



## TLO

Learners will identify response actions based on scenario types and factors associated with time, distance, and shielding.

### Responding to a threat

Effective response to school bomb incidents requires coordinated efforts of school staff and first responders. Teamwork is essential for success.

First responders understand that response is not a static procedure. They understand that response is governed by the particulars of the threat or incident.

On the other hand, school staff may view response as a practiced procedure—typically either evacuation or lock-down. First responders must discuss with school staff the relationship between threat response and the actual incident.

A copy of Module 3: Responding to a Threat may be downloaded from the Resources section.



### Module objectives

At the end of this module, you will understand how a scenario type affects response decisions. Specifically, you will be able to identify:

- Four critical actions for documenting and receiving a threat
- The three types of bomb scenarios
- Critical evacuation actions



**ELO**

**Learners will identify correct procedures for documenting and responding to a threat.**

**Documenting and responding to a bomb threat**

Bomb threats are the most common type of school bomb incident. Every bomb threat must be carefully evaluated because a threat may launch the response plan. How the response plan will be implemented is determined by the specifics of the threat.

School protocols to document and respond to a bomb threat are dependent on the policies of the school district and emergency response agencies.



**Critical actions**

There are four critical actions for responding to a threat. However, not every response will require every step.

Response involves the following:

- Collecting information as the threat is received
- Assessing the threat and deciding if the response plan should be implemented
- Notifying community agencies
- Deciding on evacuation procedures

**Threat delivery**

How information about a specific threat is collected depends on how the threat is made.

Threats are usually made in one of three ways:

- Telephone
- Written—email, letters, writing on walls or mirrors
- Face to face





## ELO

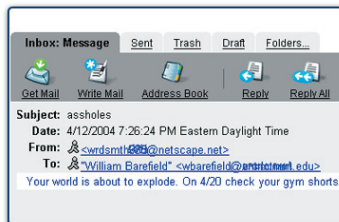
Learners will identify correct procedures for documenting and responding to a threat.

### Hoax threats

Most school bomb threats are made over the phone and end up being hoaxes. When one hoax threat occurs, expect others to follow. They are often intended to result in evacuation of the school.

School officials must consider any bomb threat as a criminal offense and refer all incidents to law enforcement. Federal laws include significant penalties on those who communicate bomb threats, including juveniles.

For further information on the penalties for false bomb threats refer to Bomb Threat Response (Resources section).



### Types of threats

Bomb threats can be general or specific. Difficult to confirm, a general threat might read, "I've placed a bomb at your school."

A specific threat has details, such as, "There's a bomb in the boys locker room in the gym set to detonate at 1:00 p.m." Specific threats may be confirmed.

### Receiving a threat

Bomb threats may be communicated through words, spoken or written, or as a physical item such as a suspicious package.

A threat is considered "received" when school staff become aware of a threat. As soon as a threat is received, the response plan begins, starting with documenting the threat.





## ELO

**Learners will identify correct procedures for documenting and responding to a threat.**

### Documenting a threat

The procedure for documenting a threat must collect as much information as possible concerning the bomb, the perpetrator and all aspects of the situation. This information is used to assess the threat. In many cases, while the threat is being made is the only opportunity to collect information.



Typically, this information is documented on a Bomb Threat Incident Form. First responders and law enforcement will request this information after dispatch to a school.

An example Bomb Threat Checklist is in the Resources section.

### Module 3 Practice 1



### Preserving evidence

Frequently, information collected on an incident form will help law enforcement link a suspect to other threats through particular details. These details may include background noises, method of delivery, or handwriting.

Documenting the threat does not end with completing a form about a threat. If the threat is physical, such as writing on a mirror, or a suspicious item, school staff must protect the scene around the threat until police arrive. This protects students and school staff, and the chain of custody for the evidence, which is critical in a court case.

### Telephoned threats

A Bomb Threat Checklist is used to document telephoned threats while the threat is being made. Using this form helps the person receiving the threat to keep the caller on the phone and record vital information.

Background noises and characteristics of the caller's voice are useful in evaluating a bomb threat. If background noise on the phone is similar to the school's background, the caller might be close to the school, which may suggest a hoax.





## ELO

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### Written threats

Threats may also occur as written documents, emails, or writing on walls or mirrors. In light of criminal proceedings, the protocols for preserving and recording the threat follows local law enforcement policy. These protocols are defined in the school bomb incident response plan. Typically, the evidence chain of custody involves as few people as possible.

School staff is responsible for cordoning off the area where the threat is, notifying the police, and preserving or recording the threat.



### Verbal threats

Any verbal threat, whether from a student or community member, must be reported to local law enforcement. This helps deter future threats and provides evidence for legal action.

Verbal threats from students are considered an imminent warning sign requiring immediate attention by school staff and law enforcement. Because it is not unusual for a student planning a bomb incident or making a bomb to tell peers, reports of this nature from fellow students must be investigated thoroughly.

 **Module 3 Practice 2**



## ELO

Learners will identify the 3 bomb scenario types.

### Incident scenarios

Every response is based on the type of incident scenario. Most bomb response training focuses on the two most common bomb scenarios—pre- and post-detonation.

The tragic events at Columbine High School in April 1999 exemplify a third scenario—the continuing explosive incident. In this scenario, explosives are used against a target but perpetrators remain in the target area. This extremely complex scenario presents new challenges for first responders.



### Types of bomb incident scenarios

There are three types of bomb scenarios:

- Pre-detonation
- Post-detonation
- Continuing explosives incident

### Pre-detonation scenario

A pre-detonation scenario occurs when a bomb threat is made and received, a suspicious device is observed, or both.

Once a threat is received or a suspicious item is reported, the school threat assessment team determines the appropriate protocol from the bomb incident response plan. If needed, school staff conducts any searches, as they are most familiar with the environment.





## ELO

Learners will identify the 3 bomb scenario types.

### Post-detonation scenario

In a post-detonation scenario, a bomb has already exploded by the time first responders are notified or arrive at the scene.

This scenario typically involves response from multiple agencies, such as law enforcement, firefighters, and emergency medical staff. The bomb incident response plan defines the chain of command and communication protocols among the school and emergency response agencies. Equally important is to train and exercise the protocols with the emergency response agencies.



Bomb Threat Response has detailed checklists for determining protocols for a post detonation scenario (Resources section).

### Critical actions



Critical actions for a post-detonation response are identified in a bomb incident response plan. Typically they include:

- Rescue and recovery operations—on-scene medical treatment and evacuation
- Scene control
- Evidence recovery and suspect identification
- Fire suppression

Checklists for defining protocols are available in the Resources section.



# ELO

Learners will identify the 3 bomb scenario types.

## Continuing explosives incident scenario

A continuing explosive incident is one in which perpetrators using explosives remain in the target area. This scenario typically results in injuries, human deaths, and structure damage. To complicate matters, the perpetrators remain at the target site and use weapons or explosives to delay first responders' actions. In the most serious cases, perpetrators continue to kill and injure people and damage structures as the scenario continues.



Law enforcement agencies typically assume the lead role in these situations. As a matter of policy, firefighters and emergency medical services staff will not enter areas where perpetrators threaten citizens and first responders until law enforcement officers have eliminated the threat.

## Critical actions



Response for a continuing explosives incident includes several critical actions. A checklist of typical priorities may be used as a starting point when drafting an MOU between emergency response agencies and school districts (Resources section).

 **Module 3 Practice 3**





**ELO**

**Learners will identify correct evacuation decisions and procedures.**

**Types of bomb threat evacuations**

Once a bomb threat is deemed credible, there are two techniques for implementing a response. The target area is evacuated and then searched; or the target area is searched, and if a suspicious item is found, the area is evacuated.

There are three possible evacuation decisions—full, partial or no evacuation. The bomb incident response plan defines who makes an evacuation decision and how the decision is made.



**Decision not to evacuate**

When a decision not to evacuate is made, the reasons must be clearly stated.

A decision not to evacuate can be costly—if staff or students are directed to remain in place and a bomb subsequently explodes, injuries and even deaths may occur. Such losses have significant and long-standing impact.

**Partial evacuation**

A partial evacuation is possible when a school building has multiple separate wings that allow for the safe evacuation of one wing. This decision may be chosen when a specific bomb threat identifies the location of a bomb in only one wing.

Consider sheltering-in-place students in other wings. If a suspicious device is found, a decision to evacuate remaining wings must be made.





## ELO

Learners will identify correct evacuation decisions and procedures.

### The scan method

In several recent bombing incidents, including one at a school, secondary bombs were placed along evacuation routes. For this reason, evacuation protocols include a search along evacuation routes.

The scan method is a technique for quickly searching evacuation routes for the purpose of identifying suspicious devices. Since they are most familiar with the environment, school staff conducts the scan.



### Full evacuation

The third type of evacuation is a full evacuation. The decision to conduct a full evacuation must be made carefully, with safety as the primary consideration. Keep in mind that copycat bomb threats frequently follow. However, these copycat threats may be reduced with planning.

One high school's plan calls for continued classes at an alternative site during a full evacuation. In addition, during a period of copycat bomb threats, the school searched backpacks left behind during a full evacuation. When the search turned up contraband and resulted in student arrests, the bomb threats subsided.



## ELO

Learners will identify correct evacuation decisions and procedures.

The Scan Method consists of two steps:

1. Stop, look and listen. Observe or hear anything that appears or sounds out of place.
2. Divide the room or corridor into four sections visually:
  - Floor to waist
  - Waist to chin
  - Chin to ceiling
  - False ceiling

Scan each section three times until all four sections have been evaluated. Look for suspicious packages, ceiling tiles askew, or other unusual items. There is no need to open cabinets, doors, look through drawers, or otherwise search thoroughly. Most importantly, no one should touch anything.

 **Module 3 Practice 4**



## ELO

Learners will identify correct evacuation decisions and procedures.

### Factors governing evacuation decisions

The decision to evacuate students is just one aspect of an evacuation decision. Equally critical is a safe evacuation site.

Determining where to evacuate students is governed by time until detonation, and distance and shielding from the detonation.

The bomb incident response plan identifies potential evacuation sites. The evacuation protocols include a search of the routes and sites before the process begins. Poor evacuation choices include areas that cannot be searched or those with potential hiding places for explosive devices.



### Time

In most cases, it is difficult to know the time of detonation with certainty. Suspects may lie to increase the success of their operations. Fuses and other bomb components may fail to function as designed or intended.

When deciding where to evacuate or shelter students in place, the time needed to evacuate is compared to the estimated time to detonation. If there is little time available, the best decision might be to minimize injuries by using the structure of the building to protect students.

Evacuate those near the suspected device immediately. The priority evacuation effort is to all potential victims in the immediate area.



# ELO

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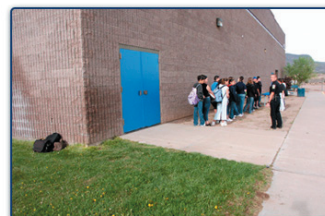
## Distance

Always assume the worst when estimating the destructive power of an explosive device. Consider the size of the container and assume that it contains the maximum amount of the most powerful explosives.

Some basic rules of distance include:

- Move people away from the device, not the device away from people.
- Evacuate people behind a substantial barrier such as a brick wall that is far enough away from the device so that the device is not visible.
- Never handle an explosive device or suspected explosive device.

The only people who should handle an explosive device are first responders with training and experience to deal with explosives in accordance with their agency's policies and procedures.



## Vehicle bomb evacuation distances

ATF	VEHICLE DESCRIPTION	MAXIMUM EXPLOSIVES CAPACITY	LETHAL AIR BLAST RANGE	MINIMUM EVACUATION DISTANCE	FALLING GLASS HAZARD
	Compact Sedan	500 pounds 227 Kilos (81 Trunks)	100 feet 30 meters	1,000 feet 457 meters	1,200 feet 361 meters
	Full Size Sedan	1,000 pounds 450 Kilos (81 Trunks)	126 feet 38 meters	1,750 feet 534 meters	1,750 feet 534 meters
	Passenger Van or Cargo Van	4,000 pounds 1,818 Kilos	200 feet 61 meters	2,750 feet 838 meters	2,750 feet 838 meters
	Small Box Van (14 ft. box)	10,000 pounds 4,545 Kilos	300 feet 91 meters	3,750 feet 1,143 meters	3,750 feet 1,143 meters
	Box Van or Waste/Fuel Truck	30,000 pounds 13,636 Kilos	450 feet 137 meters	6,000 feet 1,828 meters	1,902 meters
	Semi-Trailer	40,000 pounds 22,272 Kilos	600 feet 183 meters	7,000 feet 2,134 meters	7,000 feet 2,134 meters

If vehicle bombs are a consideration, distance is a critical issue in determining safe evacuation sites. The estimated evacuation distance is shown in this chart, created by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF). It is important to note that the recommended evacuation distances are **greater** than distances suggested by intuition.

## Distances for package and briefcase bombs

Package and letter bombs generally use different explosives than vehicle bombs. Frequently, letter and package bombs are designed with a high explosive. This chart states the evacuation distances for smaller containers—package and briefcase bombs.

ATF	DESCRIPTION	MAXIMUM EXPLOSIVES CAPACITY	LETHAL AIR BLAST RANGE	MINIMUM EVACUATION DISTANCE	FALLING GLASS HAZARD
	Small Box	20 pounds 9.1 Kilos	Variable	300 feet 90 meters	Variable*
	Briefcase	33 pounds 15 Kilos	Variable	1,123 feet 342 meters	Variable*
	Compact Sedan	500 pounds 227 Kilos (81 Trunks)	100 feet 30 meters	1,000 feet 301 meters	1,200 feet 361 meters
	Full Size Sedan	1,000 pounds 450 Kilos (81 Trunks)	126 feet 38 meters	1,750 feet 534 meters	1,750 feet 534 meters
	Passenger Van or Cargo Van	4,000 pounds 1,818 Kilos	200 feet 61 meters	2,750 feet 838 meters	2,750 feet 838 meters
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Learners will identify correct evacuation decisions and procedures.

#### Time and distance

The distance to an evacuation site is limited by the time available before possible detonation. In situations where the time to detonation is not know, distance to an evacuation site is determined by the size and potential destructive power of the explosive device, and the availability of suitable shielding.



Choose evacuation sites as far away as possible and with as much shielding as possible.

#### Module 3 Practice 5

#### Shielding

Shielding puts a barrier between potential victims and the explosive device. It also minimizes the destructive effects of an explosion. Buildings, vehicles, and terrain features can provide shielding.

Generally, more shielding provides better protection. However, all materials do not provide the same level of protection. A cinder block wall provides more protection than a wood wall, and reinforced concrete provides greater protection than non-reinforced materials.



When evaluating potential evacuation sites, all three factors—time, distance, and shielding—should be considered together. Often, the minimum evacuation distances recommended are not feasible. In those situations, structural protection—shielding—will supplement the protection.

#### Module 3 Practice 6



## TLO

Learners will identify response actions based on scenario types and factors associated with time, distance, and shielding.

### Module 3 Summary

- **The correct procedures for documenting and receiving a threat**

Regardless of whether a bomb threat is verbal, written, telephoned, or identified as a suspicious package, there are four critical response actions. The four steps include collecting information as the threat is made, assessing the threat and possibly implementing the response plan, notifying community agencies, and deciding if evacuation is necessary. Not every threat will require every step.

- **Three scenario types of bombing related incidences**

A bombing incident may be classified into one of three incident types. Pre-detonation occurs when a bomb threat is made and/or a suspicious device is observed. A post-detonation incident occurs when a bomb has already exploded when emergency responders are notified or initially arrive at the scene. A continuing explosive incident is defined as one in which perpetrators using explosives remain in the target area.

- **Three possible evacuation decisions**

Safety is the main consideration in evacuation decisions. A full evacuation is defined as one in which everyone evacuates the building. A partial evacuation may be used when a building has multiple separate wings that allow for the safe evacuation of one wing. A threat assessment team may also decide not to evacuate.

- **Correct evacuation procedures**

Potential evacuation sites are identified in a response plan and evaluated on time, distance, and shielding factors. Time refers to the time needed to evacuate a building compared to the estimated time to detonation. Distance refers to an evacuation area far enough away from the device so that the device is not visible. Shielding is a barrier between potential victims and the explosive device. Shielding minimizes the destructive effects of an explosion. Evacuation protocols should include a search of the evacuation routes and evacuation areas before the evacuation process begins.

 **Module 3 Knowledge Check**