Suspicious Item Assessment and Evacuation Decisions Training Course

4 – 8 January 2027
Amsterdam

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Programme Summary

Suspicious item assessment and evacuation decisions form the subject of this one-week training course for security, facility and operations managers, which ends with a site suspicious item response plan prepared by each participant. Organisations that host staff, visitors or mail flows face unattended bags, unexplained packages and threatening messages, where a poor decision causes harm or needless disruption. The programme combines structured indicator checks, risk reasoning and command exercises so that managers decide calmly and consistently. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme on suspicious item assessment and evacuation decisions.

The Business Case

Every false alarm that empties a building costs production, trading hours and public confidence, while every missed warning sign exposes people to injury. Managers who can tell an unattended item from a suspicious one, choose between evacuation and invacuation, and hand over cleanly to emergency services protect both safety and continuity.

- Business disruption: proportionate decisions reduce unnecessary evacuations and the hours of lost operation that follow them.
- Risk exposure: earlier recognition of indicators and correct cordons reduce the number of people near a hazardous item.
- Incident readiness: rehearsed roles and reporting shorten the time from discovery to a controlled scene and a complete handover.

Principles and Evidence Base

- Structured indicator assessment: a three-question check on whether an item is hidden, obviously suspicious and typical of its environment is used to separate lost property from items that warrant action.
- Risk assessment by likelihood and consequence: the programme applies this reasoning to location, crowd density and the credibility of a threat.
- Human factors and decision-making under stress: participants study how time pressure, bias and incomplete information affect judgement, and practise checklists that counter them.
- Incident command principles: clear roles, a single point of control and structured reporting are applied to cordons, evacuation and handover.

Intended Participants

- Managers who decide whether a building, venue or site is evacuated or kept in place.
- Professionals who write and maintain security procedures for premises and public spaces.
- Supervisors who oversee mailrooms, reception points or goods-in areas where unexplained items arrive.
- Leaders who coordinate with emergency services and brief senior executives during an incident.

The programme suits corporate security, facilities management, hospitality and events, and critical infrastructure operators.

Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to distinguish an unattended item from a suspicious item using structured indicator checks.
2. Participants will be able to evaluate threat messages and suspicious mail against recognised indicators.
3. Participants will be able to justify an evacuation, invacuation or cordon decision for a given location.
4. Participants will be able to design assembly points, cordon arrangements and communication controls for a site.
5. Participants will be able to construct a clear handover report for emergency services.
6. Participants will be able to prioritise improvements to a site suspicious item response plan after a review.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Threat Awareness and Suspicious Item Indicators

How are unattended and suspicious items told apart?

- Threat Landscape for Crowded Places
- Unattended Versus Suspicious Item Criteria
- Three-Question Indicator Check
- Suspicious Behaviour Indicators
- Lost Property Handling Procedure

Day 2: Mail, Packages and Threat Messages

How should suspicious mail and threat calls be assessed?

- Suspicious Package and Mail Indicators
- Mailroom Screening Arrangements
- Threat Call Checklist
- Written and Online Threat Evaluation
- Credibility Assessment Matrix

Day 3: Evacuation and Invacuation Decisions

When should people move away, stay in place or be relocated?

- Evacuation Versus Invacuation Criteria
- Cordon and Safe Distance Planning
- Assembly Point Selection
- Radio and Mobile Phone Controls
- Decision Log Template

Day 4: Command, Search and Handover

How is the scene controlled until emergency services arrive?

- Incident Roles and Control Point
- Premises Search Planning
- Emergency Services Handover Report
- Staff and Visitor Communication Scripts
- Recovery and Reoccupation Criteria

Day 5: Applying the Suspicious Item Response Plan

How do earlier sessions combine into a tested site plan?

- Site Indicator Check Application
- Timed Evacuation Decision Exercise
- Command and Handover Rehearsal
- Post-Incident Review Method
- Suspicious Item Response Plan Completion

Methodology

The principal method is simulation. Participants work through realistic discoveries in offices, venues, mailrooms and industrial sites, make time-bound decisions and record their reasoning in a decision log. Facilitators review each choice against the indicator check and command principles.

- Suggested activity: assess a set of photographed items and classify each as unattended or suspicious, with reasons.
- Suggested activity: handle a simulated threat call with the checklist and brief a manager on its credibility.
- Suggested activity: run a timed tabletop evacuation decision for a crowded venue and present the handover report.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes a site suspicious item response plan for their own premises. It contains an indicator checklist, decision criteria for evacuation and invacuation, cordon and assembly arrangements, communication controls, role cards and a handover report template. The plan can be adopted as a working procedure and used for staff briefings and drills.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is the suspicious item assessment programme suitable for managers without a security background?

Yes. It is designed for managers who make or support site decisions, and it assumes no specialist security or explosives knowledge.

Which model does suspicious item assessment training rest on?

It rests on a structured three-question indicator check, likelihood and consequence risk reasoning, human factors research on decisions under stress and general incident command principles.

How is the suspicious item response plan used at work?

You can adopt it as your site procedure, brief staff and security teams with it, and test it in drills.

How does suspicious item assessment training differ from a general security officer course?

It focuses on the manager's decisions: assessing items and threats, choosing evacuation or invacuation and commanding the scene. A security officer course concentrates on patrols, searches and day-to-day duty skills.