



Massachusetts Bomb Threat Response Guidance



Guidance for local police, fire and facility managers

Every facility should have an emergency operations plan or all-hazard plan.

Use these guidelines to review and revise the bomb threat response section of your plan.

Every bomb threat is unique and should be handled in accordance with the needs of the facility.



If a Threat is Received

- Immediately contact local law enforcement and fire to request a response, initiate the threat assessment team, and to establish a unified command.
- Law enforcement or dispatch should contact their fusion center of jurisdiction to report the threat and determine if other entities or jurisdictions are reporting the same or similar threat.
- Conduct a Threat Assessment.
- Execute other appropriate actions as outlined in this guidance or your established emergency operations plan.



Planning Considerations

- Coordinate in advance with local law enforcement and first responders to ensure smooth handling of a bomb threat.
- Update primary and secondary contact names and information annually, or when there are changes in personnel – share this information with your local public safety agencies.



Preparation Considerations

- Control building access.
- Implement strict master key control.
- Inspect incoming parcels.
- Safeguard confidential material.
- Keep exits unobstructed.
- Ensure adequate internal and external emergency lighting.
- Utilize electronic surveillance.
- Have building floor plans for first responders to help with searches.

Threat Assessment

Threat assessment is the **most important** step when responding to a bomb threat. It determines appropriate actions, including the level of public safety response, the scope of the search and whether to evacuate. Each incident is unique, and all circumstances must be carefully evaluated by the police/fire/facility management team.

Low Risk Threats

Low risk threats lack credibility and pose a minimum risk to the facility and/or public safety. Disruption is the probable motive.

- Threat is vague and indirect.
- Information in the threat is inconsistent or implausible.
- Caller is known to the facility management and has called numerous times in the past with no credible threat.
- Threat was discovered instead of called in (e.g., written on a wall).
- Multiple identical threats received in numerous jurisdictions.

Medium Risk Threats

A medium risk threat has an increased level of credibility and could be carried out, although it may not appear entirely realistic.

- Threat is direct and feasible.
- Wording in the threat suggests the perpetrator has thought about how the act will be carried out.
- Threat may include indications of a potential time and place.
- No strong indication that the perpetrator has taken preparatory steps, although there may be some indirect reference pointing to that possibility.
- Indication that the perpetrator has details regarding the availability of components needed to construct an improvised explosive device.
- Increased determination to carry out the threat (e.g., "I'm serious!").

High Risk Threats

A high-risk threat is specific and realistic and appears to pose an immediate and serious danger to the facility and its personnel

- The threat is direct, specific, and realistic and may include names of possible victims or location of the device.
- The perpetrator provides his/her identity.
- Threat suggests concrete steps have been taken toward carrying out the threat.
- Perpetrator makes statements indicating they have practiced with a weapon or have had the intended victim(s) under surveillance.
- Ongoing dispute, a recently terminated employee, or other situational factor that may increase the site's likelihood as a target.



Public Safety Response



- Local police and fire must respond to the facility as part of the threat assessment team.
- Notify Regional response team (if one exists), and State Police or local Bomb Squad if needed, based on threat assessment.
- State Police Bomb Squad is available to provide guidance.
- Explosive detection canines may be used for low, medium, and high-risk threats at the discretion of the threat assessment team and the EK-9 handler.



Site Decision Makers

- Mobilize the facility's emergency response teams.
- Communicate with facility personnel about bomb threat.
- Limit access to building(s).
- Decide, with threat assessment team, on appropriate action or combination of actions:
 - Search: A search should always be conducted. The scope of the search is dependent on the threat assessment.
 - Shelter-in-place: partial or full.
 - Evacuation: partial or full and determine the best route.



Searching the Building

All Risk Levels

- Always conduct a search.
- The search team should include police/fire/facility manager.
- Search common areas first (lobbies, hallways, cafeteria, bathrooms).
- Search the exterior perimeter second.
- If there is to be an evacuation, a search of the evacuation route should be prioritized.

Medium Risk: Search more controlled areas.

High Risk: Search additional locked and controlled areas such as the roof and utility areas.

Search Role of Facility Personnel

- When search is initiated by the facility manager, make a quick and complete 360 visual scan of the workplace and any other common areas for anything unusual.
- If anything unusual is noticed, move people away from the potential hazard and immediately report the location of the object to the site decision makers.

Suspicious vs. Unattended Items

An unattended item is not automatically a suspicious one. The totality of circumstances make an item suspicious (e.g., item is out of context, making a noise, visible wires protruding, or placement witnessed). Facility personnel are best equipped to identify items that are out of place.

If a Suspicious Item is Found

- Do not touch, tamper with, or move the item.
- Immediately report item to the unified command.
- Public safety controls the scene if a suspicious item is found.
- Refrain from using radio communication near the item.

Shelter in Place/Evacuation Decision Tree

It is important **not** to reward threatening behavior, so unless a threat assessment warrants evacuation, consider search, shelter-in-place, or limited evacuation alternatives first.

- Consider shelter in place and conduct a search for a low-risk threat.
- Partial evacuation depends on the specificity of the threat (if threat specifies an area, evacuate that area).
- Full evacuation – when a suspected item is located or there is a high-risk threat.

When Evacuation is Initiated

- **Never pull the fire alarm unless there is a fire.** Other means should be used to communicate the evacuation.
- Everyone should take their personal belongings with them when possible.
- Evacuate to a safe and controlled area that has been previously searched and not specifically mentioned in the threat.

Continuing Actions After Evacuation

- Debrief emergency services and assist in coordinating further actions.
- Take accountability and report.
- Open media, medical and family areas and provide regular briefings.
- Police/fire/facility officials coordinate on what can be released publicly. Often the specifics of a threat may need to be kept quiet to aid the investigation and to prevent copycats.
- As appropriate, determine reoccupy action. Time of day and specificity of the threat may dictate this decision.
- Law enforcement or dispatch should follow up with the fusion center of jurisdiction on outcome.
- Communicate with internal/external stakeholders.



Reporting Considerations

Threat via Telephone/VOIP

- Record call if possible.
- Identify the number calling.
- Document date, time, and duration of the call.
- Identify if threat was or was not made by a pre-recorded voice.

Email Threat

- Save the email and DO NOT delete it.
- Print, photograph, or copy the email.
- Obtain full email header data from the original email.

Online Web Form Threat

- Obtain IP address logs of visitors to the organizations public facing website to include source ports and timestamps.
- Run a Whois lookup to identify the telecommunications provider.
- Provide law enforcement contact information for your web hosting service to expedite evidence collection.