

Los Angeles City Fire Department

TRAINING BULLETIN

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BOMB SCENE INCIDENTS

INTRODUCTION

Bombing and the threat of bombing incidents have created a need for practical knowledge to cope with the increasingly violent activities of people who represent segments of unrest in our society.

In order to ensure safety and minimize risk to members of our Department, organizational plans must be made in advance to handle bomb incidents. Clear-cut levels of authority must be established. It is important that each company develop standard operating procedures. When one is equipped with an organized plan, most bomb threat problems can be resolved with minimal personal injury and property damage. By making this information available, we are attempting to help you help yourself in dealing with bomb scene incidents.

INCIDENTS

Numerous incidents where unusual containers have been utilized to house improvised explosive devices (IED) have been rapidly occurring since 1987.

On Sunday, December 6, 1987, at 1120 hours, the Fire Department responded to an explosion at 2450 Louella Avenue in the Venice Area. Companies first on-scene found a small fire in the kitchen area, out on arrival; extensive damage to the windows, doors and structural members were noted.

An investigation revealed that a letter/package device had exploded while being opened in the kitchen. The person opening the device received extensive injuries and was transported to a hospital. The victim eventually succumbed to his injuries.

The device was a package, approximately 8"X 10"X 3", wrapped in ordinary brown paper. The device was powered by a 9-volt battery and filled with nails and other sharp metal objects.

On September 19, 1988, fire suppression companies responded to an explosion at 11500 West Olympic Boulevard. There, the first companies found a vehicle well engulfed in fire in a subterranean garage. The vehicle was parked adjacent to the building's elevator shaft. The occupancy was a four-story office building.

It was determined that this vehicle had been set up to be an explosive device. Evidence found included numerous pipe bombs, 15 gallons of gasoline, and numerous containers of bleach and ammonia, all connected with wires attached to a power supply.

On August 11, 1991, companies in South Central Los Angeles were in the process of forcible entry into a single family residence at 4500 South Cimarron Street when an explosion was heard near the fire's point of origin. After knockdown, an inspection of the scene revealed an unexploded six-inch pipe bomb.

Each of these incidents had the possibility of causing severe damage and resulting in numerous lives lost as well as injured. Always keep in mind, the possibility of secondary devices, as well as the primary devices, being scattered some distance from the first explosion. It is imperative that the Incident Commander secure the scene a sufficient distance from the area of origin to ensure the safety of spectators as well as Department personnel.

Explosive devices can resemble almost anything: A letter, lunch pail, or common stick of dynamite. Bombs can be triggered by almost any means, including the slightest movement. Therefore, if a suspicious object is located, IT SHOULD NOT BE TOUCHED OR DISTURBED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE. OFFICERS SHOULD IMMEDIATELY REQUEST THE LAPD FIREARMS AND EXPLOSIVE UNIT (BOMB SQUAD), SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION

DIVISION (SID), DETECTIVE HEADQUARTERS DIVISION (DHD), OR
CRIMINAL CONSPIRACY SECTION THROUGH OCD.

Improvised explosive devices are easily produced through the use of common articles, such as cast iron plates, PVC pipe, saltshakers, cigarettes, matches, newspaper, and masking tape which are readily available. Smokeless powder and accelerants can also be easily acquired.

The Incident Commander should make sure that the Bomb Squad and Criminal Conspiracy Section (CCS) have been notified. NO ONE SHOULD BE ALLOWED IN THE AREA UNTIL THE BOMB EXPERTS HAVE ARRIVED AND CLEARED ENTRY INTO THE DAMAGED AREA. This will ensure that proper investigative procedures can be followed, evidence is protected from contamination, and the danger from secondary explosions is reduced.

At the scene of a bombing, one of the foremost concerns is the safety of residents. It should be determined if anyone was in the structure during the explosion and if first aid is needed. Members should use sound judgment in attempting any rescue. The possibility of a secondary device should be kept in mind if entry into the building is to be considered.

ARRIVAL AT THE SCENE

Upon arrival at the incident, members should immediately survey the surroundings for potential danger. The presence of residents, power lines, and/or flammable materials in the vicinity must be considered.

Radios should **NOT** be used for communication while at a bomb threat location. Some devices are wired with electrical blasting caps or are radio controlled: radio transmissions could trigger such a device. The 800 MHz radios are intrinsically safe, but to ensure the safety of personnel disarming the device, radio transmission should be suspended within 200 feet of the working area.

In addition, apparatus should be parked away from the scene, as the Computer Aided Dispatch System, along with the Mobile Data Terminals, randomly transmits locations to OCD approximately every 15 seconds. This random transmission could trigger a device.

PROCEDURES AT BOMB INCIDENTS

Whenever fire department personnel locate a bomb or have reason to believe that a bomb may be on the premises, they shall:

1. Not touch or move suspected bomb.

2. Notify fire personnel in the immediate area of the situation and establish a safe area.
3. Notify the police department of the need for a Bomb Squad Unit. Request emergency response, "Code Three," in LAPD terminology. This request should be made through OCD, by telephone or Department radio, if outside the 200 foot limit.

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4. Give the following information (without disturbing suspected bomb):
 - a. location
 - b. Description of object(s). (Remember there is a good possibility of a secondary device.)
 - (1) Type (dynamite sticks, grenade, etc.)
 - (2) Size
 - (3) Markings and colors
 - (4) Obvious characteristics (ticking noise, burning fuse, etc.)
5. Perform the following functions while awaiting arrival of the Bomb Squad:
 - a. Prevent any disturbance of the suspected bomb.
 - b. Determine if an evacuation is to be made.

If so, consider evacuating the area. Even though the evacuation of an area is a police responsibility, the fire department has a moral responsibility to evacuate a dangerous area before arrival of police personnel. Every situation will vary, but the average safety zone is 1,000 feet behind protective cover.
 - c. When ordering evacuation:
 - (1) Avoid mentioning a suspected bomb (use Fire Drill, etc.)
 - (2) Give firm, clear directions to safe area.

- (3) Advise evacuees to take easy transportable personal property, such as purses, coats, etc., with them.
- (4) Check to see that all doors and windows are open to minimize primary damage from blast and secondary damage from fragmentation.
- (5) Post guards against unauthorized entry or approach.

- (6) Prevent reentry into the building until the device has been removed/disarmed and the building declared safe.
- (7) Post personnel to advise arriving Bomb Squad of existing conditions.

EVACUATION RESPONSIBILITY

The fire department and the police department have concurrent jurisdictions in emergencies involving evacuations. The fire department's authority to close an area and order an evacuation is found in the Los Angeles Fire Code, Los Angeles Municipal Code, and Los Angeles Administrative Code.

The member in charge may give the order to have the location evacuated if they believe it is necessary. If refused, Section 409.5 P.C. (Penal Code), Section 57.01.20 and Section 57.01.21 of the Fire Code gives the authority to evacuate an area for the safety of the public:

409.5 Authority of Peace Officers to Close Disaster Area

Whenever a menace to the public health or safety is created by a calamity such as flood, storm, fire, earthquake, explosion, accident or other disaster, peace officers may close the area where the menace exists for the duration thereof, to any and all persons not authorized by such officer to enter or remain within the closed area.

Fire department and police department Incident Commanders must view the nature of the existing incident as the factor that determines which department should order the evacuation. Both departments must make every effort to coordinate their responsibilities at the scene. If the department with the primary responsibility for control is not at the scene, authority exists for the other to make the determination and to take appropriate action.

The most serious of all decisions to be made in the event of a bomb threat is evacuation or non-evacuation of the building.

Building management may already have a carte blanche policy that directs in the event of a bomb threat, evacuation will be effected immediately. This pre-planned decision circumvents the calculated risk and gives primary consideration to the safety of personnel in the building. However, it also results in lost production time, which is unnecessarily costly, if the threat is a hoax. The alternative is for building management to make the decision to evacuate on the spot at the time of the decision. In the past, the vast majority of bomb threats turned out to be hoaxes. However, today, more of the threats are materializing; therefore, our Department's first consideration is for human life.

It is practically impossible to determine immediately if a bomb is real. If it is decided that evacuation is necessary, members should move everyone out of the area quickly and calmly. It is advisable to evacuate all rooms of the building, avoiding the area where the suspected device is located. Evacuees should also be kept away from windows or objects that could cause injury during an explosion. Members should use their best judgment when determining how far from the suspected device evacuees should be moved, keeping in mind the average safety zone of 1,000 feet behind protective cover.

Everyone should be cleared from the area prior to the arrival of the Bomb Squad as they may be working "against the clock" on a time device. This is equally important in an open area, such as a city street. If the Bomb Squad has been called, the street should be blocked off and all traffic, pedestrians and vehicles, diverted away from the danger area.

Once the area is secured, only Bomb Squad and appropriate police personnel should be allowed to enter the area unless otherwise authorized by the responsible investigating officer at the scene. Members should maintain perimeter control until the device has been dismantled or removed.

NOTE: The disarming and removal of bombs of suspicious objects must be left to the professionals in explosive ordinance disposal: