Bomb Threats & Suspicious Objects

Community Information

Revised November 7, 2013

Contacting GCC Public Safety

Primary Emergency Number: 413-775-1111 (x-1111 from campus phones)
Call 911 (or 9-911 from campus phones) if no answer at 775-1111

DO NOT use cell phones from within affected buildings during these incidents.
DO NOT use campus call boxes during these incidents.

Bomb threats are often nothing more than pranks or threats intended to create a sense of fear, but each threat must be taken seriously. Most bomb threats are made over the telephone, but can also be made via letters, emails, or by writings on walls or other locations.

Suspicious objects can be something as simple as a suspicious envelope, a backpack, or cardboard box that is out-of-place, or as obvious as a pipe bomb or other readily-apparent explosive device. The best defense is to be aware of your everyday surroundings and to report suspicious circumstances when objects appear unusual or out-of-place.

1) Receiving Bomb Threats
   a) Bomb Threat by Phone - The person receiving a bomb threat by telephone should:
      • If your phone has a display screen, record the number or other information displayed.
      • If you are comfortable doing so, try to engage the caller in conversation in order to gather information from him/her. Use a Bomb Threat Questionnaire for sample questions and information you should be documenting about the call.
      (1) If you are continuing a conversation with the caller, try to gain the attention of someone else close-by and write them a note asking that they advise Public Safety that you are on the phone with a person making a bomb threat. This call should be made out of hearing range from the caller.
      (2) If the caller ends the call before someone else has called Public Safety, do so yourself.
   b) Bomb Threats by Letter/Email - The person receiving the letter or email should:
      • If a letter, put it down and do not handle any further.
      • If an email, leave it on your computer screen.
      • Contact Public Safety immediately. Arrange to meet the responding officer.
   c) Bomb Threats Written on Walls or Other Locations
      • Do not touch the writing or anything near it.
      • Contact Public Safety immediately. Arrange to meet with the responding officer.

2) After Receiving the Threat
   a) Immediately examine the area for unusual or unfamiliar items.
      • DO NOT touch or move any suspicious items.
      • Report any suspicious items to Public Safety.
   b) If you received a phone call or letter in your office, or if you viewed a threat written on a wall or other location:
      • Move away from the area, being sure to let Public Safety know where they can find you.
      • Calmly encourage others in the area to leave the area with you and, if safe to do so, keep others from going near the area.
3) **Suspicious Mail or Package**
   
a) Some indicators to look for with suspicious mail are:
   - Unexpected or unusual looking package or envelope from an unknown person.
   - No return address or a return address that can not be confirmed.
   - Envelope is lopsided, oil-stained, or has powder residue.
   - Envelope is sealed with excessive amounts of tape.
   - Envelope has restrictive endorsements such as "private", "personal", "confidential", etc.

   b) If you encounter suspicious mail or package:
      - Remain calm and immediately notify Public Safety.
      - DO NOT touch or move the suspicious letter or package.
      - DO NOT sniff, touch, taste, or look closely at any contents which may have spilled from the suspicious letter or package.
      - If you have touched the suspicious letter or package, immediately wash your hands and face with soap and water to prevent spreading potentially infectious material.
      - Leave the immediate area and encourage others to do the same. Be sure that Public Safety knows where to find you.
      - If it is possible to prevent others from entering the area (such as closing/locking doors, verbally advising people, etc.), please do so.
      - Make a list of everyone present and anyone who was in contact with you or the suspicious letter or package.
      - Immediately report any illnesses or injuries to Public Safety and/or Health Services.

4) **Bomb Threat and Suspicious Object DO's and DON'T's:**
   
a) **DO's**
      - Do remain calm.
      - Do contact Public Safety and give them as much detailed information as possible.
      - Do attempt to keep people away from the area of the threat.
      - Do follow instructions of college and local public safety officials.

   b) **DON'T's**
      - DO NOT activate the fire alarm system.
      - DO NOT use a cell phone, portable music device, or any electronic equipment which may receive or transmit a signal (including two-way radios).
      - DO NOT use campus call boxes as they transmit over the two-way radio system.
      - DO NOT evacuate the building unless directed to do so by college officials OR if you feel unsafe (trust your instincts).
      - DO NOT turn room lights or other electronic equipment (including computers) on or off.
      - DO NOT touch or move any suspicious object.

5) **Evacuating a Building**
   
a) If an evacuation is determined to be appropriate:
      - Building occupants will be notified by phone, email, in-person communication and/or other means appropriate to the situation.
      - Public Safety may ask for assistance from other community members in making these notifications.
      - Building occupants will be told that they need to immediately evacuate the building due to a bomb threat (or suspicious object) and that nothing electrical is to be touched.
b) When evacuating:
- Remain calm.
- Leave building via the nearest exit. **DO NOT** turn on/off lights or any electrical devices. **DO NOT** use elevators. **DO NOT** use automatic door openers.
- Advise others that you encounter about the evacuation order. Consider checking rest rooms and other rooms/areas that you pass.
- Shut doors if you are the last one out of a room. Lock doors if the room contains valuables.
- Take personal belongings with you.
- Offer assistance to those with mobility impairments.
- Move away from the building, into Parking Lots A or F, or into a non affected building (on the Main Campus). Downtown Center building occupants should gather in the public parking lot next to the Wilsons’ parking lot. Only public safety and designated personnel may remain near an affected building to ensure that people do not enter.
- Notify Public Safety if you believe that someone did not evacuate the building.

6) **Public Safety & College Responses to Incidents**
   a) When a bomb threat is received, public safety and college officials have to make a threat/risk analysis with the information available to them at the time. Building occupant safety is the number one priority. Other considerations are the validity of the threat, the caller’s demands, and the resulting disruption. There is a real possibility that copycat callers may call in threats simply to be disruptive.
   b) It is also recognized that anxiety experienced by some, and the resulting disruption to normal activities, can have significant consequences.
   c) In consultation with the college’s senior administrator(s), GCC’s Director of Public Safety (or designated Public Safety person) will use available information to determine what actions will be taken. Such actions may include:
   - Contacting the Greenfield Police Department, the Greenfield Fire Department and/or the State Police.
   - A decision to not evacuate a building (particularly when the threat lacks validity or specificity).
   - A building, a portion of a building and/or the surrounding area may be evacuated.
   - An evacuated building or occupied building might be searched.
   - An evacuated building might be held in stasis until the alleged time of the threat has passed.
   - An evacuated building might be held in stasis until the arrival of the Massachusetts State Police Explosive Ordinance Team.

7) **Community Responsibilities**
   a) When occupants leave the building they should stand at a safe distance and await further information and instructions. Gathering places:
   - Main Campus: Lots A and F, or in a non-affected building.
   - Downtown Center: The public parking lot next to the Wilson’s parking lot.
   b) Upon notification of a threat and/or an evacuation order, building occupants should make a visual search/inspection of their usual work area(s) for anything that looks out-of-place or should not be there. Report any findings to Public Safety.
   c) Because there is no public address system in the buildings, information must be disseminated by other means. Employees and students are urged to assist with notifying other building occupants of an evacuation order.
   d) Remain calm. Do not contribute to a panic situation.