

# Bomb Threat Guidance

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## **Purpose of this Guidance Note**

This guidance note sets out a summary of the actions schools should take if they receive a bomb threat or hoax. Such incidents are rare but they do happen and when they do, they are hugely disruptive and more often than not lead to full-school evacuations and occasional school closures.

The great majority of bomb threats are, indeed, hoaxes, designed to cause alarm and disruption. Terrorists or other organised groups may also make bomb threat hoaxes to intimidate the public, businesses and communities, to draw attention to their cause. While bomb threats may be made by phone, an increasing number are sent electronically by email or social media. What all bomb threats have in common is that they amount to a criminal offence (Section 51 of the Criminal Law Act 1977 and Section 1 of the Malicious Communications Act) and should be reported to the police.

## **The bomb threat message**

Precise motives for hoaxing are difficult to determine but may include revenge, extortion, a desire to impress – the intent is to cause fear and/or disruption for the victim.

## **If you receive a telephone threat you should:**

- Stay calm and listen carefully.
- Grab a copy (if you can) of the bomb-threat checklist (click [here](#) for the link).
- If possible, keep the caller talking and alert a colleague to dial 999.
- If displayed on your phone, note the number of the caller, otherwise, dial 1471 to obtain the caller's number once the call has ended.
- If the threat is a recorded message, write down as much detail as possible.
- If the threat is received by a text message, do not reply to, delete or forward the message; note the number of the sender and follow police advice.
- Know who to contact at your school upon receipt of the threat.

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

- Try to remember/record as many distinguishing features of the threat-maker as possible.

## **If the threat is discovered in a written note:**

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

### **If the threat is received via email or social media**

- Do not reply to, forward or delete the message.
- Note the sender's email address or social media user name/user ID.
- Preserve all log web files for your school to help the police investigation.

### **Assessing the credibility of bomb threats**

This is a critical task, especially if the threat of attack is imminent. In the absence of detailed information, a number of factors should be considered:

- Is the threat part of a series of threats? If so, what happened on the previous occasion?
- Can the location of the attack be established? If so, can the location be made safe?
- Is there a good reason to believe the caller?
- Could an evacuation move people closer to the source of the disruption/attack?
- Is a suspicious device visible at the alleged location?

### **Actions to consider**

**Evacuation** will be appropriate when directed by the police or it is reasonable to assume that the threat is credible and evacuation will move staff and pupils towards a safer location.

**Invacuation** will be appropriate when it is safer to remain inside a classroom or the school (e.g. in the school hall), away from walls and windows.

**Neither of the above** will be reasonable and proportionate if the threat is deemed to be implausible (i.e. a deliberate hoax).

**Media and communication** – avoid revealing details about incidents without consulting the police as this may play into the threat-maker's hands.

### **And finally...**

- Ensure your school has an up-to-date Bomb Threat Response Plan which staff know about.
- Assign relevant roles and responsibilities to support evacuation procedures.
- Carry out evacuation drills at appropriate intervals to ensure everyone is prepared.
- Make provision for those staff or pupils with specific needs at times of evacuation.
- Adopt a 'clear corridor' policy so that unfamiliar items can be quickly identified.
- Ask relevant staff to conduct safety walkabouts and report causes for concern.
- Review your school's approach and awareness to safety at agreed intervals.

If you would like to discuss anything further in this document or would simply like some advice or guidance, then please give us a call on our **NAHT Advice Line on 0300 30 30 333 (option 1)** where we will be very pleased to make arrangements to discuss your situation further.

Alternatively, you can e-mail us at [specialistadvice@naht.org.uk](mailto:specialistadvice@naht.org.uk) and we will promptly respond to you.