



The Big Step

Emergencies Policy

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The Emergencies policy will be reviewed annually, or more regularly in light of any new significant development.

Reviewed yearly by:	
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1. Introduction

Being able to handle a crisis is a normal part of running any establishment or service. However, some incidents are so critical and overwhelming that they are capable of causing acute and prolonged distress to staff or other building users.

This guidance note highlights the response establishments may have to consider and follow.

2. Definition of a major emergency/incident

2.1 A major emergency/critical incident is defined as a serious disruption to life which causes or threatens one or more of the following:

- Serious injury or death of a colleague, pupil, client or other building user
- Incidents charged with profound emotion
- Incidents attracting unusual attention from the news media
- Incidents involving serious threat
- Other incidents with very unusual circumstances which produce a high level of emotional reaction.
- Incidents involving major property loss

3. What can 'The Big Step' do to prepare?

It is evident that an establishment which has anticipated a major emergency, and laid plans for managing a response, is likely to handle the actual event more effectively and confidently. The key question to be considered is 'what happens if:

'The Big Step' cannot plan for every eventuality; however, if it is known who will assume key roles and checklists and procedures are in place etc., then the response to a crisis will be more assured.

The following process can be adopted:

- Establish and identify a critical incident management team who, collectively or individually, could take the lead in an emergency. Commission key roles to include Governors/establishment managers, administration and site staff
- Ensure basic information, contact lists, communication, procedures etc. are in place, known to all staff and kept up to date
- Carry out a simulation exercise to explore how an emergency might unravel. Identify additional needs for planning, training, skill development and awareness raising
- Ensure that all members of the establishment, including Governors and parents in schools, are aware of the existence of a planned response
- Ensure timescales for review, updating etc. are in place
- Review incidents that do occur to learn from them and amend procedures if necessary

4. Action required

- The type and scale of response will be determined by the kind of emergency or

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incident that has occurred

- An action plan would need to be developed by the Critical Incident Management Team to be followed in the event of an emergency / incident

The actual procedures necessary will depend on the incident, in terms of scale and impact. This may include procedures to:

- Obtain and collate information about what has happened
- Gather and brief the establishment's Critical Incident Management Team
- Where appropriate, put in place an incident management room and a dedicated telephone line for outgoing calls
- Ensure flexibility as an incident evolves
- Allocate responsibility for liaising with the relevant emergency services
- Contact legal services if there is an issue of liability or negligence
- Contact the Devon Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service if the incident involves serious injury or death or significant property damage
- Make arrangements for informing staff, pupils or clients. Ensure letters or statements are checked prior to issue
- Inform staff and other building users with particular care being taken to protect and support them
- Encourage people involved to talk before they go home
- Be ready to deal with the media immediately and in the longer term
- Contact the 'The Big Step' Communications Officer before agreeing to be interviewed or releasing names of staff or other building users

5. Bomb threats

The Security Service and police forces have revised their advice on bomb alerts and suspect packages in the light of experience.

Particular concerns are the:

- Variability and unreliability of information relating to warnings
- High level of hoax calls
- Risk of secondary devices placed near evacuation routes - sheltering within a building may be less risky than evacuation outside.
- Health, Safety & Wellbeing Guidance Note

Essential Action

The Manager/Headteacher in charge of an establishment should take action on the following points:

- Assess the site features
- Check that the incident control and warning system is effective
- Check that arrangements for bomb alerts, suspect packages and fire emergencies are compatible
- Train staff to play their part in searches and evacuation
- If a warning does arise, the police should be contacted immediately and the likely response will be to send the local beat officer. Even if specialist bomb experts were available, their lack of familiarity with the building layout and normal contents would prevent them from making any kind of meaningful search. The best that can

be achieved is for the manager in charge of the establishment to implement a prearranged contingency plan drawn up with the support of the local Crime Prevention Officer

- In short the manager of an establishment should assess the risk and decide:
 - To do nothing
 - To search and evacuate only if something suspicious is found
 - To evacuate everybody immediately, without searching
 - The final action will have to reflect the significance of the warning, the degree of disruption involved and the opportunities to protect people from blast, inside or outside the building

The decision to evacuate and the choice of assembly point

A major issue in respect of a bomb threat is the possibility of a second device exploding at or near an assembly point. The separation distance to avoid injuries from metal fragments from a car bomb would be at least 120 metres. A briefcase bomb could send glass a distance of around 30 metres.

Conversely, if staff were inside a building, 3 metres away from the windows, available predictions are that they would be unlikely to sustain injuries from flying glass if a briefcase bomb exploded outside, providing it was more than 18 metres from the windows. Similarly, injuries would not be expected from a car bomb more than 50 metres away.

These factors, provided by the Security Service, show why professional opinion is inclined to keeping people inside buildings in the face of bomb alerts. Where it is possible for people to shelter behind masonry walls inside buildings this is likely to offer the best protection.

Health, Safety & Wellbeing Guidance Note

If, upon considering the information to hand, the Headteacher or Manager decides that there is a reasonable possibility that a bomb may be present in the building, the building should be evacuated at once.

Where external assembly points have to be used, the police recommend that they should preferably be 200 metres away from parked vehicles.

Should occupants take personal effects e.g. briefcases with them as they Evacuate?

Traditional Fire Service advice is that bags should be left behind, to counter the risk of something being dropped. The fear is that a bag dropped could cause a tripping hazard and in turn create a major crush in a panic situation.

However, in a bomb alert, removal of hand baggage will be a great help if a search has to be conducted before re-entry. On balance, where evacuation is necessary it would be wise to have occupants take personal clothing and baggage with them providing it is readily to hand. This will also benefit occupants should the building not be available for an extended period.

Alarm Signals

The theoretical advantage of remaining inside a building during a bomb scare depends on the strength of the building structure and the ability to provide separate emergency warnings for fire and bomb threats. Some organisations have introduced arrangements where the fire alarm can be sounded manually, intermittently - say 10 times, to warn of a bomb threat. If general evacuation then becomes necessary, the normal continuous fire alarm is sounded. Where such alternatives are not practicable, evacuation would have to be to the outside in all cases.

Searching for bombs

The quickest and most reliable way of searching is where staff search their own work stations. This can only work in situations where prior notice can be sent to separate units occupying a building. A special signal (e.g. ten short bursts of the fire alarm) would be ideal. In small establishments, warnings might be given by messenger or by "cascading" telephone messages - where one person phones two people and in turn they each phone two other people etc. The results of the searches would need to be co-ordinated. Staff who normally act as fire marshals would seem to be the best candidates for collecting information for the local suite of rooms they oversee, including circulation areas and toilets. The fire marshals could then confirm the position to the Incident Co-ordinator. Any suspicious package should not be touched but identified by a red marker card placed alongside - an A4 file separator suitably marked would be ideal. Searches need to be systematic: the police recommend looking round initially for items on the floor. A second check should then focus on the walls and furniture and a final check should be made.

Receipt of Bomb Warnings

Security Service advice is that warnings, if given at all, are given cynically, so that there is insufficient time to clear areas properly. Often warnings are given via third party organisations, which have to pass them on. However, if a warning is received, it can yield important information for the person in overall control of the incident and of course for the police. With the widespread use of direct dialling, any member of staff could receive a threat and would need to know what to do. The checklist for dealing with a telephone bomb threat (Appendix 1) can be photocopied and clipped into the back of a telephone directory. Essential requirements are to keep the person talking and to listen carefully to what is said. If a colleague is on hand, he or she should notify the appropriate person or contact the police directly on 999. This might enable the call to be traced. (Note that some modern telephones display the calling number - in this case it should be noted and passed on immediately in accordance with a clearly understood "Security" arrangement to initiate the Incident Control Procedure.

Incident Control

The person(s) designated to take control of the incident should be of sufficient seniority to be capable of making a decision on how to respond. However, this response will be faster and more certain if senior managers have previously endorsed several distinct courses of action to cope with a range of potential incidents.

The system should be capable of working at awkward times, e.g. at the beginning or end of the working day. It should also be able to cope with particular staff being absent.

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Good liaison with the police will help to provide a background for a decision on evacuation.

Where searches are instituted, they should have been completed at least twenty minutes before the time the device is expected to explode.

Re-entry into a building is not recommended until at least thirty minutes after the explosion deadline. The police will advise on this aspect.

Many fire evacuations in large buildings are marshalled with the aid of two way radio. In the event of bomb warnings, hand-held radios should not be operated in the immediate vicinity of a suspect bomb and vehicles with transmitters should be parked 200 metres away in case radio transmission might trigger the bomb. The contingency plan needs to take account of such detail.

Target Hardening

This is the term given to reviewing security so as to make things more difficult for the terrorist. For example where a tight control can be maintained on the entry of visitors, the Incident Control Officer will have less need to opt for evacuation when deciding what action to take in response to a particular bomb alert.

In general, the level of on-going security awareness of all employees as well as those with special responsibilities will be a great asset. Audits of potential problems can be made and minor changes instituted. For example, re-siting litter bins to positions where they are subject to greater surveillance will remove some of the uncertainty which arises when a bomb threat has actually to be evaluated.

Windows in buildings at high risk of attack from terrorists can be equipped with anti-shatter film and "bomb blast net curtains" for windows. The effect is to limit the window damage to that which would be experienced with ordinary glass with a bomb exploding at twice the distance. Local Authority and educational buildings are not normally considered to carry a significantly high risk of being specially targeted by terrorists to warrant such treatment. However, further information is available from Police Crime Prevention Officers, should this be necessary.

6. Suspect packages

All staff who open post should know how to recognise and deal with a suspect package/postal bomb. Appendix 2 contains information, points to look for and actions to take.

Actions to be taken

Any person finding a suspect package should:

- Put the item down gently, into a 'safebin' if one is available
- Place a 'warning indicator' close to but not touching the item
- Evacuate the immediate area and place a 'No Entry' sign at all access points

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- Inform the Headteacher or Manager by the fastest possible means, stating the location, appearance and approximate size, weight and other relevant details of the suspect package and indicating why their suspicions have been aroused

Upon receiving a report of a postal bomb, the line manager will (not necessarily in this exact order):

- Obtain all relevant information from the person who discovered the suspect postal bomb
- Mark the position of the suspected postal bomb(s) on a floor plan and consider this location in relation to the premises evacuation routes and assembly points etc.
- Carefully consider all the information on the suspect package and assess the associated risks
- From this assessment, the Headteacher or Manager should decide which areas of the premises will be evacuated and where the evacuated persons will assemble
- Inform staff of the situation in a calm manner, stating the areas to be evacuated, where evacuated persons should assemble and the route(s) they should take
- Take steps to prevent anyone from inadvertently entering the evacuated area
- Arrange for a search team to check the chosen assembly point for devices. (Do not allow children to conduct searches – call for volunteers who are familiar with the area)
- Phone the police using 999 and provide them with all available information
- Instruct a suitable member of staff to meet the police at the access point to the site
- On arrival the police will take over the management of the incident and arrange for the suspect postal bomb to be checked and disarmed if necessary
- Order the re-occupation of the evacuated area once the police say that it is safe to do so
- Conduct a debriefing session for all appropriate staff, make any necessary changes to the procedure and draw these to the attention of all persons who should be aware
- Complete a report on the incident and send copies to other parties as appropriate

General mail handling principles

The post room and those handling mail deserve special attention. Post should be opened in a designated post room and not in an open plan area.

Persons opening post should space themselves out as far as possible to limit the number of casualties in the event of a detonation.

Any suspect device should be isolated in a locked room, away from windows and thin partition walls. It should NOT be placed in water, on account of the uncertain effect this might have on the trigger mechanism.

Postal bombs are intended to inflict personal injury, those within the normal size range are not likely to cause serious blast damage to the structure of the building, although there is a risk of windows being shattered leading to flying glass. The detonation of a postal bomb could cause an outbreak of fire.

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD A SUSPECT POSTAL BOMB BE OPENED, SHAKEN, PLACED IN A BUCKET OF WATER OR CARRIED THROUGH THE PREMISES.

7. Support available to establishments

Emergencies test the spirit, organisation and leadership of establishments and their communities in extreme ways. Experience indicates that an establishment at the centre of a critical incident will usually need external support from the Local Authority (LA)/other agencies to provide establishments with practical assistance and to provide people with expertise to offer emotional support, debriefing and, exceptionally, counselling.

It is best if the establishment itself seeks and manages any external help but this may not always be possible. The priority objective, shared between the establishment and LA, should be to serve the best interests of staff, pupils and other building users in coping with the incident individually and collectively.

The LA can make available some specific types of support to establishments in the first hours, days and weeks following an emergency/critical incident.

- Additional or alternative accommodation
- Telephone contacts for support and advice
- Debriefing and support for staff
- Debriefing sessions for other building users
- Longer term support
- Leaflet/information for clients/parents of clients
- Support for Headteachers and Managers

8. Conclusion

Handling a crisis is a normal part of any establishment's life. Some incidents, however, are of a more critical and overwhelming character in which staff or other building users may experience acute, even prolonged, distress.

All establishments should develop an individual Critical Incident Management

9. Appendix 1

CHECKLIST FOR DEALING WITH A TELEPHONE BOMB THREAT

In the event of receiving a bomb threat by telephone, directly from an individual/alleged terrorist organisation, remain calm and use the following checklist to obtain as much information as possible.

Immediately alert the establishment manager but:

DO NOT PUT DOWN THE HANDSET OR CUT OFF THE CONVERSATION.

- Motion to a colleague to call the Incident Control Officer or the police directly on 999 to get the call traced. Complete this form as you go along:
- Telephone number of caller (if your telephone displays it)
- Message (exact words)
- Ask for any code words
- Where is the bomb?
- What time will it go off?
- What does it look like?
- What type of bomb is it?
- Why are you doing this?
- Time of call

As soon as the call has finished complete the tick sheet overleaf and give this form to the person responsible for security, or the establishment manager who will decide What to do.

Information to be provided immediately to the person responsible for security, or the establishment manager after having received a telephone bomb threat

Details of Caller

Speech

Distractions

Other Noises

Person receiving the call:

- Number of telephone on which call was received.
- Date of incident:
- Man
- Woman
- Child
- Old / young
- Not known
- Intoxicated
- Rational
- Rambling
- Speech impediment
- Accent (specify if possible)
- Laughing
- Serious
- Message read or spontaneous
- Disguised e.g. electronically
- Noise on the line
- Call box pay tone or coins
- Operator
- Interruptions
- Anyone in background?
- Traffic
- Talk
- Typing

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- Machinery
- Railway station
- Music
- Children
- Other
- Aircraft
- Any clue as to identity of caller and/or location of call?

10. Appendix 2

SUSPICIOUS MAIL GUIDELINES

1. 'What is Suspicious Mail?'

Suspicious packages could contain bombs, biological agents or chemicals.

2. What constitutes a suspicious parcel?

Some typical characteristics postal inspectors have detected over the years, which ought

to trigger suspicion, include parcels/envelopes that:

- Are unexpected or from someone unfamiliar
- Are from a foreign destination
- Are addressed to someone no longer with your organisation or are otherwise outdated
- Have no return address, or have one that can't be verified as legitimate
- Are of unusual weight, given their size, or are lopsided or oddly shaped
- Are marked with restrictive endorsements, such as "personal" or "confidential"
- Have protruding wires, strange odours, stains or powdery residues
- Show a city or county in the postmark that does not match the return address, or has no return address

3. What should I do if I receive a suspicious piece of mail?

Immediately:

- When handling the suspect item, place it in a spot which is relatively isolated and cordon it off
- Notify the line manager and immediately contact the police by dialling 999
- If the item is from a foreign destination, check with the recipient to verify its authenticity. Ask if they were expecting mail from abroad and, if not, do they know who may have sent it?
- Evacuate the area if told to do so, take personal baggage too, (this will help if a search is ordered)

4. Keeping contamination to a minimum:

If the risk appears to be a substance, rather than a bomb, on the spot judgements will be needed to limit risks of further contamination. Follow as many of the suggestions below as possible in the absence of more specific help and advice:

- Cover the package and any substance coming from it with clear plastic so that it can be viewed without disturbing it. (This will stop fine particles becoming airborne in draughts)
- Ask for soap and warm water to be brought to the office rather than leave the office and risk extending possible contamination. Ensure that all persons who have touched the mail wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water
- If anyone has had powder spilt on clothing, moisten the area and sponge it off very gently. Don't brush dry powder
- Arrange for staff to go straight to the nearest available shower and change clothes, leaving the clothing behind in a sealed plastic bag, labelled with the person's name.
- If gross contamination has occurred, arrange for all in-one disposable overalls to be sent to the office and for staff to put them over the clothing they are wearing
- Give the soles of shoes a wet wipe before leaving the room

5. Medical surveillance:

List all persons who were present in the room and identify those who actually touched the package. Include contact information. Be prepared to provide the list to responding police officers. If prescribed medication by medical personnel, staff should take it until

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otherwise instructed or it runs out.