

SCHOOL DISTRICT 82 (COAST MOUNTAINS)

Educational Administration

2415: Bomb Threats

Preamble

When a bomb threat is received in a school, the principal must make an immediate judgment as to whether the threat is a hoax or a real bomb threat. The principal must then decide whether or not to evacuate the school. In deciding whether or not the threat is a hoax, the principal should consider:

- the exact words used by the caller;
- whether the caller's voice indicates the person is young or old, calm or nervous, drunk or sober;
- whether there is any connection with a recent incident in the school; and
- whether there have been similar recent threats in this or other schools.

A complicating factor is that it is unlikely that the principal will be the person to actually receive the call.

In deciding whether to evacuate the school, the over-riding consideration is the safety of those in the school. If, for example, a bomb has been placed in a hallway or near an exit door, there may be danger to students during an evacuation. Since the majority of bomb threats turn out to be hoaxes in which the caller wants to cause maximum confusion and disruption to the orderly running of the school, the principal must consider other consequences of a decision to evacuate, such as

- encouraging the person making the threat to continue with increasing frequency;
- encouraging others to make bomb threats;
- the effect on the health of students from having to go outside in bad weather.

Policy

1. In the event of a bomb threat, it shall be up to the principal of the school whether or not to evacuate a school. If the school is evacuated, the principal should establish the procedures for and the duration of such evacuation(s). When such threats occur, the principal shall, where practicable, consult with

the RCMP and the local Fire Department in making such decisions, but the principal shall have final authority in the matter.

2. In cases where a suit is brought against the Board and/or any of its employees for damages resulting from item (1) above, the board will accept full financial responsibility without financial recourse against the employee involved.
3. Following any bomb threat to a school, the principal shall notify the Superintendent of Schools, in writing, of the event.

Regulations

Procedures and Suggestions

The Phone Call

1. TRY TO KEEP THE PERSON TALKING AND/OR KEEP THE PHONE OFF THE HOOK—DO NOT HANG UP.
 - a) To keep the person talking, plead ignorance: “I’m new at the job.” “Let me get the secretary.” “Let me get the principal.”
 - b) Get information: “Where is the bomb?” “What time is it set to go off?” “How big is it?” “What do you hope to gain by this?”
2. The person taking the call should note the time, try to get exact wording of the threat, and listen for background noise (e.g., is the call from a pay phone, is there music in the background, are there train whistles or other distinctive sounds). Note the possible age and gender of the caller, listen for accents. Does the caller sound drunk or sober? Most importantly, note the composure of the caller (e.g. calm, nervous, excited, etc.)
3. While still talking, TRY TO PASS WORD TO SOMEONE TO CALL THE RCMP. ASK FOR A SUPERVISOR AND SAY A BOMB THREAT IS IN PROGRESS. REPORT YOUR TELEPHONE NUMBER AND SCHOOL NAME. ASK THAT THE CALL BE TRACED. ASK FOR OTHER SECONDARY SCHOOLS TO BE COVERED IMMEDIATELY.
4. Try to pass word to the principal that there is a bomb threat in progress and, upon completion of the call, report all information to the principal immediately.

Actions Under the Direction of the Principal

1. Phone the RCMP immediately:

- a) report that you have a bomb threat in progress;
 - b) ask for immediate police assistance;
 - c) ask if there have been any recent bomb threats in the community, particularly if any were real;
 - d) hang up; details can come later.
2. Phone the Fire Department and report that you have a bomb threat in progress. Give the school name. (Note: The Fire Department does not attend ALL bomb threats but will stand by awaiting further information.)
 3. Start a search of the building using a prearranged search procedure:
 - a) look for something unusual or out of place, particularly in garbage cans, hallways, doorways, and other areas selected by the school;
 - b) DO NOT touch suspicious objects.
 4. Upon arrival of the RCMP
 - a) report areas searched;
 - b) supply other information such as attendance, suspensions, etc. on request.

Principals' Options

Depending upon the nature of the call and other information available, the principal will decide what action is to be taken. The following are examples of options available:

1. Students remain in class, with business as usual. The four steps described in the previous section should still be taken.
2. Treat the threat as serious and evacuate the students and personnel in a prearranged manner. Consider taking students to another school. Buses may have to be arranged early, if the time is near the end of the school day. Students may have difficulties getting coats from lockers.
3. Treat the threat as a probable hoax, but take precautions (e.g., take students to a "safe" area of the school, clear the hallways, washrooms, close down shops or labs. etc.)
4. After things have calmed down, or earlier if possible, notify the Superintendent of Schools, by telephone, of the bomb threat.
5. Notify other secondary principals.

