

Oklahoma State University Policy and Procedures

BOMB THREATS

3-0522

BUSINESS & EXTERNAL RELATIONS

JULY 1998

General Purpose

This policy provides information about bomb threats and the reporting of suspicious devices and packages. It also identifies approved procedures and resources available to minimize disruptions to the educational process, damage to property, and to prevent loss of lives. At Oklahoma State University, the Faculty and Staff share in the responsibility to plan and prepare for the potential threat.

1.01 Bomb threats continue to be a problem on campuses across the nation and occasionally at OSU. The incidents of today require that every threat be treated as actual and real until proven otherwise. Careful preplanning by all University departments can minimize the disruption of classes, business, and activities, and avoid possible injury caused by bombs and bomb threats.

1.02 Bomb threats are made for various reasons, with most designed simply to be disruptive of some university function. Some specific reasons are listed below:

- a. Hostility by former employees
- b. Hostility toward an instructor or employer
- c. Inability to attend an important class
- d. Non-preparation for a major exam
- e. Creation of an atmosphere of anxiety and panic
- f. Creation of vulnerability for the commission of other crimes
- g. Providing a legitimate warning for an explosion where only property damage is intended

1.03 Regardless of the reason for the bomb threat, there must be four (4) primary objectives once it occurs: 1) determine the level of the threat, 2) diminish the threat to life or property, 3) minimize the disruption and 4) deter future events.

2.01 Bomb threats can be categorized into two basic categories: *General and Specific*.

A General Bomb Threat implies a threat that is very broad in nature with minimal specific information.

A Specific Bomb Threat will contain information which is specific to the type of target, location, time, and other particular information.

While OSU treats all bomb threats seriously, the total disruption/interruption of the educational process must be considered. If reasonable, the threatened areas of a general threat will be searched without evacuation and with as little disruption as reasonable. The more specific the threat, or as a threat's credibility increases, an accompanying public notification responsibility will increase. An evacuation decision will be based upon the threat specificity and totality of circumstances.

3.01 The following details the normal steps to be followed in the event of a bomb threat or the report of a suspicious package or device:

a. The receipt of a bomb threat should be reported immediately to the OSU Police by calling extension 911 or any other published police number.

(1) If the threat is made via telephone, the caller should be quizzed for as much information as possible. (See suggested checklist, APPENDIX A.) Observe the telephone display (if available) and note the number calling you or any other information on the display. Write it down immediately. If the threat is left on voice mail, do not delete it.

(2) If the threat is by written note, handle the note as little as possible and keep it secure for subsequent police use.

(3) If the threat is made by some other means, electronic mail, etc., the original text should be saved for police review.

b. Once notified of the bomb threat, the OSU Police will proceed with the following:

(1) Establish a command post (in or close to threatened area).

(2) Notify OSU's Environmental Health Services and the Stillwater Fire Department.

(3) Assign an officer to interview the call recipient.

(4) Request that the university official(s) in charge of the program located in the threatened building report to the command post.

(5) Review known facts and decide whether an evacuation is appropriate. Evacuation upon receipt of a threat is not an automatic decision, but depends upon perceived credibility of the threat.

c. When an evacuation is not ordered, the following will be implemented:

(1) All exits and exit ways will be searched first to insure that no danger exists in those areas.

NOTE: Often it is more prudent to avoid evacuation until exits can be carefully searched.

(2) When appropriate, considering the generality or specificity of the threat, persons in the affected area may be notified of the threat to allow the opportunity to make their own decisions regarding evacuation. This notification can be in the form of, and may include, intercom, word of mouth, written notice, e-mail, radio, etc. (3) When reasonable, the threatened areas will be searched.

d. When a threat is received against a residence hall, responding officers will evaluate and investigate as outlined above. However, the decision to notify residents and the method(s) employed will be determined by the Director of Residential Life or a designee in consultation with police personnel.

e. Building evacuation decision making and evacuation processes are as follows:

(1) The OSU Public Safety Director or his designate will normally

reserve the final decision for evacuation. However, if time and conditions permit, the decision for mandatory evacuation will generally be in the form of a mutual agreement between the University official in charge of the program located in the building at the time, an OSU Environmental Health Services official, and the Public Safety Director or his designate. This decision will be based upon an evaluation of the credibility of the threat and the feasibility of reasonably notifying persons in the area of the threat.

- a. Evacuation will be accomplished by word of mouth, preprinted notices, intercom, and other means.
- b. All evacuated persons should be moved a reasonable distance away from the evacuated area. Any staff evacuated should proceed to a predesignated office or conference room in a nearby unaffected building and notify their department of their new location.
- c. In inclement weather and late night hours, evacuated persons will be asked to wait in a nearby building.

(2) If practicable, Police Department officials will search the building exits for any evidence of a bomb before an evacuation decision is made. If the building is evacuated, a search will be conducted before persons are allowed to return to the building.

(3) Should any device resembling a bomb be found, the building or the affected area of the building will be evacuated or remain evacuated and steps to dispose of the suspected device will be taken.

(4) Depending upon the total size of a building and once an evacuation is made, expect two to four hours delay in returning to the building.

4.01 Bombs (Suspicious Devices): Should a container be observed which is suspected to be a bomb, or to contain explosives, call the OSU Police by dialing 911. Other appropriate notifications will be made from the police headquarters. Police officers will report to the location of the suspicious device and will prepare to assist in possible evacuations.

5.01 Letter Bombs: Should a person receive a letter or package which is suspected to be an explosive device, no attempt to open the package should be made. Instead, the area should be evacuated within 15 feet of the parcel and the OSU Police Department should be notified immediately. A review of letter bombing incidents from around the nation reveals certain recognition factors that may indicate when a package contains an explosive or destructive device. (See APPENDIX B). OSU Police should be contacted for in-house training of your department staff on the recognition and handling of suspect packages.

6.01 In preparation for bomb threats or suspicious devices, every department or unit is encouraged to implement the items listed in a, b, c, and d below. See Appendix C for a checklist provided for your convenience.

a. Address the possibility of a bomb threat or suspicious packages or devices in staff meetings, class meetings, and include your expectations in the class syllabus.

b. Review the suggested evacuation plan below and plan for an evacuation using the attached Appendix C.

(1) Instructions for closing the department/unit

(2) An assembly point for staff and students

(3) Instructions to assemble at a predesignated location and time at a reasonable distance from the affected area, and account for all persons

(4) Discussion of which university or personal property or items that should be taken out

(5) The last person to leave is requested to lock the outer doors of the department/unit

(6) Instructions for staff to quickly review assigned space for any suspicious objects. Reviews should be quick visual checks. Do not handle any suspicious objects. Be prepared to notify police of the exact location of any suspicious object sighted.

c. Communications is essential in a bomb threat.

- (1) Advise everyone in the area of what is occurring.
- (2) Remember to check restrooms, file rooms, and other out-of-the way places to ensure all persons are notified.
- (3) At assembly point, discuss any suspicious persons, parcels, or activities observed recently. Notify police of any relevant information.

d. Prepare for future evacuations.

- (1) Clean your workspaces and dispose of unused objects.
- (2) Remove empty boxes and containers.
- (3) Know what is in every container and label them.

7.01 Media Information:

- a. The local media will be interested in reporting the story. Please refer all media inquiries to the OSU Public Information Office or to the OSU police.
- b. It is believed that the more publicity a bomb threat receives, the more likely repeat threats will be received.
- c. It is essential that all news releases be made by one person. All other persons should be instructed not to discuss the details with the media unless requested by the OSU Public Information Office.
- d. The Public Information Office will coordinate the manner and sources of media dissemination for the benefit of evacuees, faculty, staff, students, visitors, and parents of students.

8.01 Under normal conditions, this policy will prevail. However, under exigent conditions, variations may occur.

9.01 In summary, bomb threats, suspicious packages, and devices can be expected periodically. Bomb threats are either general or specific. The more specific the threat, the greater the search and notification process. Departments are encouraged to review this policy and work with the attached checklist (Appendix C). Buildings are not

automatically evacuated on the basis of a threat alone. Officials will need as much information about the caller as possible. Every effort to identify persons perpetrating bomb threats will be made. It is further recommended that the Appendix A form be provided to all persons answering incoming phone calls to the unit. Cooperation, patience, and understanding in the event of evacuation and during investigations are essential.

APPENDIX A

*** PLEASE ENSURE THAT ALL PERSONS ANSWERING INCOMING PHONE CALLS REVIEW THIS FORM AND KEEP IT READILY AVAILABLE.**

BOMB THREAT CHECKLIST

Exact time of call

Telephone Number on Display (if available)

Telephone Number of Person Calling This Phone Immediately Before and After the Threatening Call

Exact words of caller (complete this section immediately after call)

Try to keep caller on phone. You might:

- Pretend you didn't understand the message
- Ask the caller to repeat the message
- Ask the caller if they will help you avoid injuries and death

Try to obtain the following information, not necessarily in order listed:

1. When is bomb going to explode?
2. Where is the bomb?
3. What does it look like?
4. What kind of bomb is it?
5. What will cause it to explode?
6. Did you place the bomb?
7. Why?
8. Where are you calling from?
9. What is your address?

10. What is your name?

CALLER'S VOICE (circle)

Calm/Normal Disguised Sincere Slurred Male
Stutter/Lisp Slow Crying Broken Female
Giggling Deep Loud Rapid International
Stressed Accent Angry Excited

If voice is familiar, whom did it sound like?

Were there any background noises?

Remarks:

Person receiving call:

Telephone number call received at:

APPENDIX B

(FBI warning indicator sheet on letter and package bombs)

NOTE: Appendix B can be seen on the hard copy in your dean's office.

APPENDIX C

BOMB THREAT/EVACUATION CHECKLIST

_____ Have you reviewed the University policy with your organization?

_____ Have you briefed your staff and students about bomb threats?

_____ If a building is evacuated, does your staff know where to report?

_____ If in evacuations of extended duration, have you provided a location or phone

number to report to for further instructions?

_____ Have you developed a plan for quickly closing the department or unit?

_____ Do you have a predesignated location and time (for example, 15 minutes after evacuation) for an assembly point for staff and students?

_____ Does everyone know to take important items with them if evacuated and to plan for an extended evacuation?

_____ Designate a person who will be responsible for turning off coffee makers, flames, experiments, etc., in the event an evacuation is extended.

_____ Have someone assigned to lock safes, critical storage areas, and outer doors.

_____ Instruct staff to review their assigned space for any suspicious objects. The review should be quick visual checks. No suspicious objects should be moved, and be prepared to notify police of the exact location of any suspicious object(s).

_____ Students in classrooms should be instructed to take all books, book bags, purses, coats, etc., with them.

_____ Residents of residence halls should be instructed to plan for a possible extended evacuation. They should quickly take personal items like purses, wallets, books, book bags, and lock the door upon departure. Of course, appropriate dress for weather conditions should also be considered.

_____ Designate someone who will be responsible for checking rest rooms, file rooms, and other out-of-the way places to ensure all persons are notified.

_____ If a residence hall is involved, has someone been designated to enter each room to ensure persons are awake and alerted to the evacuation?

_____ Prepare for a threat and evacuation by cleaning the workspace of unused objects and boxes.

_____ Know what is in every container and/or label them.