



AIG Crisis Solution
Prevention Management

Bomb threats and explosions



There are a number of measures that high net worth individuals and companies can take to protect themselves against threats from explosive devices. These include:

- Employing good 'housekeeping' practices. It is important to keep buildings and outside areas tidy so that any unusual packages will be noted more easily. Employees should be encouraged to know the premises intimately so that they can report anything suspicious or out of place.
- Preventing explosive devices from being brought on to the premises in the first place by searching people's bags when they arrive. This is easier for companies to carry out than individuals, but households should still be vigilant about any items being brought on to the premises.
- Keeping your home or office premises under surveillance – for example, by using CCTV and regular patrols by security staff.
- Training staff in search and incident response techniques. For companies, these will include creating a detailed search plan, allocating individual responsibilities, and agreeing evacuation plans.

Specialists are available to talk you through this booklet and provide any additional information that you require.

Get in touch on

pcprevention@aig.com

to arrange a telephone appointment.

Prevention and preparation

With the right preparation, individuals and organisations can minimise their risks when it comes to explosive devices. Many of the steps outlined below apply more to organisations, but high net worth individuals may use scaled down measures in their households and offices.

Companies will need to appoint an 'incident controller' who will be responsible for managing activities at the scene and ensuring that company procedures are followed.

Evacuation plan

Evacuation plans should be drawn up as a contingency measure and include the following:

- Up-to-date evacuation route drawings.
- A minimum of two designated muster points in opposite directions.
- A reminder that if the threat indicates that a device is attached to or inside a vehicle, car parks must not be used for marshalling areas or control points.
- Guidance on how the incident should be communicated.
- Instructions for doors and windows to be left unlocked and lights left on, but computers and IT equipment and plant and machinery closed down, if practical.
- Instructions on how to check that everyone has left the building and is accounted for.
- Details of the location of evacuation packs and the crisis management plan.

Companies should develop their evacuation plans in consultation with the police, emergency services and neighbouring buildings.

Evacuation packs

Evacuation packs are designed to assist with evacuations, especially if an incident is prolonged. Prepare evacuation packs in advance and keep them close to building exits.

They should include:

- First aid kit
- Emergency reporting procedures
- Staff emergency contact list
- Floor plan of the building
- Incident controller's action check list
- Stationery
- Keys for any shelters/buildings that will need to be searched
- List of emergency repairers (such as glaziers)
- Taxi phone numbers and public transport details
- Emergency procedure information regarding gas leaks and power failures
- Crisis management plan

Search plan

It is important for search plans to be prepared and readily available at all times to enable a rapid, effective and coordinated response in the event of a threat.

Search procedures should cover the following:

- Each building/area should be divided into sectors, including toilets, stairs, corridors and lifts.
- Search teams should assemble at a designated point, under the direction of the incident controller, for an initial briefing.
- Evacuation assembly areas should be searched first, particularly if the bomb threat call was vague regarding the location of the suspect device. Those areas that people planting the device could have had access to should be searched next, including car parks, outside areas, refuse areas and the perimeter. Following this, the whole building should be searched starting with lavatories, staircases, corridors and lifts, before moving to a room by room search.
- If nothing is found in an area during a search, the incident controller should be informed so that the search plan can be marked 'clear' and the next area searched.
- People that are familiar with the areas to be searched should be selected for the search teams.

Selected staff should receive training in incident management, searching techniques, reporting actions and evacuation procedures.

Telephone threats

The person receiving a bomb threat call should:

- Switch on a tape recorder, if available.
- Attempt to keep the caller on the line and elicit as much information from them as possible.
- Summon assistance to contact the exchange supervisor on a different line, so that an attempt may be made to trace the origin of the call.

After the call has ended:

- Do not replace the handset – keep the line open even if the caller has rung off as this may help with tracing the call.
- Attempt to determine if the call was internal, national or international.
- Report the call immediately to security.

The police should always be notified of a telephone threat as they will have knowledge of similar incidents in the area. Their guidance can help you to decide whether the call might be a hoax, or whether searching or evacuating the premises would be the best option.

Deciding whether to evacuate

The incident controller will need to decide whether to evacuate the premises if a threatening call is received.

They have four options:

1. To do nothing. This may be attractive if the threat appears to come from a harmless source such as a child or someone inebriated, but if there is the slightest doubt, another option must be chosen.
2. To search and then evacuate if necessary. This option may be appropriate if the threat level is considered to be low.
3. To search and conduct a partial evacuation. If there is no reason to suspect that an explosion is imminent, or the possible device is thought to be small (eg a letter bomb), the incident controller might consider searching and then evacuating part of the premises.
4. To evacuate immediately without searching if the risk is assessed as high, especially if there is danger of an imminent explosion. If the time of an explosion is given in the telephone warning, searches must be concluded and all staff cleared from the premises at least 20 minutes before the deadline, irrespective of whether a device was found or not.

Evacuation areas

In some buildings, it may be safer to evacuate people to an area within the building rather than outside, particularly if the latter could mean passing close to a suspicious device.

To determine a safe place for people to evacuate to, the advice of a qualified structural engineer with experience in the effects of explosions should be sought, together with confirmation of whether the area could accommodate the number of people who might be evacuated to it.

Deciding to reoccupy after searching

Once an evacuation has been completed, the incident controller will have to decide when a building can be reoccupied.

The incident controller should remember that there may be another suspicious object in the building – undiscovered because the search was terminated when the first object was discovered – so the remainder of the building should be searched before reoccupation is agreed.

Where a time has been given for an explosion but no explosion occurs, at least an hour should be allowed to pass before searches are carried out.

Suspicious devices

If a suspicious object is discovered, it should be treated as a genuine device until it is proven to be otherwise.

In the first instance, you should:

- Not touch or move the object.
- Move away from the object, leaving a distinctive marker near it, but not touching it, and further markers showing the route to the object from outside the building.
- Inform the incident controller immediately.
- Evacuate everyone from the surrounding area and put a cordon around it.
- Make sure that the incident controller creates a control point and notifies the police.

In addition to managing activities at the scene, the incident controller should:

- Continue trying to establish ownership of the object or the identity of the person who left it.
- Keep the person who found the device at the control point so that they can help the police. It is also helpful to draw an accurate plan of the location of the suspicious package.
- Issue suitable briefings to the police, as appropriate.

What to do after an explosion

In the event of an explosion, the incident controller should:

- Maintain the cordon until control is handed to the emergency services.
- Restrict access to the area of the explosion to specialist personnel eg the police and other emergency services. The police will almost certainly take control of the incident and treat the area as a crime scene.
- Exercise control over rescue efforts. While the priority should be to evacuate casualties and many staff will be willing to help, control must be exercised over rescue efforts and they should be done under the direction of the incident controller or emergency services.
- Involve the minimum number of personnel in the search for casualties, to minimise the risks from further explosive devices, falling masonry and fire.
- Make sure that any rescue personnel approaching the site of an explosion use a designated approach path and exit by the same route. This will reduce the risk from other explosive devices and minimise the possibility of contaminating evidence.
- Leave deceased personnel in place. Bodies should not be touched or covered.
- Prepare a casualty list for the site director.
- Assemble the local crisis management team to begin normal reporting and control actions.

People in the vicinity of an explosion, or those involved in a hoax that resulted in an evacuation, may suffer negative after-effects. Post-traumatic stress is something that managers should be aware of, especially as the effects may only reveal themselves over the long term. Staff that show signs of this should be referred for appropriate treatment and counselling.

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