



BISHOP MILNER CATHOLIC COLLEGE

Policy and Procedure for a Bomb Threat

“Who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father”

Galatians 1:4

Approved by Representatives: September 2020

Review Date: September 2022

Nb. Where Vice Principal is referred to this is delegated to any other member of the SLT

1. POLICY STATEMENT

This policy and procedure should be read in conjunction with the college's Fire Policies and Health and Safety Policy

The receipt or setting of explosive or other potential dangerous devices (bomb threats) is a potential hazard in all premises. The consequence of an incident within the College could be potentially serious. The aim at all times must be to ensure that effective procedures are in place and are clearly understood to ensure, so far as it is reasonably practicable, the safety of students, staff and visitors. All College staff have a responsibility to observe the Bomb Threat Policy and Procedure at all times. It is imperative that all staff understand what to do in the event of a bomb threat to ensure the safety of their colleagues, students, the general public and themselves.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES FOR BOMB THREATS PRECAUTIONS

The Principal has overall responsibility for managing all bomb threat situations within the College. To assist the Principal, the responsibility for the supervision of day to day precautions and the co-ordination of staff action in a bomb threat emergency is delegated to the Vice Principal, Senior Leaders or their nominees. In this event, the procedures should be initiated without delay but efforts should be made to contact, by telephone (home and/or mobile), the Principal, Vice Principal.

3. PRINCIPAL or NOMINATED DEPUTY

The Principal, or in his absence, the Vice Principal, is responsible for the:

- Implementation of the procedures and precautions when dealing with bomb threats. Ensuring that all staff receive the necessary training and clearly understand the procedures for bomb threats.
- Co-ordinating and directing students the general public and staff in the event of a bomb threat.
- Reporting all bomb threat incidents to the police.

4. STAFF

Staff have responsibility:

- **To know what to do in the event of a bomb threat and take appropriate action.**
- **To know what to do if a suspicious package/letter is discovered and take appropriate action.**
- **To participate in bomb alert training and evacuation.**

PROCEDURE INSTRUCTIONS

1. INSTRUCTION TO STAFF IN THE EVENT OF A BOMB THREAT ALERT

These instructions set out the procedure to be adopted in the event of a bomb threat becoming apparent in any of the College buildings or properties

All actions resulting from a bomb threat will be co-ordinated by the Principal or, in his absence, the Vice Principal

2. DEALING WITH TELEPHONE WARNINGS

Terrorists, militants, extremists (e.g. Animal Rights, etc) frequently, but not always, give telephone warnings of bomb explosions. So, unfortunately, do hoaxers whose threats are empty. A warning may be received that any of the College premises are at risk. In such cases we will have to decide how to respond. In particular we will have to decide whether to evacuate the premises.

In all cases, whether or not the person receiving the call considers the threat to be credible, they should:

- Telephone the Police immediately
- Search the premises
- Consider whether to evacuate the premises

In all cases it is important to telephone the Police immediately with details of the call.

Responding to warning calls often involves making difficult decisions. What is often overlooked, however, is how important and yet how difficult it is to obtain the maximum amount of useful information from the call. The following advice is designed to help in this.

Who to inform

It is most likely that the Receptionist will be most likely to have to deal with telephone bomb warnings but any member of staff who has a direct line might also receive a threat. All should therefore know what to do if they receive a threatening call. The four key rules are:

- Keep calm
- Try to obtain as much information as possible from the call
- Make a note of the details on the caller display
- **Report the call to the Principal or Vice Principal**

Obtain Information

The caller may ring off immediately after giving the message, but whoever takes the call should nevertheless try to get a response to the following questions and write down the answers.

- Where is the bomb?
- What time will it go off?
- What does it look like?
- Why are you doing it?

The person receiving the call should also try and assess the following:

The caller

Is it a man, woman or child?

The speech

Is it intoxicated, rambling or irrational? Has it a distinctive accent? Was the caller laughing? Did the caller have a speech impediment?

Distraction

Is the call from a public call box or private phone? Is there background noise, such as a train, aeroplane, traffic or possibly conversations, music, that may indicate a public house or other place of entertainment? In order to help with this task, the form (in Appendix A) sets out the points mentioned above. A copy should be kept, easily to hand, at reception. Make a note of the details shown on the caller display.

3. SEARCH

Searches may be undertaken as a matter of routine or in response to a specific warning. It is not always necessary to evacuate the premises before carrying out a search.

Police Policy

It is helpful to know and understand Police Policy on 'Search and Evacuation' and the Police role in dealing with bomb threats.

Normally, the Police will not themselves search a building following receipt of a bomb threat.

This is for two good reasons.

Firstly, Police are unlikely to know the layout of the premises and the various places in which a device could be concealed. College staff will know the layout of the premises, and be able to search more quickly and more thoroughly.

Secondly, the Police, unlike your staff, will not know what should be there. Consequently they will not so easily be able to spot anything which is out of place.

In all cases where a bomb threat is received, the Principal, or nominated Deputy should immediately inform the Police and advise them of what action is being taken.

Search Plan

Because of the number and geographical spread of College buildings it is only considered practicable to conduct a search in the event that a particular building(s) is identified as a target – say by a bomb threat call. It is also highly unlikely that a bomb would have been planted anywhere other than an area that had general accessibility.

Searches are, generally, only likely to be possible during daylight/office hours, when there are several staff on duty whereas in the evening/night times there is often only one person on duty, and that person will be required to be co-ordinating the plan and maintaining communications.

If a decision is made to conduct a search, Search Teams should be formed from staff nominated to search those areas with which they are most familiar. Numbers required will depend upon the size of the search task. The Principal/nominated Deputy will initiate a search by instructing members of staff – depending on who is on duty at any particular time – and allocating an area/rooms for each of them to search.

What they are looking for

It is difficult to offer guidance to Search Teams about the appearance of bombs as they can be disguised in many ways. What the Search Teams are looking for is an unidentified object.

§ That should not be there

§ That cannot be accounted for

§ This is out of place

How to Search

Although the way in which the teams conduct their searches will depend, to some extent, upon local circumstances and their local knowledge, they should conduct it in a logical and thorough manner.

A search should begin at the entrance/threshold to the room/area. Each searcher or team should first stand still and look around the room. They should note the contents of the room and make a quick assessment of those areas, which will need special attention. They should look for any unusual lights (including small light sources known as LED's which are often used in terrorist bombs). They should also listen carefully for any unusual noises, particularly ticking or whirring sounds. If anything unusual is seen, the searcher or team should alert the Principal/nominated Deputy who will decide whether to evacuate the building. If nothing unusual is seen, the search should begin.

The search should be conducted methodically, moving in one direction around the area to be searched. It should be carried out in three sweeps:

- The first sweep is to work around the **edges of the room**, taking in the walls from top to bottom and the floor area immediately beneath the wall. Look inside fireplaces, behind curtains and pelmets, behind and beside furniture around the edges of the room. The sweep should finish at the doorway where it began.
- The second sweep should take in the **furniture and the floor**. Furniture should not be moved but drawers should be opened and searched and gaps in and under furniture should be explored. If the floor covering shows signs of recent disturbance, it should be lifted.
- The third sweep should cover the **ceiling**, if of a kind in which objects might be concealed. Start at one corner and systematically search the whole surface.

After the search has been completed and if nothing has been found, the Principal/nominated Deputy should be informed immediately.

IF A SUSPICIOUS OBJECT IS FOUND (PACKAGE/LETTER)

Follow the golden rule:

- **DO NOT TOUCH OR MOVE**
- If possible, leave a distinctive marker near (not touching) the device.
- Move away from the device to a designated control point, leaving lights on.
- Inform Principal/nominate Deputy
- The Principal/nominated Deputy should implement the Evacuation Plan (see below)

The person finding the object should be immediately available for interview by the Police.

Signs and Symptoms of Suspicious Packages

There are a number of signs that may lead you to become suspicious of a letter or parcel. By themselves these signs may be innocent, but perhaps a combination of a few will need a cautious approach.

A simple mnemonic to remember is the **7S**s

SIZE Is the letter big enough to house a device without being obvious, e.g. Jiffy-bags, videotapes, etc.

SHAPE Is the letter not uniform, e.g. denoting possibility of batteries or switch system

SENDER Do you recognise who sent it from the postmark, label or typeface? Do they match? Can you check with the recipient?

STAMPS Are there no stamps or is it over-stamped? Is the postmark blurred, smudged or missing altogether?

SEAL Has the letter been sealed more securely, denoting it contains something that must not fall out, use of tape, staples, etc?

STAIN Is there an oily stain showing through the envelope or oily fingerprints on the outside? Some explosives weep/sweat small amounts of liquid that will produce stains.

SMELL Explosives can smell, particularly the Nitro- glycerine and Nitro-toluene. A strange smell such as almonds or marzipan should therefore be treated with suspicion. Equally an overpowering smell, say of perfume, could be used to cover up or disguise other smells.

4. EVACUATE

Making a decision whether to evacuate

The decision to evacuate must normally be taken by the Principal but the Police will be ready to advise on request. In exceptional circumstances, where for example the Police have received specific information, they may themselves order an evacuation, if necessary overruling the decision of the Principal. However, they will always seek help from the Principal or nominated Deputy. On the other hand, it may be necessary for the Police in some circumstances to insist that the premises are **not** evacuated. They may, for example, have reason to believe that there may be an explosive device outside the building and evacuation would place people at greater risk.

There are four actions open to the Principal/nominated Deputy: which one is chosen depends upon his assessment of the threat which the situation presents. The choices are:

Option 1 – Do nothing

This option may appear attractive if the threat appears to come from a drunk or a child, but it should not be adopted unless the Principal/nominated Deputy, is absolutely sure that it is a malicious call or prank. If there is a **slightest** doubt, the Principal/nominated Deputy must turn to one of the other options.

Option 2 – Search and then evacuate if necessary

This choice means, of course, that people will be in buildings for a longer period if there is a bomb present. However, if a bomb is found, they can be evacuated away from danger. If nothing is found and there are no other significant factors, the Principal may then decide to declare the building safe. This option may be appropriate if the assessment of the threat level is low.

Option 3 – Search and partial evacuation

When the threat level is considered to be moderate, but there is no reason to believe an explosion may be imminent, or if the suspect device is small (e.g. a letter bomb) and some of the premises may be a considerable distance from the device, the Principal/nominated Deputy might consider evacuating part of the premises.

Option 4 – Evacuate immediately

If a call is received which the Principal/nominated Deputy considers to indicate the existence of a high risk, there will be case for evacuating as quickly as possible without conducting a search, especially where there is a possibility of an imminent explosion. When the time of explosion has been disclosed in a threat call, then the Principal/nominated Deputy must ensure that any searches are finished and buildings cleared at least 20 minutes before the deadline, irrespective of whether any device has been found or not.

Evacuation Plans

If a decision to evacuate a building, or buildings, is made, for speed and convenience the Fire Evacuation procedures – activating the Fire Alarms in separate buildings – should be used, **although Fire Assembly Points should not be used as they are too close to buildings, and evacuees should be told to gather at least 400 metres from the College premises.** In some circumstances, assembly areas may need to be up to 1000 metres away from any building. Police advice should be sought as to whether this is necessary. Ideally, all employees/members of the public should be asked to take personal belongings with them, since this will help to avoid unnecessary suspicion over articles of property left behind after evacuation. However, this is contrary to standing instructions for fire evacuation and will be difficult to implement. When an evacuation is initiated, doors and windows should, whenever possible, be left unlocked, especially in the vicinity of a suspect object. Lights should be left on, but plant machinery shut down where practicable.

5. THE DECISION TO RE-OCCUPY

Once an evacuation has been completed, the Principal/nominated Deputy will at some stage have to decide when the building can be re-occupied. Of course, where a suspect object has been found, the Police (if not already present) will attend immediately and assume control, until the object is declared safe. Thereafter, control will revert to the Principal/nominated Deputy, who should remember that there may be another suspicious object somewhere in the building undiscovered, because the search was terminated and the building evacuated due to the discovery of the first suspect object. The Principal/nominated Deputy should therefore consider having the rest of the building searched before making the decision regarding re-occupation. It also follows that, where

the evacuation was carried out before any search, the Principal/nominated Deputy must ensure that at least one hour is allowed to lapse after that time before search procedures are initiated or re-commenced. Where Police have ordered the initial evacuation, they will remain in control and declare the building safe for re-occupation.

6. STAFF TRAINING

Good training is essential so that in the event of a need to search and evacuate, not only potential members of the search teams but also every employee will know what to do. Regular search and evacuation drills will help maintain staff's awareness and vigilance. All staff should be made aware of the evacuation assembly points. Any persons likely to answer a telephone should be instructed on how to handle a bomb threat call (refer to checklist for telephone at Appendix A).

APPENDIX A

ACTION TO BE TAKEN ON RECEIPT OF A BOMB THREAT

RECORD THE EXACT WORDING OF THREAT

ASK THESE QUESTIONS

a) Where is the bomb right now?

b) When is it going to explode?

c) What does it look like?

d) What kind of bomb is it?

e) What will cause it to explode?

f) Did you place the bomb?

g) Why?

h) What is your name?

i) What is your address?

j) What is your telephone number?

Record Time Call Repeated

Telephone Number from caller ID

INFORM THE SENIOR MANAGER/NOMINATED DEPUTY

Name, telephone number and time person informed.

CONTACT THE POLICE BY USING THE EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBER 999

Time informed _____

THIS PART SHOULD BE COMPLETED ONCE THE CALLER HAS HUNG UP AND POLICE/SENIOR MANAGER/NOMINATED DEPUTY HAVE BEEN INFORMED

Time and date of call

Number at which call is received (that is your extension number)

ABOUT THE CALLER

Sex of caller? _____ Male/Female?

Nationality? _____ Age? _____

THREAT LANGUAGE (circle)

Well-spoken

Irrational

Taped

Foul

Incoherent Message read by threat-maker

CALLER'S VOICE (circle)

Calm Crying Clear throat Angry Nasal Slurred
Excited Stutter Disguised Slow Lisp Accent
Laughter Hoarse

If the voice sounded familiar, who did it sound like?

What accent?

BACKGROUND SOUNDS (circle)

Street noises House noises Animal noises Crockery
Motor Clear Voices Static P A system Music
Factory machinery Office machinery

Others (specify) _____