

Bomb Threats

A bomb threat is any communication that indicates the presence of or intent to detonate an explosive device. These are often made by phone but also may be received by text, hand-written note, or social media post. The impact on a school can be dangerous and costly, even if no device is present. The threat alone is a tactic used to disrupt, distract, and harass. The [deadliest school massacre](#) in

our nation's history was a bombing that took place on May 18, 1927, in Bath Township, Michigan, at a school of 314 students. The bomb was placed in the basement of the north wing and killed 44 people.

Being prepared for a potential bomb threat prior to it occurring helps ensure our response reduces psychological and emotional stress. Preparation may also lessen the financial impact of the threat by shortening the duration of the incident. By developing and implementing a [threat management plan](#) for bomb threats and suspicious packages, you can help ensure your school is better prepared in the event of a bomb threat.

The four primary goals when responding to a bomb threat are:

1. Reducing and mitigating vulnerabilities of a facility to bomb threats and suspicious packages
2. Ensuring timely and research-informed decisions are made during the assessment
3. Reducing and deterring the likelihood of potential bombing incidents.
4. Minimizing the consequences following a bomb threat to persons or property (loss of life, disruption of business)

What to do when receiving a bomb threat

- **Phone threat** – Remain calm and don't hang up. Keep the caller on the line for as long as possible. This helps for tracking purposes and allows them to share more information that can be useful in assessing the level and nature of the threat. If possible, signal other staff members to listen in and notify those in charge. If the phone has a display, copy down the numbers and letters shown. Write down the exact wording of the threat. Record the call if possible.
- **Social media threat** – Do not turn off or log out of the account. Leave the message open on the device. Take a screenshot or copy the message and subject line. Note the date and time of the threat. This allows those investigating the bomb threat more opportunity to gather contextual details from the social media source.
- **Written threat** – Handle the document as little as possible. Note the date, time, and location the threat was found. Secure the document and do not alter it in any way. This allows investigators more opportunities for analysis, both to determine the nature of the threat and to identify the person making the threat.

CISA's [bomb threat awareness for college students video](#) explains how college students should respond to a potential bomb threat. They also offer an extremely well-detailed [guide related to bomb threats](#).



Assessing bomb threats is a crucial component of bomb threat management. Although most bomb threats prove to be false, decision-makers need to be able to determine how seriously a threat should be taken. One way to ensure you don't miss anything important is to use the [CISA bomb threat checklist](#). Some of the things that need to be taken into consideration are:

- Level of realism of the device and its location
- Plausibility of the event and how likely the location is for an attack
- Exact wording of the threat
- Directness
- Amount of time between the threat and reported timing of the event
- Prior acts or threats against the school
- Current events
- Individuals or acts at the school
- Accessibility to the school
- Occupants of the school
- Danger in the evacuation areas

When **responding to bomb threats**, keep all information regarding the incident, such as usernames, email addresses, websites, phone numbers, or names of platforms. Report the threat to local law enforcement. If a suspicious item is found or a threat is elevated, treat it as an emergency and dial 911.

[Visit CISA](#) to learn more about responding to bomb threats.