
	GAITHERSBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT		
	Bomb Threats and Evacuations		
	GENERAL ORDER	603.6	
Effective Date	05/17/2016	12.1.1, 46.1.5	
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I. DEPARTMENT POLICY

The Department and its members will treat all bomb threats seriously, regardless of their location, and officers dispatched to calls of this nature will respond safely and promptly, in accordance with appropriate response protocols and procedures. Upon the arrival of first-responding officer(s), the primary concern will be the safety and security of individuals occupying the threatened facility, and the safety and security of those in close proximity to the threatened location.

II. RECEIPTS OF BOMB THREATS

A. By PSCC (911 Center)

1. On receipt of a bomb threat at the Public Safety Communication Center (PSCC) call takers shall be governed by their Standard Operating Procedure.
2. Notifications of Fire/Rescue, the F.B.I., and other persons or agencies will be made by PSCC.

B. By Station Personnel

1. In the event a caller advises station personnel that the caller has just received a bomb threat, station personnel will treat this call as an **emergency** and refer the caller to 911 in accordance with established policies.
2. If a caller is the one making the threat, station personnel will attempt to obtain as much information from the caller as possible and station personnel will call 911 to advise PSCC of the threat.
 - a. Since PSCC is responsible for all notifications, this procedure will ensure that all appropriate notifications are made.

III. FIRST-RESPONDING OFFICERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Upon Arrival At Scene

1. Upon arrival at the scene, responding officers must know who is in-charge until the arrival of a higher ranking officer.
2. To ensure an orderly and coordinated response to this type of incident, the first-arriving officer will be the officer-in-charge until the arrival of an officer of higher rank. Activating the Incident Command System may be considered.
3. Without unnecessarily endangering the officer and individuals occupying the threatened facility, officers dispatched to bomb threats will conduct a thorough preliminary investigation to determine, among other things:
 - a. The validity of the threat;
 - b. Layout of the threatened facility;
 - c. Location of any suspected device(s);
 - d. Population of the threatened facility; and
 - e. What other resources, equipment, personnel, etc. are needed to contain and control the incident.
4. Until the scene is secured and determined to be safe, all mobile, cellular and portable radio transmissions will be discontinued within 500 feet of the threatened facility.
5. Necessary communications will be made by telephone (not cellular or portable phone) or by going a safe distance away from the scene to use the radio.
6. The highest-ranking officer on the scene will ensure that reasonable efforts are made to attempt to identify and locate the owner, manager, or person otherwise in-charge of the threatened facility and advise them that the decision to disregard the threat, search for a device and/or evacuate the premises is totally at the owner/agent's discretion, unless the officer has information that would require an evacuation and/or search.

B. Evaluating the Threat Validity

1. When evaluating the validity of the threat, some factors deserving of consideration are:
 - a. The amount of detail provided by the caller when the threat was made;

- b. The type of place threatened (i.e., performs abortions or other controversial medical procedures, laboratory using animals on which to perform experiments, a school during exam time);
 - c. The notoriety of the person(s) who occupy the threatened facility;
 - d. The number of prior false threats received by the place or person threatened;
 - e. Whether the caller identified him/herself with an organization known to carry-out bombings;
 - f. Current events surrounding the threatened person/premises (i.e., are they in the news?; controversial?, etc.);
 - g. Any other pertinent information in the officer's judgment.
2. If the owner/agent decides to disregard the threat, this will be noted in the Event Report, along with the owner/agent's name and position.

C. Evacuations

1. If the validity of the threat is uncertain, the senior ranking officer will defer the decision to evacuate to the person in charge of the premises. However, if the senior ranking officer possesses any information that would indicate the presence of an explosive device, that officer may order an evacuation regardless of the decision of the person in charge of the premises.
2. If an evacuation of the threatened facility is deemed necessary, the investigating officer will notify the Shift Supervisor, and will assist the facility's owner/manager/agent in facilitating an orderly and safe evacuation.
3. Officers are strongly discouraged from using the pretext of a fire drill for the evacuation because fire drill procedures normally call for the closing of all doors and windows, which would maximize blast effect and damage in the event of a detonation.
4. Prior to the evacuation, the senior ranking officer should consider implementing a brief "evacuation message" to calmly:
 - a. Convey the nature of the threat;

- b. Encourage every occupant to *visually* check his/her work areas for any suspicious packages, objects, etc.;
- c. Advise occupants to take their personal belongings with them as they evacuate;
- d. Advise occupants before they exit the building of the location they are to assemble after they get outside; and
- e. Advise occupants to report any suspicious sightings to the first police officer they see.

D. Searches

1. The need to search premises must be carefully evaluated. A search is not mandatory simply because an evacuation has occurred. However, when determining the need to search for a suspected device, the following should be considered:
 - a. The time remaining before alleged detonation;
 - b. Size of the building, area, or premises to be searched; and
 - c. Validity of the threat.
2. If it is determined by the senior ranking officer that a search of the building should be conducted, a bomb detection canine team will be requested via PSCC and the premises will be secured until the arrival of the bomb detection canine team. Officers will not search buildings or other facilities for suspected devices, except in circumstances in which lives are in imminent danger.
 - a. Bomb detection canine teams may be requested from MCP, MSP, Sheriff's Office, NIH, and the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department.
 - b. If a bomb detection canine team is requested, the building must be evacuated.
3. If no bomb detection canine team is available to conduct the search and it is deemed necessary that a search should be conducted, the shift supervisor will be consulted. If the shift supervisor determines that officers should conduct the search, whenever possible, members of the building's staff (i.e., maintenance men, engineers, custodian, person in charge, etc.) should be paired with officers to search the building since they know the layout of the building better than the officers.

IV. SHIFT SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Upon Arrival At Scene

1. Establish a field command post and assume Command.
2. Assign officers as necessary to assist with the evacuation, direct and divert traffic, crowd control, and staff any staging area.
3. Meet with the person in charge of the facility and obtain a floor plan, if available.
4. Ensure that notifications of the Chief of Police, Operations Bureau Commander, and MCP supervisors have been made by PSCC.
5. If a bomb detection canine team cannot respond, and the supervisor has decided to utilize officers to conduct, or to assist building staff with a search of the premises, the supervisor will brief all persons involved with the search of the following, which may include:
 - a. A reiteration of the radio silence policy;
 - b. Elevators will not be used until officers have run them through one full cycle from top floor to bottom floor, stopping at each floor;
 - c. The search will be done visually from floor to ceiling;
 - d. Lights will not be turned on to illuminate rooms or darkened areas, but officers will use flashlights instead.
6. When assigning tasks to searchers, the shift supervisor should prioritize search areas.
 - a. Target areas.
 - i. Any specific location identified by the caller.
 - ii. If an individual is the target of the threat, search those areas occupied or frequented by that person
 - b. Outside perimeter of the building.
 - c. Public areas (lobbies, corridors).

- d. Other easily accessible areas (stairwells, elevators, bathrooms).
- e. Remainder of the building.

V. IF A DEVICE IS LOCATED

A. Procedures

1. Officers will not make any attempt to touch, move, disarm, or otherwise tamper with any device that is suspected to be a bomb.
2. If a suspicious object that officers believe to be a bomb or the suspected device is encountered, officers will:
 - a. Note its exact location;
 - b. Note whether it is making a noise, and;
 - c. Leave the area and proceed directly to the command post to advise the supervisor of the sighting.
3. If a supervisor is advised by searching officers or the bomb detection canine team of the location of a suspected device, the supervisor will:
 - a. Order all police personnel out of and away from the threatened facility;
 - b. Ensure that everyone is at least 500 feet from the threatened facility (if the device is indoors), and at least 500 feet from the suspected device, if the device is outdoors;
 - c. Request additional officers (for possible expansion of the outer perimeter) and the County Fire and Explosives Investigation Unit, via PSCC;
 - d. Re-check on the availability of a bomb detection canine team;
 - e. Assign an officer, if necessary, to escort the Fire and Explosives technicians to the scene;
 - f. Evaluate the need for "Field Comm 1" or the Fire Rescue Mobile Command Post.

4. The Fire Marshal of Montgomery County or his/her deputy, or the State Fire Marshal, upon their arrival, shall inherit responsibility for the incident and officers remaining at the scene will take direction from the Fire Marshal and render whatever assistance is requested.

VI. IF AN EXPLOSION / BOMBING OCCURS

A. Procedures

1. If an explosion occurs:
 - a. Advise PSCC of the detonation and have them make all notifications;
 - b. Request an alternate radio channel from PSCC, unless the incident is already on such a channel;
 - c. If Fire/Rescue apparatus is in the staging area, have them respond to the scene for fire suppression, assist with search and rescue, etc.;
 - d. Officers will not enter any structure, except when immediately necessary to save lives and/or to prevent serious injuries and only if it can be done with an acceptable level of risk;
 - e. Officers must make every reasonable effort to maintain order and to protect any physical evidence, while still allowing Fire/Rescue personnel to perform their tasks.
2. If the Fire Marshal is on the scene, officers will provide assistance, as necessary.
3. If the Fire Marshal is not on the scene, officers will ensure that the scene remains secure until the Fire Marshal arrives.