Assembly officers; 5. Head teachers to ensure that the procedures are tested; and 6. The governing bodies of schools are directed to adopt the policy, as from time to time revised, and implement its procedures. 	

1. Introduction

The threat of terrorist crime is ever present and in this current climate has its connections with the Middle East. However, it is equally important to keep the threat in perspective, that is terrorist incidents nationally are rare and the threat level within Halton is very low.

There is a legal obligation to plan for Bomb Threats as provided by the Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1974 that states that all employers are responsible for safety on their premises and requires them to identify appropriate procedures for serious, imminent danger.

2. Scope

The Policy identifies standard procedures for bomb alerts and subsequent evacuation for all school premises. Template for developing procedures is contained in appendix 'A' and, once completed, must be communicated to staff.

These procedures can also be used when there are external threats, in particular involving firearms, and there is a need to move to places of safety in the centre of the school whilst decisions over evacuation are being established, e.g. 'lockdown' (see Security Guidelines).

There are two types of threats,

1. Hoax threats designed to disrupt, test reactions or divert attention; and
2. Warnings 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

3. Notification of Bomb Alert

3.1 Role of Head teacher

Take charge of any bomb threat incident at their school by: -

1. Assessing the threat;
2. Liaising with Police;
3. Making the decision to evacuate and nominate an assembly area; and
4. Making the decision to reoccupy the school.

3.2 Assessing the Threat

Assessing the credibility of a threat is a critical task, particularly if the attack being threatened is imminent. This is a tactic used to place additional pressure on decision makers. When specific intelligence is known to police, advice will be issued accordingly; however, in the absence of information, it will be necessary to consider a number of factors:

- Is the threat part of a series?
- If so, what has happened elsewhere or previously?

- Can the location of the claimed bomb(s) be known with precision? If so, is a bomb visible at the location identified?
- Considering the hoaxer's desire to influence behaviour, is there any reason to believe their words?
- If the threat is imprecise, could an external evacuation inadvertently move people closer to the hazard?

It is important that they always remain alert to the threat from terrorism, nationally, domestically and from domestic extremist groups. This can be done by visiting www.mi5.gov.uk or by contacting Cheshire CTAs at ctsa@cheshire.pnn.police.uk. During any bomb threat incident attending police will have access to the current threat levels.

3.3 Decision

Responsibility for the initial action taken at a school subject to a bomb threat sits with the Head teacher, not the police. However all bomb threats should be reported to the police and their advice followed accordingly. Evacuation considerations include:

- a) An assessment of the credibility of the threat has been made and the threat is aimed directly at the school or elsewhere;
- b) The threat has been passed on by the police and is aimed directly at the school or elsewhere;
- c) Discovery of a suspected device in the school (perhaps a postal package, an unclaimed holdall or rucksack); and
- d) Discovery of a suspected device or vehicle outside the school.

3.4 Options

There are four options,

- a. Do nothing – low level threat that could include call from a child or drunk, however, if there is the slightest doubt the Head teacher must adopt one of the other options; or
- b. Search of school without immediate evacuation – low level threat and there is no reason to believe that an explosion is imminent; or
- c. Searching a school with partial evacuation - the size of the object found i.e. thin letter, which could not contain enough material to cause structural damage outside of the immediate vicinity, therefore the evacuation is to surrounding rooms including those above and below; or
- d. Evacuate immediately – reason to believe that information is credible, then there must be full or partial evacuation as quickly as possible.

3.5 Search Considerations

In order to carry out an effective search in response to a bomb threat, note the following:

- Search plans should be in place;
- Identify who in will coordinate and take responsibility for conducting searches;
- Identify how communicate the initiation of a search, e.g. by word of mouth, over a public address system (coded messages avoid unnecessary disruption and alarm), by text message, personal radio or by telephone cascade, etc.;

- Divide the school into areas of a manageable size for 1 or 2 searchers. Ideally staff should follow a search plan and search in pairs to ensure nothing is missed;
- Ensure those conducting searches are familiar with their areas of responsibility. Those who work regularly in an area are best placed to spot unusual or suspicious items;
- Focus on areas that are open to the public; enclosed areas (e.g. cloakrooms, stairs, corridors, lifts etc.) evacuation routes and assembly points; car parks, other external areas such as goods or loading bays;
- Develop appropriate techniques for staff to be able to routinely search public areas without alarming any visitors or customers present; and
- Under no circumstances should a suspicious item found during a search be touched or moved in any way. Immediately start evacuation and dial 999; and
- Ensure all visitors know who to report a suspicious item to and have the confidence to report suspicious behaviour.

3.6 Internal or Inwards Evacuation (inevacuation)

This involves staying in the school but moving people away from external windows/walls and is relevant when,

- e. It is necessary to move staff into safe areas whilst decisions over evacuation are being made; or
- f. It is known that a bomb is not within or immediately adjacent to the school.

If a suspect device is outside the school it may put people in danger if the evacuation route takes them past the device. A safer alternative maybe the use of internal protected spaces. Inwards evacuation needs significant pre-planning and may benefit from expert advice to assist in identifying an internal safe area within the school.

See also 'lockdown procedures' contained in the Security Guidelines.

3.7 Other Considerations

On every occasion the decision to evacuate should be made in consultation with the Police. Points to consider when it has been decided to evacuate the school,

- × Mobile phones should not be used;
- × The fire alarm is not to be used. If possible agree a discrete signal which will immediately alert staff to the fact that it is a bomb alert as opposed to a fire evacuation. This could be by use of an intermittent sounder, the additional use of a klaxon or verbal communication. It is important not to create fear and panic amongst the pupils;
- × Car parks should not be used as assembly areas;
- × On evacuation schools should not be re-entered and personal items should be left behind;
- ✓ Staff should be able to distinguish between fire alarms and bomb alerts and it is important not to create fear and panic;
- ✓ Depending on the size of the suspected device, the assembly point should be,
 - **100 metres for small items** including parcel bombs
 - **200 metres for larger items** including cars
 - **400 metres for vans and LGV's**

- ✓ Nominated assembly points should be behind 'hard cover' (substantial brick walls or concrete) and away from glass (glass is the major cause of injuries in an explosion);
- ✓ Nominated assembly points should not be close to "secondary hazardous" such as gas, electricity, petrol and diesel storage;
- ✓ Nominated assembly points should be searched for suspicious devices;
- ✓ Disabled staff should be individually briefed on their evacuation procedures;
- ✓ If the location of the suspected device has been identified, evacuate using a route which avoids that area; and
- ✓ Evacuation procedures should also put adequate steps in place to ensure no one else enters the school.

3.8 Role of Evacuation officers

- a. To assist the Head teacher in raising the alarm and notifying staff of the assembly point and evacuation route.

3.9 Role of Assembly officers

- a. Ensure that all staff and pupils lists are updated.
- b. At assembly point, check that all staff and pupils are accounted for and report any missing staff to the officer in charge.

3.10 Re-occupation:

Again responsibility for reoccupation sits with the school, not the police, however; their advice followed accordingly.

- c. If possible the school should be searched prior to reoccupation; and
- d. The decision to reoccupy the school should be made in consultation with the Police.

4. Actions

Head teachers are responsible for ensuring that staff are familiar with this actions to take as follows:

4.1 Finding Suspicious Articles

- Do not touch suspicious items;
- Move everyone away to a safe distance;
- Prevent others from approaching;
- Communicate safely to staff, visitors and the public;
- Use hand-held radios or mobile phones away from the immediate vicinity of a suspect item, remaining out of line of sight and behind hard cover;
- Notify the police; and
- Ensure that whoever found the item or witnessed the incident remains on hand to brief the police.

4.2 Bomb Warnings (see appendix 'B')

If the threat is delivered through a **telephone call**:

- When a call is received continue the conversation whilst attempting to alert a colleague to the issue. Checklist for calls is contained in appendix 'B';
- The person receiving the call should try to remain calm and get as much information as possible.

If the threat is delivered **face-to-face**:

- Try to retain as many distinguishing characteristics of the threat-maker as possible.

If discovered in a **written note, letter or as graffiti**:

- Treat as police evidence and stop other people touching the item

If the threat is received via **email or social media application**:

- Do not reply to, forward or delete the message
- Note the sender's email address or username/user ID for social media applications; and
- Preserve all web log files for your organisations to help the police investigation (as a guide, 7 days prior to the threat message and 48 hours after).

After a warning the followings actions must take place:

- The Head of the school and the police must be notified immediately by the person taking the call;
- In consultation with Police a decision is to be made on whether to evacuate the school; and
- The person receiving the call should try to remain calm and get as much information as possible.

4.3 Letter / Parcel Bombs:

Terrorists and others wishing to cause harm or disruption have long used postal and courier services to deliver hazardous items to target recipients. Delivered items can include letters, packets and parcels and may contain:

- Explosive or incendiary devices
- Sharps or blades
- Offensive materials
- Chemical, biological or radiological (CBR) materials or devices.

A delivered item will probably have received fairly rough handling in the post and so any device is unlikely to function through being moved, but any attempt at opening it may set it off. Therefore:

- Staff opening incoming mail should remain vigilant at all times;
- They should be familiar with what may be a suspect package and look for the 'give away' signs (see appendix 'C'). It is advisable that a copy of this is displayed in the post – handling area;
- Place the package on the nearest horizontal firm surface. Make no attempt to open it;
- Do not touch or move the package further;
- Order any other staff present to leave the room as quickly as possible;

- Prevent other persons from entering the room;
- If it is possible, open the windows of the room before leaving;
- Leave the room closing the door;
- Lock the door if possible and give the key to the Head of the school or the police;
- The Head of the school and the police must be notified immediately;
- It is up to the Head of the school to consider full school evacuation, which is dependent on size of package, letter size devices and staff must go beyond the police cordon;
- An alternate is to evacuate adjacent rooms and rooms above and below;
- Do not stay behind to make the phone call to the Police;
- The evacuation route should be coordinated to avoid entering the area near to the suspect package; and
- Remaining occupants in the school should be made aware of problems, reassured and allowed to carry on working but they should be prevented from entering into the cleared areas.

N.B. On no account should a suspicious package be taken to the police or the security officer. It should not be placed outside in the street, put in a bucket of water or covered with sand.

4.4 Personal Safety

If a suspicious object is found, **do not touch it**. Before transmitting on a radio or mobile phone **move away** and transmit from behind hard cover.

Hand held radios: - *minimum 15 metres*

Radios fitted in vehicles: - *minimum 50 metres*

Mobile phones switched off and not used within: - *minimum 50 metres*

4.5 Letter to Parents

After an incident a Head teacher may decide to formally notify parents and a draft letter is contained in appendix 'D'.

5. Testing Procedures

Familiarising through testing and exercising will increase the likelihood of an effective response to an evacuation and ensure that staff are familiar with bomb threat procedures, routes and rendezvous points. Disabled staff should have personal evacuation plans and be individually briefed on their evacuation procedures. Similarly all visitors should be briefed on evacuation procedures and quickly identified and assisted in the event of a threat.

6. Review and Evaluation

In order to ensure that this policy continues to be effective and applicable to the Council, the program will be reviewed biennially by Risk and Emergency Planning and relevant stakeholders. Conditions which might warrant a review of the policy on a more frequent basis would include:

- Changes to legislation;

- Employee concern.

Following completion of any review, the program will be revised and/or updated in order to correct any deficiencies. Any changes to the program will be consulted through the relevant stakeholders.

Version Control and Change History

Version Control	Date Released	Date Effective	Amendment
1	Jan 10	Apr 1 st - 2010	Policy Created
2	Jan-13	Jan-13	Amendments highlighted by Police Security officer, email
3	July 2015	July 2015	Updated date of review
4	February 2016	Mar 2016	Updated with Government guidance
5	June 2016		Updated with Government guidance

Appendix 'B'

CHECKLIST FOR DEALING WITH A TELEPHONE BOMB THREAT

The member of staff who receives the threat will probably not be prepared and so general advice will include,

- Stay calm and listen and you will be able to gather more crucial information.
- Try to obtain as much information as you can.
- Signal immediately to a colleague that an incident is in progress.
- Do not put the handset down as the longer you stay on the line, the better the chance of the call being traced.
- Immediately relay the message to the Head teacher.

Further actions to be taken on receipt of a bomb warning:

- Switch on recorder/voicemail (if connected).
- Tell the caller which town/district you are answering from.
- 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.
- Record the exact wording of the threat:

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

ASK THESE QUESTIONS & RECORD ANSWERS AS ACCURATELY AS POSSIBLE:

1. Where exactly is the bomb right now?

Click here to enter text.

2. When is it going to explode?

Click here to enter text.

3. What does it look like?

Click here to enter text.

4. What does the bomb contain?

Click here to enter text.

5. How will it be detonated?

Click here to enter text.

6. Did you place the bomb? If not you, who did?

Click here to enter text.

7. What is your name?

Click here to enter text.

8. What is your address?

Click here to enter text.

9. What is your telephone number?

Click here to enter text.

10. Do you represent a group or are you acting alone?

Click here to enter text.

11. Why have you placed the bomb?

Click here to enter text.

INFORM BUILDING SECURITY / COORDINATING MANAGER

1. Name and telephone number of person informed:

Click here to enter text.

DIAL 999 AND INFORM POLICE

1. Time informed:

Click here to enter text.

This part should be completed once the caller has hung up and police / building security / coordinating manager have all been informed

1. Date and time of call:

Click here to enter text.

2. Duration of call:

Click here to enter text.

3. The telephone number that received the call:

Click here to enter text.

ABOUT THE CALLER:

THREAT

Male

Female

Nationality

Click here to enter text.

Age

Click here to enter text.

LANGUAGE:

Well-spoken

Irrational

Taped

Foul

Incoherent

CALLER'S VOICE:

Calm

Crying

Clearing Throat

Angry

Nasal

Slurred	Excited	Stutter	Disguised	Slow	Lisp	*Accent
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Rapid	Deep	Familiar	Laughter	Hoarse	Other (please specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.					

* What accent?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

If the voice sounded familiar, who did it sound like?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

BACKGROUND SOUNDS:

Street Noises	House Noises	Animal Noises	Crockery	Motor	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Clear	Voice	Static	PA system	Booth	Music
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Factory Machinery	Office Machinery	Other (please specify)			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.			

REMARKS:

[Click here to enter text.](#)

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

[Click here to enter text.](#)

ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN ON RECEIPT OF A BOMB THREAT SENT VIA EMAIL OR SOCIAL MEDIA

1. DO NOT reply to, forward or delete the message
2. If sent via email, note the address [Click here to enter text.](#)
3. If sent via social media what application has been used and what is the username/ID?
[Click here to enter text.](#)
4. Dial 999 and follow police guidance
5. Preserve all web log files for your organisations to help the police investigation (as a guide, 7 days prior to the threat message and 48 hours after)

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Signature:

Print Name:.....

Record time call completed..... Date:/...../20.....

SAVE AND PRINT – HARD COPY TO BOMB THREAT COORDINATOR AND POLICE

Appendix 'C'

POST ROOM

WARNING LETTER/PARCEL BOMBS AND SUSPECT PACKAGES

Pay particular attention to:

OILY STAINS

LOPSIDED OR UNEVEN ENVELOPE

FOREIGN MAIL AND SPECIAL DELIVERIES

RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS – CONFIDENTIAL, PERSONAL ETC.

EXCESSIVE POSTAGE

IT IS UNEXPECTED OR UNUSUAL ORIGIN FROM AN ORIGINAL SENDER

EXCESSIVE USE OF WRAPPING MATERIAL SUCH AS A JIFFY BAG OR SIMILAR

PADDED ENVELOPE

RIGID CONTENTS IN FLEXIBLE ENVELOPE

INCORRECT TITLES

TITLES BUT NO NAMES

UNUSUALLY HEAVY

(Most letters weigh 28g or 1 ounce whilst letter bombs weigh 50-100g and are 5mm or more thick)

ENVELOPE FLAP STUCK DOWN COMPLETELY

(A harmless letter usually has an ungummed gap of 3-5mm at the corners)

PIN-SIZED HOLE IN ENVELOPE OR PACKAGE WRAPPING

ADDITIONAL INNER ENVELOPE, AND IT IS TAPED OR TIED

MIS-SPELLINGS OF COMMON WORDS

~~HANDWRITTEN OR POORLY TYPED ADDRESSES~~

WRITING IS IN AN UNFAMILIAR OR UNUSUAL STYLE
LETRASET OR STENCILLED ADDRESS
PROTRUDING WIRES OR TINFOIL
UNUSUAL SMELL IN PARTICULAR BLEACH, ALMONDS OR MARZIPAN
LOOSE POWDER
NO SENDERS ADDRESS
VISUAL DISTRACTIONS
UNEXPECTED DELIVERY

If you are concerned, immediately contact a Head teacher.
Do not attempt to open the package.

Vacate the room immediately, leaving the package where it is.

Appendix 'D'

**DRAFT LETTER FOR SCHOOLS & EDUCATION ESTABLISHMENTS TO CONSIDER
USING IF AN INCIDENT AFFECTS THEIR PREMISES**

Dear Student, Parent or Carer
May 2016

Following a number of hoax bomb calls to schools across the UK this letter provides an update to students, their parents and carers.

Each call has caused significant disruption to school life, upset to school staff and concern to pupils, their parents and carers.

The police treat calls threatening bomb attacks very seriously and are committed to working with schools to ensure the safety of all students and to minimise disruption to their learning.

The following action will be taken:

- Every bomb threat will be assessed. Highly experienced officers review intelligence and work with counter-terrorism experts, who have an in depth knowledge of incidents of this nature, to assess whether a threat is real or not. So far, there has been no credible threat posed to student safety and all the calls have been malicious designed to cause fear and disruption.
- Police are conducting a major criminal investigation. Making a hoax bomb threat is a serious crime punishable by up to seven years imprisonment. Police forces across the country are working together to find those responsible and a number of arrests have already been made.
- Police have refreshed guidance with the Department for Education to share with leaders of schools, other education establishments, and authorities. This guidance also signposts to advice on wider security reviews and supports existing safeguarding plans. Public guidance on how you, schools and the council can prepare for emergencies can be found at: www.gov.uk/local-planning-emergency-major-incident;

There is a real threat from terrorism and it is important that we are alert but not alarmed. Schools remain some of the safest and most secure public spaces; the wellbeing of students is the top priority of staff.

To help us we ask the following of you:-

- If the school makes a decision to temporarily suspend lessons while safety checks are carried out, do not attend to remove your child unless asked to do so. Schools will keep you informed and always arrange care for students unable to return home or whose parents/carers are unable to collect them. Do not phone the emergency services to ask for updates on your child as it delays genuine people in need from getting help.
- Consider speaking to your child about the consequences of making hoax calls.
- If you have any information about those responsible for the security alerts call police on 101 (999 in an emergency) or the independent charity Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.