



Policy Number: 404 – Response to Bomb Threats or Explosions

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Approved By: Denis Otterness, Chief of Police

404.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines to assist members of the Montana State University Billings Police Department (Department) in their initial response to incidents involving explosives or explosive devices, explosion/bombing incidents, or threats of such incidents. Under no circumstances should these guidelines be interpreted as compromising the safety of first responders or the public. When confronted with an incident involving explosives, safety should always be the primary consideration.

404.2 POLICY

It is the policy of this Department to place a higher priority on the safety of persons and the public over damage or destruction to public or private property.

404.3 RECEIPT OF BOMB THREAT

Department members receiving a bomb threat should obtain as much information from the individual(s) as reasonably possible, including the type, placement and alleged detonation time of the device.

If the bomb threat is received on a recorded line, reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that the recording is preserved in accordance with established Department evidence procedures.

The Department member receiving the bomb threat should ensure that a supervisor is advised and informed of the details as soon as practicable. The on-duty supervisor will ensure that appropriate personnel are dispatched, and, as appropriate, the threatened location is given an advance warning.

Non-sworn administrative staff should maintain a Telephone Bomb Threat Checklist in close proximity to their work station and incoming landline telephones.

404.4 Police Assistance

Information and circumstances that indicate a reasonably apparent, imminent threat to the safety of either the facility or the public may require a more active approach, including police control over the facility.

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Should a determination be made that the Department will assist or control such an incident the responding officer(s) will determine:

1. The appropriate level of assistance.
2. The plan for assistance.
3. Whether to evacuate and/or search the facility.
4. Whether to involve facility staff in the search or evacuation of the building.
 - a. The person in charge of the facility should be made aware of the possibility of damage to the facility as a result of a search.
 - b. The safety of all participants is the paramount concern.
5. The need for additional resources, including notification and response, or standby notice, for fire and emergency medical services.
6. Even though a facility does not request police assistance to clear the interior of a building, based upon the circumstances and known threat, officers may be sent to the scene to evacuate other areas that could be affected by the type of threat, or for traffic and pedestrian control.

404.5 FOUND DEVICE

When handling an incident involving a suspected explosive device, the following guidelines, while not all inclusive, should be followed:

1. No known or suspected explosive item should be considered safe regardless of its size or apparent packaging.
2. The device should not be touched or moved except by the bomb squad or appropriately trained explosive ordnance disposal team.
3. Personnel should not transmit on any equipment that is capable of producing radio frequency energy within the evacuation area around the suspected device. This includes:
 - a. Two-way radios.
 - b. Cell phones.
 - c. Other personal communication devices.
4. The appropriate bomb squad or explosive ordnance disposal team should be summoned for assistance.
5. The largest perimeter reasonably possible should initially be established around the device based upon available personnel and the anticipated danger zone.
6. A safe access route should be provided for support personnel and equipment.
7. Conduct a search of the area for secondary devices as appropriate and based upon available resources.
8. Consider evacuation of buildings and personnel near the device or inside the danger zone and the safest exit route.
9. Promptly relay available information to the City/County Dispatch Center and other responding units including:

- a. The time of discovery.
- b. The exact location of the device.
- c. A full description of the device (e.g., size, shape, markings, construction).
- d. The anticipated danger zone and perimeter.
- e. The areas to be evacuated or cleared.

404.6 EXPLOSION/BOMBING INCIDENTS

When an explosion has occurred, there are multitudes of considerations which may confront the responding officer(s). As in other catastrophic events, a rapid response may help to minimize injury to victims, contamination of the scene by gathering crowds, or any additional damage from fires or unstable structures.

404.6.1 OFFICER CONSIDERATIONS

Officers responding to explosions, whether accidental or a criminal act, should consider the following actions:

1. Assess the scope of the incident, including the number of victims and extent of injuries.
2. Request additional personnel and resources, as appropriate.
3. Assist with first aid.
4. Identify and take appropriate precautions to mitigate scene hazards, such as collapsed structures, blood borne pathogens and hazardous materials.
5. Assist with the safe evacuation of victims, if possible.
6. Establish an inner perimeter to include entry points and evacuation routes. Search for additional or secondary devices.
7. Preserve evidence.
8. Establish an outer perimeter and evacuate if necessary.
9. Identify witnesses.

404.6.2 NOTIFICATIONS

When an explosion has occurred, the following people should be notified as appropriate:

1. City/County Dispatch
2. Fire Department
3. Bomb Squad
4. Chief of Police, or the Assistant Chief of Police in their absence.
5. Other law enforcement agencies, including local, state or federal agencies, such as the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).
6. Other government agencies, as appropriate

404.7 CROWD CONTROL

Only authorized Department members, first responders and mutual aid partners with a legitimate need should be permitted access to the scene. Spectators and other unauthorized individuals should be restricted to a safe distance as is reasonably practicable given the available resources and personnel.

404.8 PRESERVATION OF EVIDENCE

As in any other crime scene, steps should immediately be taken to preserve the scene. Officers may be assigned to protect the crime scene area, which could extend over a long distance. Consideration should be given to the fact that evidence may be embedded in nearby structures or hanging in trees and bushes.

404.9 TRAINING

The Department shall ensure all officers are periodically trained in the policy and procedures of response to bomb threats and explosions.