



## **Emergency Response Plan (ERP) Drill**

November, 2005

Tabletop, In-house Exercise

### *Instructions to the Safety Officer:*

Bomb Threats have been a security issue in aviation for at least 50 years. Most of the time, it is an attempt to disrupt an entity (like a school or a transportation system) but is a hoax and not an actual bomb. However, there is a precedence of bombs being placed aboard aircraft. A United States airliner was subjected for the first time to terrorist attack in November 1955 when a bomb exploded in luggage on a DC-3 that had just left Stapleton Airport in Denver. A man, hoping to collect on a life insurance policy, placed a bomb in his mother's luggage. The plane crashed, killing all aboard.

More often, these threats are just attempts to disrupt a company or an event. In the last few months, bomb threats have been called in to professional basketball teams, colleges, and transportation hubs. Some are called in by juveniles, some by current or ex-employees, but some may be made with genuine terrorist intent.

According to Great Britain's Security Service, MI5:

**"Most bomb threats are made over the phone. The overwhelming majority are hoaxes, often the work of malicious pranksters, although terrorists also make hoax calls.**

During the Irish republican terrorist campaign, there were approximately 10,000 bomb threat calls reported in the Greater London area in one year. Of these, 70 were made by terrorists, 10 of which resulted in the actual discovery of a device.

Any such hoax is a crime and, no matter how ridiculous or unconvincing, should be reported to the police."

This is a simulation of a bomb threat call into your scheduler/dispatcher. As we have discussed, most bomb threats are false alarms from malicious pranksters, but it is important to take them seriously to minimize your risks. You are the referee in this exercise, so you control the release of information to the other members of your flight department. Remember that all this is designed to be a learning experience. If necessary, stop the drill and make changes to your Emergency Response Plan (ERP) or other appropriate manual. Take time to provide additional "on the spot" training to individuals who might need it.



## **Preparation**

1. Preparation: Ensure each manager has a copy of the ERP, and has read through the portion that pertains to his department. Make sure the notification table, with everyone's home and cell phone numbers, is current. Designate a conference room with phones and fax to work the exercise.
2. Schedule this exercise in advance, and have the management personnel assemble in the conference room with their copies of the ERP, at the start of the exercise, which we will call "H hour."
3. Release the attached "Exercise Inputs" at the times indicated for each one. Controlling the release of information not only improves realism, but allows the entire management team to participate in solving each problem. The purpose of this exercise is to validate your ERP, and to revise the manual content if improvements are necessary.
4. Keep a log of what the management team does throughout the exercise to solve problems and to simulate coordination with outside agencies. This will be valuable later in the self-critique.
5. Keep this exercise "in-house" by simulating the coordination with outside agencies. As the management team becomes more experienced at coordinating the company's response to an accident, other agencies can be invited to participate and exercise their own emergency manuals alongside yours.
6. At the end of the exercise, go over your notes, and record any open concerns by the participants which may require reworking of the manual on your part. Schedule a meeting when you feel you can present the team with a finished summary of the exercise, open items, problems that were identified and resolved, and other suggestions for the next exercise.



## **ERP Bomb Threat Exercise**

Exercise Inputs: Timed releases

**H Hour:** A call is received by your scheduler detailing a bomb aboard one of your aircraft which is enroute. The call can be simulated and the Bomb Threat Checklist filled out, or this can be conducted as a pure table top exercise and the call would not be made.

**Goal:** Whether the call is made or not, every person who answers a phone in your flight department needs to be briefed on the Bomb Threat Checklist procedures and where the checklist and ERP are kept. The Team leader should ensure the ERP is activated, critical managers are alerted and recalled to the office, and confirm the details you can from your own flight schedule. Have the managers present make sure that the contact emails, phone numbers and other information is correct. Here is some additional information that you can share with your flight department regarding bomb threats, again courtesy of the UK's MI5.

*"Calls from terrorists fall into two kinds:*

- *bomb threats when none has actually been planted. These hoaxes may not be merely malicious but designed to disrupt, to test reactions or to divert attention;*
- *bomb threats warning of a genuine device. These may be attempts to avoid casualties, but they also enable the terrorist to blame others if there are casualties.*

*Even genuine threats are frequently inaccurate with regard to where and when a bomb might explode. Also, staff receiving a bomb threat may not always be those trained and prepared for it. Whilst it is not reasonable to expect them authoritatively to assess a threat's accuracy, truth or origin, listen to their impressions of the caller.*

*Be prepared for your staff to be temporarily in a state of shock at the threat, which will be the closest that many people ever come to acts of terrorism. Take account of this when establishing your procedures (see "What you can do", below) and base your preparation on enabling any member of staff to pass on a threat promptly, in as much detail as possible, to those tasked with deciding what action to take. Remember to distinguish between calls referring to your own building and those warning of a bomb elsewhere."*



**H+3 minutes:** Company records show that the aircraft is a live trip halfway to its destination, with four hours of fuel on board, two pilots, and two passengers. For the purposes of this drill, the passengers are either principles (if Part 91) or brokered clients (if Part 135).

**Goal:** Resources of the company should be directed toward contacting the aircraft (which can be a challenge, depending on equipment or location), contacting the authorities, and making provisions to divert the a/c and have it met on the ground by appropriate personnel (Bomb Disposal Unit, FBI, etc.). Talk how you are going to resolve the challenges that can occur with this scenario. If you divert the aircraft to the closest airport, it might not have a very good bomb disposal unit nearby. Do you do a lot of international trips? What if you are over water? Have you contacted your insurance company yet?

**H+15 minutes:** The Aircraft has landed safely and the passengers and crew have deplaned.

**Goal:** The safe landing of the aircraft and crew is the ultimate goal of any emergency scenario. However, consider these issues: The airport may well have requested that the aircraft would be parked in an open, quiet area of the facility, just in case there was a bomb and it did explode. Many emergency, controllers, and operations personnel are aware of the situation, and everyone has a cell phone. Expect leaks.

**H+30 minutes:** There is a pretty good shot of your aircraft on CNN. Your phone is ringing off the hook from media personnel.

**Goal:** Expect the media to find out what is going on. Leaks should be expected, and prepared for. The people who answer the phones at your company should have the generic media release statements, if they don't, show them where they could be found. If no one has thought to contact the passengers and crewmembers families, they would be calling now as well. Make sure this is considered prior to this stage.

*This concludes the drill.* Have an out briefing with your personnel and go over the good points and the areas where you might need some work. Think about the different scenarios that could occur, and how you would handle them. For example:

What would happen if the bomb threat was called in and you were told that the bomb was in the facility? How would you handle the evacuation? How would you maintain flight following if you had aircraft in the air?

**The purpose of this drill is to educate your staff on how to handle a bomb threat. The Bomb Threat Checklist should be kept near every phone. The contact numbers of the people they need to call should be readily available and checked for currency and accuracy.**