

Policy and Procedure

Department: Emergency Preparedness	Section: CODES	Subject: Code Black - Bomb Threat/Suspicious Object
Policy:	Original Date: 2004-01-31	Supersedes: 2017-08-31
Last Reviewed: 2026-06-22	Next Review Date: 2027-06-22	Approver: Angie Brunetti (Emergency Preparedness Committee)

POLICY STATEMENT

Code Black is the term used to declare a written or verbal bomb threat, or discovery of/search for a suspicious package or object. The Code Black policy is a risk management strategy used to ensure Espanola Regional Hospital and Health Centre (ERHHC) employees are able to react appropriately to a threat or suspicious package, in order to ensure the safety and protection of staff, patients, residents, and visitors. The plan is reviewed, tested and evaluated annually by the Emergency Preparedness Committee (EPC).

Code Black may escalate into a Code Purple (Hostage Taking), which would immediately involve OPP, or Code Green (Evacuation) if it is determined that it is unsafe to remain on-site.

AUTHORITY TO DECLARE

Code Black-Bomb Threat may be declared by the **Incident Commander**, in collaboration with OPP.

DEFINITIONS:

Active Phase: Threat confirmed and location known/unknown. Suspicious object found. CEO and OPP notified.

Code Purple: a planned response to an individual being held against their will.

Incident Command Centre: The central command and control location/group responsible for carrying out the principles of emergency preparedness and emergency management functions at a strategic level in an emergency, and ensuring the continuity of vital operations

Incident Commander (IC): The most responsible person at the time of an emergency. This person will depend on the time of day and may change as the situation progresses. The ED Ward Clerk may initiate the process during daytime hours, until relieved by the ED Nurse, or the most responsible person (e.g. Senior Manager or OPP).

Precautionary Phase: Threat has been received but not confirmed/validated. CEO and OPP notified.

Scan and Sweep: A rapid inspection performed by individuals familiar with the specific area. The inspection should be slow and systematic and should include both a visual and auditory review. Areas such as false ceilings, closed cupboards and drawers **should not** be opened or inspected.

Suspicious Object: Anything which is out of place and cannot be accounted for, and ownership of the item cannot be established or any item that is suspected of being an explosive device.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Employees

- Review the emergency plan annually and when changes are made, ensuring understanding of the roles and processes.
- Participating in mock exercises, debriefs and educational programs as required

Managers

- Review the emergency plans upon new staff orientation, annually and when changes are made, ensuring understanding of the roles and processes.
- Participate in mock exercises and attend educational programs as required
- Ensure all employees review and can respond competently in an emergency situation
- Ensure employees attend scheduled education programs or training opportunities

Emergency Preparedness Lead/Committee:

- Review and update the policy annually
- Coordinate and conduct mock drills as required
- Review of all Code Action reports for process improvement opportunities

Incident Commander (ED Nurse or CEO/Senior Leader, until relieved by OPP)

- Assume responsibility for initiating and/or overseeing the situation until relieved
- Communicate with staff, visitors, clients and partners, and ensure others are prevented from accessing the area
- Determine, in collaboration with OPP, the need to set up an Incident Command Centre, local evacuation (Code Green), and activation of the Code Black process
- Supervision of a facility search (if required)
- Initial and cancellation announcements of Code Black, Green etc.
- Ensure complete documentation (census sheets, Code Black checklist, Code Action Report, Critical Incident report)

NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE

If deemed appropriate by IC/OPP, a "Code Black" will be initiated through the emergency activation system.

Dial 7777 from any hospital phone and provide Incident Command (IC) specific information as to where the suspicious object is located, or details of the threat.

RESPONSE PROCEDURE

RECEIPT OF THREAT VIA TELEPHONE:

- Remain calm and courteous.
- Do not interrupt the caller.
- Keep the caller on the line if possible, and do not hang up, even when the caller does.
- Try to notify any nearby colleagues for assistance.
- Take note of the number on the call display.
- Obtain as much information as you can, using the "Threatening Call Form" to record the time of the call, exact words used, discerning characteristics of the caller, and a list of specific questions to ask. (Appendix A)
- Call and report the threat to IC at 7777 or direct a co-worker to do so.
- All calls that are received by switchboard from the Police Department, Fire Department or Monitoring Station are to be transferred to Incident Command (7777).

RECEIPT OF THREAT VIA LETTER:

- Handle paper as little as possible so as not to destroy fingerprints or other identifying marks.
- Notify your manager or CEO immediately for further instructions.

RECEIPT OF THREAT VIA ELECTRONIC MEANS:

- Do not reply, forward or delete the email/text/fax, and do not close the message (on the screen)
- Print or screenshot the message and notify your manager or CEO as soon as possible.

DISCOVERY OF SUSPICIOUS OBJECT:

- Do not touch or disturb the object.
- Isolate the area, remove unnecessary persons, carefully close the door.
- Discreetly notify staff in the area of the situation, and proceed to leave the area
- Do not use wireless communication (telephone, radio, cellphone) in the immediate area of the item.
- Notify IC immediately at 7777 to relay information including name, area, description, when it was noticed, any noises coming from the item.

INCIDENT COMMANDER (Appendix B)

Upon notification of bomb threat, IC will immediately notify OPP.

Upon notification that a suspicious object is found, IC will notify OPP and provide staff instructions to restrict access to the area.

IC will work in collaboration with OPP to determine further steps, including the need for initiation of Code Black (Precautionary or Active), or evacuation (Code Green). All communication to the media must be vetted by IC, in collaboration with OPP.

If appropriate, IC will dial **9(pause)00 to announce:

"Your attention Please, Your Attention Please: Code Black Precautionary Phase, await further instruction" x 3
OR

"Your attention Please, Your Attention Please: Code Black Active Phase. Await further instruction"x3

Precautionary Phase

- IC will notify OPP of the threat/object and request they attend the site to conduct a threat assessment.
- IC will notify the Maintenance Manager of a potential Code Black. Power, water, gas, or electricity may need to be shut off if deemed necessary.
- IC will provide any collected material and information to the OPP, once on site.
- In conjunction with the OPP, determine the need to activate Code Black Active Phase.

Active Phase:

- In conjunction with OPP, determine appropriate need for departmental searches (scan and sweep) or need for evacuation (including route and pooling location). Refer to Code Green policy for evacuation protocol.
- No search shall be undertaken by departmental personnel unless directed by OPP through IC.
- If evacuation from unit/area has occurred, announce overhead "Code Green all clear" and follow the Code Green response plan to resume normal function.

ALL STAFF

Upon hearing a Code Black overhead announcement:

- Direct visitors/unnecessary persons to leave the building and prevent others from entering. Lockdown entrances if possible.
- Turn off **ALL** electronic devices (phones, computers, iPad, etc.)

- Await further instruction from the Incident Commander, CEO or Designate regarding evacuation (refer to Code Green policy).
- Complete Visual Scan and Sweep if instructed to do so.
- Do not return to the area until the "All Clear" has been called or instructed to do so by OPP/IC.

Staff are not permitted to release any information to anyone other than emergency services personnel. All other inquiries must be directed to the CEO/Designate.

➤ **SEARCH PROCEDURE** (Refer to linked policy: Departmental Search Maps)

- A departmental search will not be conducted unless directed by qualified personnel (OPP)
- A preliminary assessment will be conducted with OPP to establish the need for full search
- If a full search is required, ERHHC employees will conduct a visual scan and sweep since staff are familiar with their work areas and can quickly identify items out of place. Refer to Linked Policy: Departmental Search Maps.
- Look, listen and don't touch. Search from lowest to highest point.
- As each area is searched, it shall be marked by placing a piece of tape on the door handle. If questioned by the public, avoid using the terms "Bomb" or "Bomb Threat".
- Upon discovery of a bomb or an object suspected of being explosive, call 7777 to report to IC.
- Continue the search until otherwise directed. Once the search of an area is completed, the person in charge of the area shall notify IC.
- Any suspicious individuals noted by any of the staff should be immediately reported to IC and OPP.

RECOVERY PLAN

Police will advise IC (or designate) when it is safe to end the Code Black. At this time, the Incident Commander or Delegate will announce

"Your attention please, your attention please, *"Code Black, All Clear"* x3.

- HCWs from the affected area should go to a designated meeting point that will be announced overhead when determined by Police, Incident Command and Senior Leadership
- A plan will be created to support all staff involved. This will include an immediate debrief, as well as individual and group counselling, and EAP. Workers should speak with their supervisor regarding any specific concerns, needs, or considerations.
- Some departments may not be able to resume immediately if the affected area is secured for investigation, or if damage to facilities and equipment inhibits their use. An action plan will be generated to support patient services and return to normal functioning.
- A secondary debrief meeting will be held to evaluate current processes and identify process improvement opportunities.
- If a coordinated emergency response by several agencies is required, please consult the Town of Espanola Emergency Response Plan

EDUCATION

All employees complete the online Code Black policy review in Surge Learning upon orientation and annually. It is the responsibility of the department manager to ensure their staff review the document following any revision. Staff are required to participate in any mock drills or training opportunities.

SURGE REFERENCED DOCUMENTS

ERRHC. (2022). Code Green-Evacuation

ERHHC. (2025). Code Purple-Hostage Taking

ERHHC. (2019). Reporting of Critical Incidents and Disclosure of Adverse Events.

REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

Bomb Threats-937-1-IPG-003 Government of Canada <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/laws-regulations/labour/interpretations-policies/003.html>

Canada Post-Suspicious Mail Poster. Retrieved March 19, 2025 https://www.canadapost-postescanada.ca/cpo/mr/assets/pdf/aboutus/suspiciousmailposter_en.pdf

Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.0. Ontario.ca. (2022, April 21). Retrieved June 14, 2022, from <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90e09>

Health Protection and Promotion Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.7. Ontario.ca. (2022, April 11). Retrieved June 14, 2022, from <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90h07>

Ministry of Long-Term Care. (2021). Fixing Long Term Care Homes Act 2021. Ontario.ca/laws/statute/21f39

Occupational Health and Safety Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.1. Ontario.ca. (2022, April 11). Retrieved June 14, 2022, from <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90o01>

St. Joseph's Health Care London. 2021. *Code Black-Bomb Threat/Suspicious Package*.

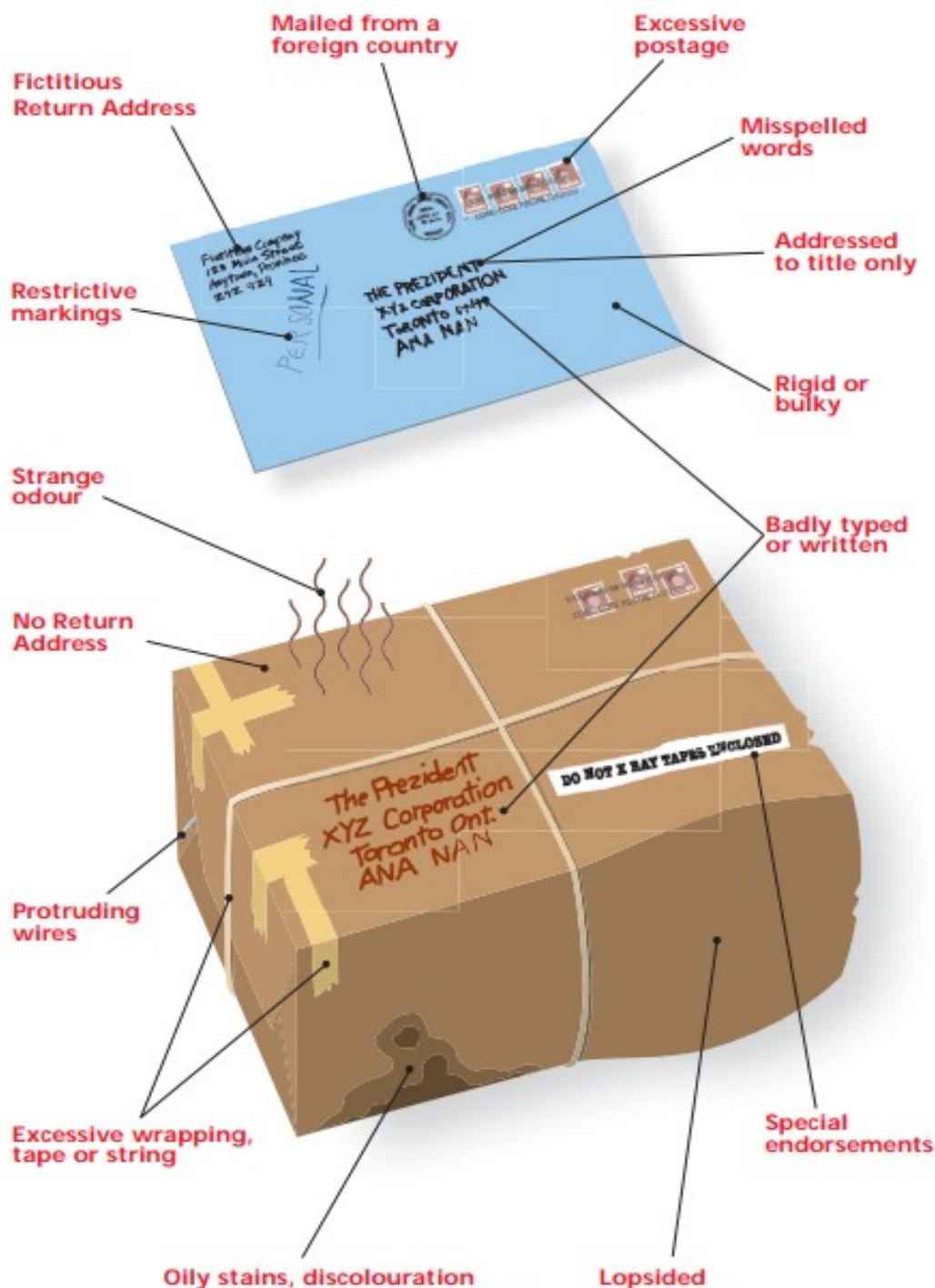
Suspicious Mail Alert



From anywhere... to anyone

If you receive a suspicious letter or parcel

(A COMBINATION of the following may constitute a suspicious mail item)



- 1** Immediately advise local emergency services of the situation.
- 2** Do not handle, shake, smell, or taste the suspicious article.
- 3** Isolate the article, and evacuate the immediate vicinity.
- 4** Anyone who has handled the article should immediately wash their hands with soap and water.

If a letter or parcel is open and/or a threat is identified

For a Bomb:

- Evacuate area immediately
- Call local emergency services

For Biological or Chemical:

- Isolate - do not handle
- Evacuate area immediately
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water
- Call local emergency services

For Radiological:

- Limit exposure - do not handle
- Evacuate area immediately
- Shield yourself from object
- Call local emergency services

Corporate Security

www.canadapost.ca

Appendix A: THREATENING CALL FORM

This form is to be used in the event of a threatening call such as bomb threat or extortion.

Fill out as completely as possible.

When a bomb threat is received by telephone:

- Listen
- Be calm and courteous
- Do not interrupt the caller
- Signal a co-worker and let them know you have a bomb threat on the phone and to dial 7777
- Obtain as much information as you can

Date: _____ Time: _____ Duration of Call: _____

Questions to Ask:

What time will the bomb explode? _____

Where is it? _____

Why did you place the bomb? _____

What does it look like? _____

Where are you calling from? (record # on phone) _____

What is your name? _____

What type of bomb is it? _____

Exact Wording: _____

Identifying Characteristics

Sex: _____ Estimated Age: _____

Accent (Eng., Fr., etc.) _____

Voice (loud, soft, etc.) _____

Speech (fast, slow, etc.) _____

Diction (Good, nasal, lisp, etc.) _____

Manner (calm, emotional, vulgar, etc.) _____

Background noise: _____

Voice was familiar (specify)? _____

Caller was familiar with area. _____

Threat Recipient's Information Name: _____ Department _____

Appendix B: Incident Commander – ED Nurse, until relieved by CEO/OPP

Staff name:

Date of Incident:

Time of Incident:

Time		Duties
	1.	Bomb Threat: Notify OPP Suspicious package: Notify OPP and provide staff instruction on how to restrict the area
	2.	With OPP, determine need for evacuation and proceed to Code Green policy.
	3.	With OPP, determine need for overhead announcement.
	4.	If deemed appropriate, dial **9 – 00 for entire campus notification Announce: "Your attention Please, Your Attention Please: Code Black Precautionary Phase, await further instruction" x 3 OR "Your attention Please, Your Attention Please: Code Black Active Phase (location) commence scan and sweep using search maps" x3
	5.	If deemed appropriate, collaborate with OPP to coordinate a facility wide search.
	6.	Ensure all documentation is complete
	7.	Once directed by OPP, overhead announce "All Clear" for Code Black and/or Code Green,
	8.	Coordinate de-brief meeting.