



TRAINING BULLETIN

Los Angeles Police Department

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INVESTIGATION OF BOMB THREATS

Bomb threats are one of the most serious calls for service that an officer can receive. The destructive potential of even a small device must be seriously considered. This Bulletin describes the proper procedure for conducting the preliminary investigation of a bomb threat, searching the location, and the handling of a suspected device.

Receiving a Bomb Threat Call

When a Mobile Data Computer (MDC)-equipped unit is assigned a bomb threat investigation, the call will be dispatched via the MDC. The operator will tell the unit to monitor the incident number and the comment section for further. All communications regarding the call should be made via the MDC or telephone to prevent unauthorized persons from being attracted to the scene. After all information about the call has been received, responding units should turn off the MDC approximately one block away from the location and it should not be used again until the threat is resolved. The radio signal of incoming and outgoing MDC transmissions could detonate a radio-controlled bomb.

Communications

Communications at the scene of a bomb threat or improvised explosive device should be accomplished by the use of a landline telephone. The handheld radio should be kept in the "on" position and used to receive emergency messages with any transmissions done out of line of sight of the device. The same holds true for the use of a cellular phone. It also transmits a radio signal which could activate the bomb and should be used sparingly and only when out of line of sight of the device.

Arrival at the Scene

Upon arrival at the location, officers should immediately survey the surroundings for potential danger. The presence of people in the area, power lines, or flammable materials must be considered if a suspicious object is discovered.

The first officer at the scene should contact the person who initiated the call, and if a business or public entity, the person in charge. It is recommended that people with knowledge of the threat be separated from others and the matter discussed privately using good interview techniques. The officer should obtain the precise statements of the individual making the threat and the method used to communicate the threat. Also, if possible, the type of bomb, location, time of detonation, and the reason for the threat should be determined.

If the bomb is at a school, Area detectives should be responsible for dispatching a detective to conduct the preliminary investigation. If a detective is not available, a uniformed unit will be assigned to handle the call.

Searching a Location

The person in charge of the location is responsible for determining if a search is to be conducted. However, officers may recommend a search if they believe it is advisable. A secure location with telephone service should be designated as a command post to coordinate the search. It is preferred that people familiar with the location perform the search, while officers assist. Anyone involved in the search must be admonished not to touch any suspected items or activate light switches, thermostats, or other mechanisms that might trigger an explosive device.

The watch commander should be notified of any developments, particularly if a device or suspected device is located. Additional units needed to search or secure the location should be requested through the divisional watch commander or Communications Division.

During the search for a bomb, it is recommended that a low profile be maintained since it can be potentially dangerous to unnecessarily alarm people. Buildings should be systematically and cautiously searched beginning with public areas such as restrooms and lobbies. Searchers should be directed to report their findings to a designated "search coordinator." The search coordinator, usually an officer, should keep a tabulation of each section of the building cleared.

If **NO** device is located, all parties who are aware of the search should be notified that a bomb was **NOT** found, especially the person in charge and the watch commander. Officers should tell the parties involved that **NOTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY WAS FOUND**. Do not tell the parties that the location is safe.

Reporting

If no device is found, the officers should complete an Investigative Report, Form 03.02.00. The victim of the crime is the specific person, business, or entity that was the object of the threat. When completing the report, officers should interview the

witnesses carefully to obtain as much detail as possible about the caller. Report exactly what the caller said. Poor grammar or mispronounced words may be clues to the suspect's identity. Did the caller have an accent? Was the caller's voice disguised? These are some of the important things to remember when investigating a bomb threat.

Suspected Device Located

Explosive devices can be contained in almost anything. Small bombs have been disguised as letters; others have been concealed in automobiles to create a tremendous explosion. Bombs can be detonated by a variety of methods including the slightest touch. Therefore, if any suspicious object is located, **IT SHOULD NOT BE TOUCHED, OR DISTURBED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.** Immediately notify the Explosives Unit (Bomb Squad), Emergency Services Division, or the Department Operations Center during off-hours, via telephone.

The person in charge should be told to evacuate every person to a safe distance from the location and to an area that has already been searched. If anyone refuses to evacuate, a police officer has the authority under Section 409.5 of the Penal Code to evacuate an area for the safety of the public.

When it is decided to evacuate a building, officers should move everyone out of the area quickly and calmly. During the evacuation, the area containing the suspected device should be avoided. Care should be taken to keep all persons away from windows or other objects that could cause injury during an explosion. The minimum recommended evacuation distance is 300 feet. Officers may choose to evacuate to a greater distance depending on the location or size of the suspected device.

The area should be cleared of all persons prior to the arrival of the Bomb Squad. A quick, orderly evacuation is important because the device may be on a timer. Officers should keep the person with the most information about the suspicious device at the command post, so that the Bomb Squad can conduct an immediate and thorough debrief. Information such as size, material (wood, metal, plastic, etc.), and location are very important to the bomb technicians. It is important that the entire area be kept clear and all traffic, whether pedestrian or vehicular, be diverted from the area. Once the area is secured, only Bomb Squad personnel should be allowed to enter. Officers should maintain a secure perimeter until bomb technicians have rendered the device safe.

Responding to the Scene of a Bombing

Officers responding to the scene of a bombing should refer to the Training Bulletin titled, "Terrorism — Part II, Post Homicide Bombing Incident," for the proper protocols.

CONCLUSION

An officer's main objective at the scene of a bomb threat is the preservation of life and property. If a device is located, the area should be secured without causing undue alarm. Remember, if it could be a bomb, treat it like one!

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Field Training Services Unit
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