


# Bomb Threat or Threatening Call Checklist

**Resource Type:** Articles

**Topic:** Crisis Management, Crisis Communications

 The danger of a possible fire or bombing is too great to ignore. All phone calls threatening bombs, arson, death or bodily injury should be treated as real expressions of the caller's intention to inflict injury or damage.

In the case of a letter bomb, the U.S. Postal Service and several other sources, advise training telephone receptionists [and anyone else who regularly answers the organization's telephones] to remain calm and ask the caller the following questions:

- What kind of bomb is it?
- What does it look like? Please describe it.
- Where is it located? Can you give us the office and floor number and building location?
- What will cause it to detonate?
- Many innocent people may be hurt; why are you doing this?
- What is your name and address?

The USPS says if the bomber's intentions are to damage property and not harm people, the receptionist may be able to elicit useful information before the caller hangs up. They advise "under no circumstances should the person taking the call hang up if the caller is still on the line."

The person taking the call should also attempt to write down the threat in the caller's own words, and record vocal traits and background noises that might help in identifying the caller during the official investigation.

The following sample checklist can be used as a reminder and to record of any type of threatening call, or it may be adapted to specific threats, such as bombs, by making the questions more specific to the threat. (See the six bomb-specific questions at the beginning of this piece.)

## SAMPLE

### Threatening Call Checklist

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#### Instructions:

1. Be calm and courteous
2. Let the caller speak.
3. Keep the caller on the line as long as you can.
4. Record as much of the caller's conversation verbatim, as possible.
5. Notify your supervisor (or, if your supervisor is unavailable, the Executive Director) immediately after the call.
6. Don't tell anyone else about the call or caller.

#### Ask:

1. Who are you?

2. Where are you?
3. What do you want from us?
4. What are you going to do?
5. Why are you doing this?

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### **Threatening Caller Profile Checklist**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of call \_\_\_\_\_ a.m./p.m.

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Caller's Exact Words:**

\_\_\_\_\_

Male \_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_

#### **Try to estimate the following while speaking to the caller:**

Adult \_\_\_\_ Teen \_\_\_\_ Child \_\_\_\_

Approx. Age. \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Circle any and all characteristics that apply to the caller:**

##### **Voice:**

Loud  
Highly pitched  
Raspy  
Soft  
Deep  
Pleasant  
Monotone

##### **Speech:**

Fast  
Distinct  
Stutter  
Slurred  
Slow  
Distorted  
Nasal  
Lisp

##### **Accent:**

Local  
Foreign  
Race  
Region

##### **Word Choice:**

Very educated  
Average  
Poor  
Foul  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

##### **Manner:**

Calm  
Rational  
Coherent  
Deliberate  
Righteous  
Angry  
Irrational  
Incoherent  
Laughing  
Crying

**Background Noise:**

Talking  
Laughing  
Music (describe \_\_\_\_\_)  
Machinery  
Typing  
Traffic  
Trains  
Planes  
Boats  
Restaurant/Bar  
Party  
Quiet

**Building Knowledge:**

Very familiar  
Some familiarity  
No familiarity

**Assessing Your Vulnerability**

No organization is completely immune from attack according to the USPS. Your organization's vulnerability depends on its exposure to foreign terrorism, domestic hate groups and workplace violence.

Organizations with foreign offices or activity; high-profile organizations whose services or programs are subjects of public controversy; and any recent downsizing, layoffs, employee threats or stalking are red flags indicating further assessment is wise.

Law enforcement finds that revenge appears to be the most common trigger of a bomb or bomb threat. The USPS says letter bombs are targeted most often at individuals, while placed bombs target organizations ad hoc and aim to injure whoever's in the way.

**More Information**

Read our book on crisis management: [\*Vital Signs: Anticipating, Preventing and Surviving Crisis in a Nonprofit.\*](#)