The Allegheny County Chiefs of Police Association

MODEL

BOMB THREATS AND SEARCHES

An Allegheny County Criminal Justice

Advisory Board Project

Initial Issue 2001, rev. 2023

In Partnership With

The Allegheny County Police Department
&
The Allegheny County District Attorney's Office

Reviewed March 2024

Please understand that this model should serve only as a "**Starting Point**" for those departments who may wish to update their Rules & Regulations Manual in this area. To best serve your department, it should be reviewed and revised by you and your Municipality and Insurance Carrier.

MODEL
BOMB THREATS AND SEARCHES

01. PURPOSE

A. Officers should be aware that hoax "swatting", "bomb threat" type calls on schools, businesses, office complexes and homes are on the increase.

B. The purpose of this policy is to provide police officers with general guidelines on bomb threat situations and searches

02. POLICY

A. While many bomb threat calls are later determined to be false alarms or hoaxes, they all present particularly serious response requirements for law enforcement agencies. It is the policy of this Department that all responses to bomb threats or emergencies should, when possible be conducted systematically, efficiently and in a manner that gives primary consideration to the protection of human life.

03. DEFINITIONS

A. Bomb Threat: A bomb threat condition exists when an explosive device has been reported or is suspected to be at a given location. A bomb threat can be a nonspecific threat, or a specific threat.

B. Bomb Emergency: A bomb emergency exists when a suspected or actual explosive device has been located or has been detonated.

C. Original Caller: Used to describe the individual who made the initial threat. Is used to describe a person who is calling to advise the department that a bomb threat has been received, or that a possible explosive device has been discovered.

D. Reporting Party: Used to describe a person who is calling to advise the department that a bomb threat has been received, or that a possible explosive device has been discovered.

04. PROCEDURES

A. 911/DISPATCH RESPONSIBILITIES (Outlined in 911/Dispatch SOP)

1. Upon notification of an incident involving a bomb threat, clandestine explosive device or military ordinance, or a suspected explosive device the Dispatcher will to the degree possible,

a. **Keep the reporting party on the line**;

b. Identify the location of the device with as much precision as possible and determine when it will be or if it has been detonated;

c. Determine what type of explosive device is involved;

d. Attempt to determine
- **i.** what the device looks like;
- **ii.** the type of bomb involved;
- **iii.** what will make it detonate, (e.g., radio signal, time delay fuse);
- **iv.** why it was placed; and what is the target;
- **v.** who placed it.

e. Be alert to
- **i.** exact wording of the threat;
- **ii.** estimate of the sex, race and age of the caller;
- **iii.** nature/character of the caller's voice, such as an accent, speech impediment or intoxication;
- **iv.** nature of any background noises; and

f. Dispatch appropriate patrol units and other emergency service personnel as directed by the OIC. (at a minimum advise local fire and EMS services of the threat and potential need for services).

2. Dispatch personnel receiving reports from individuals or organizations that have received bomb threats will;

a. If the caller states that a bomb or explosive device has been found, **ascertain (if possible) if the caller is in a safe location, if so, keep them on the line,** and advise them to immediately clear at least the immediate area (room in which the device is located) and **NOT TO IN ANY WAY TOUCH, TAMPER WITH OR MOVE THE ITEM!**

b. **ASK if it has been photographed. If it has not, advise NOT TO reapproach to obtain pictures.**

c. Dispatch the call to the patrol units and emergency personnel as directed by the shift OIC.

d. If possible, determine
- **i.** the location and time of detonation;
- **ii**. any available information concerning the nature of the threat or the identity of the perpetrators;
- **iii.** the best entry passage from the street to the location of the device;
- **iv.** detailed description of the area immediately around the location;
- **v.** general description of the entire area, including storage of nearby chemicals or other explosives;
- **vi.** detailed description of the device, its appearance, color, any wiring, type of packaging, etc. and relay it to the responding units.

e. If no explosive device has been identified, ask that the caller alert employees and others to unusual parcels or items on the premises and if something is observed **not to in any way touch, tamper with or move it.**

3. Based on the nature of the threat, the OIC should direct Dispatch to alert the Fire Department and EMS to be on standby.

4. If the caller reports that a bomb has exploded, dispatch the Fire Dept. Medic Units, appropriate patrol units and other emergency service personnel as directed by the OIC.

B. Responding Officers' Responsibilities

1. Responding patrol units should be aware that some explosive devices may be detonated by the transmission of a radio signals, cellular phones (including text messaging), Wifi, and any other electronic communication device signals. People should refrain from using these items within 1000' of the suspected device. Cellular telephoned transmit data without actual use, so power off or do not bring a phone into the immediate area of the suspected device.

2. If applicable, contact the individual who received the threat to obtain additional information, to include
- **a**. whether previous threats have been received;
- **b.** possible motives and/or suspects;
- **c.** vulnerabilities of equipment and personnel; and
- **d.** exploration of any basic information provided to communications.

3. In bomb emergencies, establish and secure a suitable perimeter. A minimum of 300 feet in all directions. Ideally 1,000 feet, but also consider sheltering in place and the use of good cover (behind a building vs. Infront of).

C. Searching for Explosive Devices

1. Nonspecific Threat - If an explosive device is alleged to be within a building but has **not** been located, the OIC will contact the building owners/management or other responsible persons to determine if a search of the facility is desired.

2. **The decision to search, evacuate or to reenter a structure/location during a bomb threat will be the responsibility of the individual in charge of the property, NOT THE POLICE.**

a. The OIC at the scene should provide information as it becomes available and is practical to the responsible parties in order to assist them in making decisions on searching, evacuation or reentry.

b. If management or the responsible agent does not wish that a search be conducted, no further action by Police is warranted with the exception of documenting the decision and the name of the facility manager.

3. When faced with an explosive related incident regardless of the nature contact the Allegheny County Police Bomb Squad early on. ACPD Bomb Squad personnel can help determine the level of the threat, appropriate response, the need to evacuate, how far, and, what assets to request (Fire, EMS, Bomb Squad response, K-9 response, FBI, ATF, Etc.) The bomb squad can be reached at 412-472-5513 or through 911 Emergency management.

4. Specific vs. Nonspecific threat examples for decision making.

a. **Non Specific Threat** - There is a bomb in a car in the parking lot, and a K-9 Explosives Detection Team can be requested to assist in the search.

b. **Specific Threat** – There is a bomb in the blue Buick PA registration ABC-123. A K-9 team will not respond to verify if there is or is not a bomb. This would be specific enough for the ACPD Bomb Squad to respond and either clear or render the vehicle safe.

5. **Specific threat** – When specific or detailed information in reference to the type and /or location of a suspected device, has been supplied to Dispatch by the caller, searches of target buildings should be conducted only with the direct assistance of employees or others knowledgeable of the contents and lay out of the building. Only in cases where a real or suspected explosive device has been detected **shall** an evacuation be conducted **regardless** of the desires of building management.

a. The OIC may, if available, request the assistance of the Fire Department and/or an Allegheny County Police Department, Explosives Detection K-9 Team in order to assist in conducting the search.

b. A search plan should be developed identifying the extent of the search depending upon the type of establishment, the motivation of the perpetrator and accessibility of the building. Immediately access security camera footage from this and surrounding facilities.

c. A floor plan should be obtained whenever possible, and a systematic search organized by the OIC. Prioritize searching public access and high concealment areas first (I.E. trash cans). Then work towards nonpublic and secured areas (employee's locker rooms).

d. In no case shall departmental personnel declare that no bomb is present or in any way make the representation that the building is safe to occupy, no matter how thorough the search. Upon completion of the search, advise that no threat was found and the absence of discovering a threat, is no guarantee a threat is not present.

6. When conducting a search without the assistance of the bomb squad, Officers should be particularly alert to the following items as indicators that there may be explosives at the location. Officers should be aware that absence of the following **does not** assure that no bomb is present:

a. Explosives-related pamphlets, periodicals and books;

b. Excessive amounts of galvanized or PVC pipe nipples and end caps, especially if they have drill holes in the nipple or cap;

c. Low-explosive powders or other incendiary mixtures;

d. Fuses of any type to include homemade burning fuses, such as string soaked in a burning powder;

e. Electrical switches; and

f. Electrical matches, blasting caps or similar initiators.

g. Any odors, or other environmental conditions that are atypical.

D. Located Explosive Devices

1. If a real or suspicious device has been located, or paraphernalia identified such as noted in item 6 above, Officers should

a. **Not attempt to move or otherwise disturb the device(s),**

b. **Not use mobile radios, walkie-talkies or cell phones (shut off power supply completely, incoming calls are the same as outgoing calls) for communication within 1000 feet of the device (s);**

c. Proceed with the immediate evacuation of the structure and / or the area to a point consistent with the threat Ideally 1,000 feet, but also consider sheltering in place and the use of good cover (behind a building vs. Infront of it).

d. Define and secure the perimeter;

e. Contact Dispatch by telephone and request the assistance of the Allegheny County Police Department, Bomb Squad, Fire Department, EMS, notify the Police Chief and Emergency Management Coordinator

2. The OIC is responsible for command of the scene until the A.C.P.D. Bomb Squad arrives.

3. The A.C.P.D. Bomb Squad OIC shall have functional authority at any bomb emergency to direct departmental personnel in a manner necessary to accomplish its mission in a safe and efficient manner.

05. POST-EXPLOSION INVESTIGATION

1. Once requested, the A.C.P.D. Bomb Squad will have primary responsibility for investigating bombing incidents.