ProtectUK

Search planning

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1. Introduction

Search measures can help reduce the likelihood of threats entering your site and help detect threats that may already be on your site. Visible search measures may also serve as a deterrent to those with hostile intent.

The following advice is generic for most sites and events, but recognises that they often operate differently and face different threats or risks. If considered necessary, advice and guidance on searching should be available through the local Police CTSA, Police Search Adviser (PolSA) or Police Security Co-ordinator (SecCo).

Searching people and their belongings, mail, deliveries and vehicles before they enter a site can help detect weapons, explosive devices and other disruptive, hazardous or prohibited items and prevent them from entering your site. Searching the site itself and the surrounding areas can help identify threats that may have been left to cause damage, disruption or harm. Some key principles are set out below in more detail.



1.1 Detection priorities

A risk assessment should identify threats which could have an impact on the business and its vulnerability. This risk assessment can be used to define the items that need to be detected – either to prevent them from entering your site or specific areas of it, or detect them if they have already been placed on your site.

1.2 Search policies and procedures

Clear polices will need to be in place that define what, where or who is searched, the aims of the search, and the authority for conducting it.

The regularity and scale of searches should reflect the current threat, be proportionate to the risks faced by the organisation and site, and correspond with other security measures in place. It may be appropriate to implement a layered approach to your searches so that quick searches for large threats take place on the periphery of the site, with more detailed search procedures closer to critical

areas or assets.

Procedures to be followed during any search process will need to be outlined. This should include considering roles and responsibilities for all staff involved in the search process and those responsible for its management and oversight.

1.3 Implementation

All staff involved in carrying out searches should be fully trained in the site's search procedures including escalation and emergency response procedures. They should also understand the aims of the search and the site's specific detection priorities. As well as comprehensive initial training, staff should receive regular refresher training and be briefed if there are any changes to the search priorities or procedures. Where casual staff are used, it is particularly important that they are trained to understand the requirements and procedures at the specific site.

Consider the health and safety of staff conducting the searches and of anyone being searched. If any tools or equipment are to be used to aid search, make sure they address a defined requirement, are fit for purpose and are well maintained.

Once implemented the search process should be monitored and reviewed (regularly and in response to any incidents or changes) to ensure it continues to address the identified risks.

1.4 Actions on discovery of suspicious items

Clear procedures should be in place that set out the actions to take in the event that a suspicious item is discovered during a search. These are likely to include a resolution procedure, an escalation procedure and an emergency response procedure, with the exact steps to be taken depending on the nature of the item discovered, its location, and the context in which it is found. All personnel involved in carrying out searches or responding to any such incidents should be fully aware of these procedures.

2. Searching buildings and areas

Searches of a site or an event can be conducted as part of a daily good housekeeping routine. They should also be conducted in response to a specific threat (such as a breach in perimeter security, or

a bomb threat) and when there is a heightened or elevated response level.

- The way you search your site will depend on local circumstances and knowledge, but the overall objective is to make sure that the entire area, including grounds, are searched in a systematic and thorough manner, so that no part is left unchecked
- Consider dividing the site or venue into sectors for searching. If the site is organised into departments and sections, these should be identified as separate search sectors. Each sector must be a manageable size. Remember to include the following areas in your search plan: stairs, fire escapes, corridors, toilets, lifts, car parks, service areas, boiler houses and other areas outside that are within the perimeter
- It may be appropriate to define different search regimes for different areas or sectors, for example searching critical areas of a site more frequently than other areas
- Ideally, searches should be conducted in pairs to make sure searching is systematic and thorough. The staff nominated to carry out the search do not necessarily need to have expertise in explosives or other devices. They must simply be familiar with the place they are searching and what they are looking for. This may include items that are hidden, obviously suspicious or not typical of that environment
- Test and exercise your search process regularly. The searchers need to get a feel for the logical progression through their designated area or sector and the length of time this will take. They also need to be able to search without unduly alarming any visitors. The search process should be reviewed and action taken on any lessons learnt
- If evacuation is considered or implemented, then a search of the assembly areas, the routes to them and the surrounding area should also be considered where possible. Staff should be encouraged to be particularly vigilant of suspicious behaviour and/or items during invacuations and evacuations, and know how to immediately report them. If a decision to invacuate or evacuate a venue or event is taken, in response to an incident or threat, it may also be necessary to search prior to re-entering again to make sure it is safe

3. Searching people and their belongings

Searching people and their belongings at entry points can help reduce the likelihood of explosive devices, weapons, and other hazardous or prohibited items or materials being taken onto sites. Similarly, searching personnel as they exit can help reduce the risk of unauthorised removal of items and information.

Items that need to be prevented from entering and/or exiting the site should be defined and prioritised

so it is clear what the search process is aiming to detect.

- Consider the different groups of individuals that enter a site such as staff, visitors, contractors or the public, the different levels of risk each group presents, and whether they need to undergo different search processes
- Make sure you have policies and procedures in place for searching all groups of individuals who may attend your site. For example, children, vulnerable adults, people with reduced mobility and religious groups. Consider the provision of discreet search areas to cater for all needs
- Consider the arrival rate of people and volume of possessions and assess how this demand might vary at different times of day, seasonally, or for particular events. Make sure the search process is designed and resourced to deal with the maximum expected demand
- Consider the space required and optimum location for the search process. This should take into account the space required for any equipment, staff, resolution of searches and possible queues
- Make sure the search process is aligned and integrated with other aspects of the entry process and that it does not interfere with emergency exits
- Make sure the search area has the necessary infrastructure (e.g. power, lighting, tables and shelter)
- Prior notification about the search process (and any items that are prohibited from the site) and communication to people as they approach to encourage them to prepare, can help reduce delays and maximise visitor flow

4. Searching mail and delivers

See our mail handling section to learn more about screen post and what to look out for when receiving deliveries.

5. Searching vehicles

Controlling vehicles and occupants entering your site can significantly reduce the risk presented from vehicles. Measures may include checking driver and vehicle credentials; turning away unexpected visitors and deliveries; and using off-site search facilities for commercial vehicles. Once these measures are in place, consider what additional security benefits can be gained from searching vehicles for threats.

When considering searching vehicles, it is particularly important to be clear about the size and type of threats the organisation is concerned about, and the relative priority of these from a detection perspective.

There are a wide range of threats which would require very different approaches to search, for example:

- vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) – large explosive devices necessitating a vehicle for delivery
- under-vehicle improvised explosive devices (UVIEDs) – small explosive devices specifically targeting the vehicle's driver or other occupants
- small, portable improvised explosive devices or firearms and ammunition – where the vehicle is being used to transport the threat items through the site's secure perimeter (such items may be concealed within the vehicle, or within deliveries, personal bags, or other items contained within the vehicle)
- other items such as those related to crime or protest materials

Consideration should be given to the different types of individuals driving vehicles entering the premises such as staff, visitors, couriers, contractors, or the public. It may be considered appropriate, given differing risk profiles, for some vehicles (for example visitors as opposed to staff), or different sized vehicles, to undergo different search regimes. The risk posed by different groups of vehicles is likely to vary with the extent to which they are known whether their arrival is expected and where on the site the vehicles can gain access to.

The optimum location for a vehicle search area will typically be on or near the site's perimeter, and away from any of its key assets. Consider the space and infrastructure required for the vehicle search area taking account of requirements for shelter, lighting, communications infrastructure. There should be the capacity to turn away unwanted vehicles (i.e. a rejection lane) and sufficient queuing space to minimise the impact on public roads. Hostile Vehicle Mitigation should be used in the area to prevent vehicles driving through checks and into the site. Consider how any queues will be managed to reduce the impact of traffic build-up.

6. Further Information:

Organise your search planning processes with our Search Planning Checklist

Go to the NPSA's (formerly CPNI) Screening People and their Belongings webpage to learn about searching visitors and staff on your site.

Go to the NPSA's Screening Vehicles webpage to learn about what methods you can use to effectively search vehicles entering your site.

Go to BSI PAS 127:2014 for more information about search people and vehicles

Go to the Hostile Vehicle Mitigation (HVM) webpage webpage to learn what steps you can take to avoid threats from hostile vehicles.

KEYWORDS
SEARCH PLANNING
PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE PLACES
SECURITY
SECURITY MEASURES
SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOUR
PALS GUIDANCE
PALS
PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE LOCATIONS