

Types of bomb threats in schools and their specificity

Type	Threat rationale	Vague threat	Specific threat
Conditional	“Do this or else.”	“Put back the candy machines or I’ll bomb the school.” Student expressing outrage, probably no bomb unless there has been a series of such threats.	“If you don’t put back the vending machines, a bomb will go off in the cafeteria at 12 o’clock today.” A low-profile search of the cafeteria is probably necessary.
Instrumental	Threat made in order to achieve another usually immediate goal.	Offender calls school and says, “There’s a bomb in the building” and immediately hangs up. Student calls in false bomb threat in order to disrupt classes and get the day off.	“I’ve put a bomb in the school set to go off at 10:00. Burn down the school!” Evacuation and search are probably necessary.
Getting even	Bomber inverts power relationship between himself and the target.	“Death to all and I shall rule the world.” Student places this threat on his website. Threat does not explicitly mention bomb. If identity of threatener is known should probably be taken seriously, especially if past history of threats.	“I’m sick of being humiliated by Smith. Today is the day when Smith and his precious science labs will be terminated.” Evacuate school, search science labs, and in and around Smith’s car.
Hate (ideological, religious, ethnic)	Bomber makes threat against hated opponent or target.	“Death to all child murderers!” Threat called into a school day before family planning officials visit school.	“Stay away from school tomorrow. The child murderers will be blown to hell where they belong! I’m not joking!” Lock down security, increase surveillance, search building and grounds.

Questions to ask when planning a project

About the School

- Are the schools in your locality aware of the problem of bomb threats and their possible consequences?
- Does the school have a bomb-threat response plan?
- Does the school district and the local community have a disaster plan?
- Does the school have a climate of respect and clear and consistent rules of behavior?
- Does the school keep a record of threats by students or teachers that are not reported to the police?
- Does the school keep a record of violent incidents that occur in and around the school (including school buses)?
- Is there a system among teachers for sharing information concerning serious threats or targeted violence?
- Does the school have effective intervention programs in place to deal with problem behaviors, including bullying?
- Does the school have a process for receiving and responding to student grievances?
- Does the school have an up-to-date telephone monitoring system?
- Are teachers in the schools aware of the warning signs (see Appendix B) of targeted violence?
- Do troubled students (potential victims and offenders) have a way to express their concerns to appropriate adults such as counselors or designated teachers?
- Does the school monitor student activities in and out of the classroom, on school buses and at sporting activities?
- Does the school have a mechanism for identifying troubled children?
- Does the school work with parents to encourage supervision of student Internet use?

About Threats

- How many bomb threats at schools have been made?
- If there is a rash of threats, do some schools report more threats than others?
- If threats are received, are they targeted against any individuals (as in retaliation against bullies, for example) or are they unspecified?
- Does the school have a procedure for evaluating the seriousness of threats?
- When a threat is reported to the police, how serious is the threat and what type is the threat?
- What kinds of threats are received and do they vary according to type or location of school?
- What proportion of threats turn out to be hoaxes or pranks?
- Is there a way for bystanders who hear of threats or observe targeted violence to report such behavior to school authorities?

About Munitions

- Are there reports of weapons use by juveniles either in school or elsewhere?
- Do hardware stores or other retail outlets notify police of unusual purchases of substances that may be used for bomb construction?
- Are there isolated areas in your locality where juveniles might experiment with bomb detonation?

About Locations/Times

- Which schools have been the target of bomb threats?
- Does your town have a graffiti problem that indicates problems of racism or other kinds of hatred and does it extend to any schools?
- Are all incidents of arson or school break-ins reported to the police? If not, why not? If so, are they followed up to see if they indicate possible bomb threats or incidents?
- Do incidents of arson, graffiti, school break-ins or bomb threats occur in particular schools or particular areas?
- If targeted violence and threats are reported, what locations in the schools do they occur? Are there hot spots such as a locker room, a cafeteria, particular bathrooms, a particular classroom?
- Are there particular times of the day or days of the week when bomb threats more commonly occur?

Questions to Ask When Coordinating the Bomb Threat Response Team

Police

- When should the police be called?
- When will police respond?
- Who will be sent?
- What is the police department's role at the scene?
- What is the school's place in the incident command structure?
- What information and materials will the bomb squad require from the school?
- Where does evacuation decision-making power lie, with police or with the principal?
- Will police participate in searches and if so, when and how?
- When will an explosives detection canine be involved?
- Under what circumstances will police assume command of the scene?
- When do police relinquish command of the scene?
- Will police assist with evacuation and relocation of students and how?
- When will police declare the "all clear"?
- Who makes the decision to re-occupy the facility, police, the principal, or someone else?
- Who conducts follow-up investigation of bomb threats and how is the investigation conducted?
- What role will police have in the prevention of bomb threats?
- How can police assist in "hardening the target"?

Fire

- When should the fire department be called?
- When will the fire department respond?
- Who will be sent?
- What is the fire department's role at the scene?
- What information, materials and participation will the bomb squad require from school administrators?
- Will the fire department participate in searches and if so, when and how?
- Under what circumstances will the fire department assume command of the scene?
- When will the fire department relinquish command of the scene?
- Will the fire department assist with evacuation and relocation of students and how?
- When will the fire department declare the "all clear"?
- What role will the fire department have in the prevention of bomb threats?

Bomb Squad (also may include Explosives Detection Canine Unit)

- Who makes the request for the bomb squad?
- When will the bomb squad respond?
- Who will be sent?
- What is the role of the bomb squad at the scene?
- What information, materials and participation will the bomb squad require from school administrators?
- Will the bomb squad participate in searches and if so, when and how?
- What general procedures does the bomb squad use when dealing with a suspicious item?
- When will an explosives detection canine be involved?
- Under what circumstances will the bomb squad assume command of the scene?
- When will the bomb squad relinquish command of the scene?
- What role will the bomb squad have in the prevention of bomb threats?

EMS

- When should EMS be called?
- When will EMS respond?
- Who will be sent?
- What is the role of EMS at the scene?

ATF

- Under what circumstances should ATF be involved?
- Who makes the request for ATF?
- Who will be sent by ATF?
- What is the role of ATF at the scene?
- What information, materials and participation will ATF require from school administrators?
- Will ATF participate in searches and if so, when and how?
- Under what circumstances will ATF assume command of the scene?
- How does ATF work with law enforcement and the fire department?
- When will ATF relinquish command of the scene?
- What role will ATF have in the prevention of bomb threats?

Local Emergency Management Office

- When will local emergency management be involved?
- What role will local emergency management take?
- What resources does local emergency management have?
- How will local emergency management respond when called?