



# City of San Diego Parks and Recreation Department

CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA <b>DEPARTMENT INSTRUCTION</b>	NUMBER <b>DI – 3.20</b>	DEPARTMENT <b>Parks and Recreation</b>
SUBJECT <b>THREATS FROM OUTSIDE SOURCES</b>	<b>PAGE 1 OF 15</b>	<b>EFFECTIVE DATE</b> April 1, 1999
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**I.     PURPOSE**

To provide employees and volunteers with direction on how to respond in threatening, hostile or potentially violent situations, when the source of the situation is a park patron or member of the general public.

**II.    AUTHORITY**

Policy of the Parks and Recreation Director.

**III.   POLICY**

It is the policy of the Parks and Recreation Director that employees and volunteers be provided a safe and secure workplace and that the general public be provided safe and secure facilities to recreate, socialize and experience the many activities/programs provided by the Department. To this end, each employee and volunteer of the Parks and Recreation Department will be required to exercise every precaution when dealing with irate patrons or potentially violent situations. The procedures outlined in this Department Instruction are designed to protect and provide guidance to the employee and volunteer. Employees and volunteers are encouraged to use verbal persuasion or leave the area before resorting to physical force. It is not the intent of this instruction to direct employees or volunteers to try each option before trying the next one. Good clear judgement will dictate where the employee or volunteer will start with each situation. Employees and volunteers will be held accountable for any and all offensive responses to situations.

Authorized by:

C. M. [Signature]

Date: 3/22/99

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**A. HOSTILE, ANGRY PATRONS (Think of your safety first. If you believe you are in danger, get out of the area.)**

**Example: An angry patron talks loudly, gestures rudely and is clearly upset.**

1. Avoid arguing with the patron. Choose your words carefully. What you say and how you say it can help diffuse a tense situation.  
Use neutral or non-threatening body language. If the patron gets too close, step back.  
Keep your voice calm.
2. Use active listening skills:  
Acknowledge their concerns.  
Ask open ended questions to get them to explain their reason for clarification.  
(Be non-contentious and non-argumentative).  
Repeat their complaint to show you understand their concerns.  
Show concern for their feelings.  
Do not be overly defensive.  
Summarize the situation.
3. Give the citizen direction:  
Isolate the individual. (Be cautious and stay within hearing distance of a fellow employee).  
Avoid letting it become personal between you and the patron.  
Allow the patron to fully express their feelings.  
Avoid judging whether the patron is right or wrong.
4. Set limits:  
Explain to the citizen what to do and why. Inform the citizen of the possible outcomes.  
Allow time. Give patron an estimate of when you will get back to them.  
Follow through on what you said you would do.
5. When you need to give bad news: Be prepared with the information.  
Respect and preserve the citizen's dignity.  
Be objective.  
Listen with concern.  
Offer any options, if possible.

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6. After hearing out the patron, help them solve the problem or at least help them take the next step toward the solution.  
If you cannot help them any further, offer them assistance from a supervisor.

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**B. PHYSICAL VIOLENCE: (Think of your safety first. If you believe you are in danger, get out of the area.)**

**Example: You are in immediate danger inside a facility. A patron displays a gun or knife and directs it toward you or a customer, or gets physically violent (grabs, pushes, throws a punch, etc.).**

**If you think you can talk your way out of it, follow these suggested steps:**

- Be overly polite. Tell the person what he or she wants to hear; agree with him/her in order for you to move away from the situation as soon as possible.
- If you cannot excuse yourself, stay calm, try to get the attention of someone else for assistance or wait for opportunity to leave.
- Listen to what the person tells you to do. Avoid interrupting the person or asking too many questions.
- Use neutral or non-threatening body language and movements. If the customer gets close, step back.
- If at all possible, try to pay attention to details so you can help the police with descriptions of the person, their clothing, weapons, etc.
- Suggest a reason why you need to leave, then move away from that person.
- Leave or excuse yourself in any way possible.

Once you are away from the threatening or violent person:

- \* CALL 911 (CENTREX 9-911)
- \* INFORM A SUPERVISOR IMMEDIATELY  
(Supervisors will ensure the appropriate actions from this 0.1. are taken and comply with the Supervisor's Action List on Page 13).
- \* INFORM OTHER STAFF TO LEAVE THE AREA (if appropriate)
  - As soon as you can, write down all of the details of the incident (person's name (if known), description of person, weapons, etc.).

**If your safety or life is in danger and you cannot leave the area, you have a right to protect yourself using reasonable force. Always use good judgement and common sense.**

**Example: You are in immediate danger out in a park. A patron displays a gun or knife and directs it toward you or a customer, or gets physically violent (grabs, pushes, throws a punch, etc.).**

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**If you think you can talk your way out of it, follow the same suggested steps as listed in the previous example, in addition to the following:**

- Get into your vehicle and leave.
- Using a radio or phone, report the incident to your supervisor/manager and/or the police, especially if any weapons were involved.
- Do not return to the site alone.

**If your safety or life are in danger, you have the right to protect yourself using reasonable force. Always use good judgement and common sense.**

**Example: You see a patron become threatening or violent towards another employee or patron.**

- Walk quickly and quietly away from the area.
- Call 911 (Centrex 9-911) and report to police.
- Inform a supervisor immediately.
- Inform other staff to leave the area surrounding the incident.

**Example: A patron calls in on the phone and threatens that he/she is coming in with a weapon and/or, threatens any other physical harm.**

- Be calm and courteous, choose your words carefully. What you say can help calm the patron down.
- If possible, notify supervisor while caller is on the line.
- If the caller seems agreeable to further conversation, ask questions like:
  - Can someone here help you?
  - When will you be coming in?
  - Where are you now?
  - How will I recognize you?

Once the caller hangs up:

\*NOTIFY BUILDING SECURITY, if applicable.

\*NOTIFY POLICE DEPARTMENT.

\*IF EMERGENCY, CALL 911 (CENTREX 9-911).

\*COMPLETE THE PHONE THREAT CHECKLIST ON PAGE 15.

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**Example: You notice a patron is carrying a partially concealed weapon.**

- Unless you know this patron is a law enforcement officer or security guard on duty, excuse yourself from the patron
- Notify your supervisor. (Supervisor refer to Supervisor's Action List).

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**C. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (Think of your safety first. If you believe you are in danger, get out of the area.)**

**Example: A family member, spouse, or significant other threatens your safety. For example, the person threatens to come to the workplace and do you harm, or the person is at the workplace and threatens you. Take the following steps:**

- Notify your supervisor.
- Notify co-workers in your work area, that you have been threatened, so they are on alert.
- Notify police.
- Notify Building Security, if applicable.

Keep a low profile, if possible. Make arrangements with supervisor and co-workers to be away from your usual area.

- Do not leave the area with the person who has threatened you. Stay where there are people around. A person is less likely to harm you in front of witnesses.
- Give photo of person who has threatened you to supervisor and co-workers, if possible.

Note: You may also take the steps listed above if a family member, spouse, or significant other threatens your safety at home, and you are not sure if this may carry over into the workplace. In this case, it is at your discretion to inform your supervisor. (If the threat involves you in the workplace, then you must inform your supervisor.)

Note: If you need help, please contact the following resources:

Employee Assistance Program: 619/236-6373

San Diego Domestic Violence Unit: 619/533-5620

San Diego Police Department Domestic Violence Unit: 619/533-6000



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**D. STRANGERS IN THE BUILDING OR OPERATIONS YARD (Think of your safety first. If you believe you are in danger, get out of the area.)**

**Example: A stranger is in an employee area. The stranger could be a patron, but you're not sure who they are.**

- Ask: May I help you?
- Ask: Who are you meeting? I can help direct you.
- If they are a lost patron, simply direct them to their destination or a public waiting area.

**Example: A suspicious stranger (or former employee) is in an employee area or looking through someone's office or desk.**

- Notify your supervisor.
- Notify other staff in the area.
- Call 911 (Centrex 9-911).
- Notify Building Security, if applicable.

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## E. BOMBS AND BOMB THREATS/SUSPICIOUS LOOKING OBJECTS

**Example: You find a device that looks like a bomb or clearly is a bomb.**

### **Immediately do the following:**

- Notify the police. Dial 911 (Centrex 9-911).
- Keep others away, if safe to do so, until police arrive.
- Notify your supervisor or manager.
- Any bombs or suspicious objects found on or near the premises, are not to be moved or otherwise disturbed. (Put "A" frame around or close off the area in some way.)
- Do not use a hand-held radio near a bomb or suspicious package.
- Police will conduct a search and/or investigation. If needed, an evacuation will be conducted. The evacuation will be announced via alarm or the paging system.
- Exit the building by the nearest stairwell. If in an open area (park), move away to safe distance and keep others away until police arrives.

Note: If you have any reason to believe an item or parcel is suspicious, do not take a chance, report it. Do not worry about possible embarrassment if the item turns out to be innocent.

**Example: You receive a bomb threat via phone.**

### **Immediately do the following:**

- 1) Upon receiving a bomb threat, attempt to keep caller on the line. Advise the closest person to call the Police Department, Dial 911 (9-911) and advise them that a bomb threat is being received and the telephone number that the caller is on.
- 2) Listen to the background noise (airplanes, traffic, etc.). Write down as much as you can. Attempt to get the caller to answer the following questions:  
Where is the bomb?  
When will it explode?  
What will cause it to explode?  
What does it look like?  
What kind of bomb is it?  
Reason for placing bomb?  
Did you place the bomb?  
What is your name?
- 3) After the caller hangs up, call the police at 911 (Centrex 9-911). Follow any instructions given by police.
- 4) Notify your supervisor or manager.

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- 5) Complete the attached Phone Threat Checklist (Page 15) as soon as possible.

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**F. PHONE THREAT**

If you receive a threat over the phone, call the police at 911 (Centrex 9-911) and report the threat. Identify the type of threat (bomb, gun, knife or other physical violence). Then write down as much information as you can about the call. This information may help the police investigate the case and/or prevent an incident from occurring. (See attached "Phone Threat Checklist", Page 15).

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**SUPERVISOR'S ACTION LIST**

- Supervisors will ensure the appropriate actions from this Department Instruction are completed and complied with.
- Contact the Safety/Environmental Health Division of the Risk Management Department for an assessment of your work area, if necessary.
- Evaluate your employee's state of mind; contact the Employee Assistance Program (619/236-6373) if necessary for assistance.
- If a building, determine if the facility should be immediately secured. If so, close and lock all doors. Do not let anyone in or out of the facility.
- Investigate the incident for immediate actions to take.
- Ensure the appropriate agencies have been called (Police, Fire, Parents, Parks and Recreation management staff, etc.).
- If someone has been injured, ensure proper care is given. (Try to keep the victim calm until help arrives, do not allow the victim to be moved unless absolutely necessary, for their safety.)
- If a building, determine if it should be closed for the remainder of the day/evening.
- Complete a thorough investigation of the incident.
- Continue to report up the chain of command.

**Supervisors will ensure this Department Instruction is tailgated to all new employees and volunteers and reviewed on an annual basis.**

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**RECOMMENDED PROCEDURES:**

Threats to employee safety may come from citizens, customers, park patrons, or any member of the public. Use the following procedures if you are being threatened, either verbally or physically, by any member of the public.

**Assess and evaluate the situation. If you suspect something:**

1. Be overly polite. Tell the person what he or she wants to hear. Agree with him/her in order for you to move away from the situation as soon as possible.
2. Suggest a reason why you need to leave, then move away from the person.
3. If you work out in the field, walk away and say, "I'll be right back." Get into your vehicle and leave the area. Report the incident to your supervisor/manager and/or the police immediately after leaving the area.
4. If at all possible, try to pay attention to details so you can help the police with descriptions of the person, their clothing, weapons, etc.
5. Once safe, notify your supervisor or manager, or call 911 for immediate intervention.
6. Supervisor/Manager: Contact the Safety/Environmental Health Division of the Risk Management Department for an assessment of your work area, if necessary.

If no option, defend yourself. If in danger, walk away and leave the area. Remember: You are accountable for any offensive behaviors of your own.

**DON'T EVER TAKE UNNECESSARY RISKS.  
CONSIDER YOUR SAFETY FIRST.**



## PARK AND RECREATION PHONE THREAT CHECKLIST

If you receive a threat over the phone, call the Police at 911 (centrex 9-911) and report the threat. Identify the type of threat (bomb, gun, knife, or any other physical violence). Write down as much information about the call/caller as you can. This information may help the police investigate the case and/or prevent an incident from occurring.

NAME OF EMPLOYEE MAKING REPORT:	WORK PHONE:	DATE OF INCIDENT:	TIME OF INCIDENT: <input type="checkbox"/> AM <input type="checkbox"/> PM
DIVISION:	LOCATION OF INCIDENT: (ADDRESS OR SITE LOCATION)	SUPERVISOR'S NAME:	
Describe the conversation: _____ _____ _____			
IF A BOMB THREAT: Where is the bomb? _____			
When will it explode? _____			
What does it look like? _____			
What type of bomb is it? _____			
Reason for placing bomb? _____			
Did they place the bomb? _____			
Did they mention their name or any name? (first, last, nickname, reference to employee, etc) _____			
Check off as much information about the call/caller as you can: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female			
<b><u>VOICE CHARACTERISTICS:</u></b> <input type="checkbox"/> LOUD <input type="checkbox"/> SOFT <input type="checkbox"/> HIGH PITCH <input type="checkbox"/> DEEP <input type="checkbox"/> RASPY <input type="checkbox"/> PLEASANT <input type="checkbox"/> INTOXICATED <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (Explain) _____	<b><u>LANGUAGE:</u></b> <input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD <input type="checkbox"/> POOR	<b><u>SPEECH:</u></b> <input type="checkbox"/> FAST <input type="checkbox"/> SLOW <input type="checkbox"/> DISTINCT <input type="checkbox"/> DISTORTED <input type="checkbox"/> STUTTER <input type="checkbox"/> NASAL <input type="checkbox"/> SLURRED OTHER _____	
<b><u>MANNER:</u></b> <input type="checkbox"/> CALM <input type="checkbox"/> RATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> COHERENT <input type="checkbox"/> DELIBERATE <input type="checkbox"/> LAUGHING <input type="checkbox"/> ANGRY <input type="checkbox"/> IRRATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> INCOHERENT <input type="checkbox"/> EMOTIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____	<b><u>ACCENT:</u></b> <input type="checkbox"/> LOCAL <input type="checkbox"/> NOT LOCAL <input type="checkbox"/> FOREIGN  _____ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> REGION _____ _____	<b><u>BACKGROUND NOISES:</u></b> <input type="checkbox"/> MACHINES <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC <input type="checkbox"/> VOICES <input type="checkbox"/> STREET TRAFFIC <input type="checkbox"/> MOBILE PHONE <input type="checkbox"/> TRAINS <input type="checkbox"/> ANIMALS <input type="checkbox"/> QUIET <input type="checkbox"/> AIRPLANES <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____	