

ST MARYS CATHOLIC CHURCH, BRIDGE GATE, DERBY
PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING BOMB THREATS

- **Introduction**

The vast majority of bomb threats are hoaxes designed to cause alarm and disruption. As well as the rare instances of valid bomb threats, terrorists may also use hoax bomb threat calls to intimidate the public, businesses and communities to draw attention to their cause and to mislead police. While many bomb threats involve a person –to-person phone call, an increasing number are sent electronically using email or social media applications.

CCTV footage may be helpful in identifying suspects delivering threats in person and should be secured.

Threats are most likely to be received at weekends and other occasions in the year when the church is likely to be full.

No matter how ridiculous or implausible the threat may seem, all such communications are a crime and should be reported to the police by dialing 101. The police will provide a crime number.

- **The bomb threat message**

Bomb threats containing accurate and precise information, and received well in advance of an attack, are rare occurrences. The vast majority are hoaxes.

- **Communication of the threat**

A bomb threat can be communicated in a number of ways. The threat is most likely to be made in person over the telephone but it may also be a recorded message, a letter or note, a face-to-face contact or increasingly sent by email or social media (e.g. Twitter or Instagram).

- **Immediate steps if you receive a bomb threat**

If you receive a telephone threat you should:

- Stay calm and listen carefully
- Have immediate access to a checklist on key information to record (see Form 5474 attached)
- Try to keep the caller talking for as long as possible.
- If displayed on your phone, note the number of the caller. Otherwise dial 1471 to obtain the number once the call has ended
- If the threat is a recorded message write down as much detail as possible
- If the threat is received via a text message do not reply to, forward or delete the message. Note the number of the sender and follow police advice

If the threat is delivered face to face, you should

- Try to remember as many distinguishing characteristics of the threat-maker as possible.

If received in a written letter, note or as graffiti:

- Treat as police evidence and keep handling of the letter and envelope to a minimum. Prevent other people from touching them. If possible, place each in a separate clear plastic wallet.

If the threat is received via email or social media application:

- Do not reply to, forward or delete the message.
- Note the sender's email address or user name/ user ID for social media applications
- Preserve all web log files to help the police investigation (as a guide – 7 days prior to the threat message and 48 hours after).

REMEMBER – in all cases dial 101 as soon as possible and follow police advice. Then inform a responsible person, usually a member of the clergy.

- **Decision making**

The responsible person must decide if the threat is plausible or implausible (i.e. a deliberate hoax). If the threat is considered plausible then the responsible person may decide that it is most appropriate to evacuate or evacuate inwardly, bearing in mind that an external evacuation could inadvertently move people closer to danger.

The decision should not be delayed until the arrival of the police.

- **Police support**

The attending police officer may ask for a written statement from you. The officer may also ask your consent to provide your fingerprints to assist in eliminating your prints from others found on the correspondence.

- **Notification**

In all cases please inform the General Secretary, Fr Christopher Thomas, about any threat that you have received.

Email: Christopher.Thomas@CBCEW.Org.uk

- **Further information**

Email from Fr Jonathan Rose, Bishop of Nottingham's Private Secretary dated 10 January 2019 regarding 'Operation Matrix'

Further information is contained in "Guidance – Procedures for handling bomb threats" (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bomb-threats-guidance>)