Duress Button Policy
University of Massachusetts Boston

Policy Name: UMass Boston Duress Button Policy

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1.0 Purpose

This policy is applicable to members of the University of Massachusetts Boston ("UMass Boston") who have met the criteria listed in the policy and have had a duress button installed at their workstation. The purpose of this policy is to establish university guidelines for the requirements for installation, and operation, and use of the duress alarm system on university sites. UMass Boston has law enforcement presence 24 hours a day monitoring the duress alarm system.

2.0 Background

UMass Boston utilizes duress alarms which allow community members to contact the UMass Boston Police Department (UMBPD) via silent alarm. Areas authorized for duress alarm installations are selected after meeting specific defined criteria as described below. Departments where duress alarms are installed will be required to participate in testing, training, and review of conditions resulting in the installation.

3.0 Definitions

<u>Duress Alarm/Button</u>: A button/device installed in a concealed location at a workspace, that notifies the UMB PD via silent alarm activation on the central monitoring station in the UMB PD Communication Center.

4.0 Procedures for Installation
4.1 Approval

Departments wishing to install a duress alarm will submit a request to the IT Service Desk at ITServiceDesk@umb.edu directed to telecom. The request will be reviewed by the Office of Emergency Management, working with UMass Boston Police Department as necessary. The requested location will be reviewed based on a threat assessment and criteria contained in this policy.

Criteria for consideration includes:

- Dean or Vice Chancellor must approve request
- Must be based upon objective threat assessment
- Drug dispensing
- Mental health counseling
- High volume cash collection points
- High Profile Threat Location

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- Isolated, after-hours operations with significant public contact
- Previous incidents of actual acts of violence

High traffic areas do not automatically qualify for a Duress Alarm. Additional threat assessment factors must be met.

4.2 Installation

Information Technology (IT), will complete a site survey of the location, review necessary cabling needs, and work with the Office of Emergency Management to select the duress button equipment and install. The installation will be in a location that is inconspicuous and not susceptible to being triggered accidentally while readily accessible to the user.

4.3 Funding

Departments requesting a duress button will be required to meet criteria listed above. Those who meet criteria will not be required to pay for duress button installation, or monthly fees associated with these buttons.

5.0 Testing/Training:

Student Affairs Technology Services (SATS), IT, and Emergency Management will coordinate with the end user to schedule annual testing in coordination with UMB PD. The alarm will be activated by the end user and notification will be received in the UMB PD Communications Center. Additional testing may be requested as needed. During this annual test, policy and procedure will be reviewed with the end user.

6.0 Maintenance/Monitoring

IP Monitor will alert via email to IT if a button has been unplugged or is not working. This is not a replacement for periodic testing which is required to ensure that a button is fully functional.

7.0 Activation

7.1 Activating the Duress Button

A user under immediate duress that would not be able to otherwise call 9-1-1 due to imminent physical harm, will activate the duress button. Activation triggers an emergency response by UMass Boston Police. If it is safe to do so, the activating party or another university member should call 9-1-1 to update UMBPD with key information. The calling party should remain on the line with the UMBPD and provide all requested information.

7.2 Law Enforcement Response

Once the duress alarm is activated, UMB PD will respond. UMB PD will treat all duress alarms as an emergency and will respond in a deliberate manner while ensuring officer safety.

7.3 False Activation

In the event of an accidental activation, the user shall notify UMB PD (617-287-7777) immediately. Please inform the Dispatch Officer of your name, location of their workstation, and the reason for accidental activation, so the proper response can be determined. Improper use or tampering with this system is a serious

violation of Massachusetts law (MGL 269 Section 14) and university policy. False activation may result in disciplinary action. Violators are subject to immediate arrest, substantial fines, and imprisonment.

7.4 Removal of Duress Buttons Due to Misuse

If an end user activates three false alarms, the duress alarm assigned to that individual or their department may be deactivated following a review conducted by the UMB Police Department and IT Services. To request reactivation, the individual or department must complete remedial training on the proper use of the duress button. Department supervisors will be notified of any false alarm activations within their area. Additionally, if a duress button is tampered with, the department will be responsible for covering the cost of replacement.

8.0 Review

IT and Emergency Management will annually review all currently installed duress buttons and determine if all locations still meet the criteria listed within this policy. If criteria is no longer met due to change, a letter shall be sent to the Dean/Director of the department giving notice the equipment will be disconnected and removed from service. The removal will be coordinated with the UMBPD, Emergency Management, and IT.

9.0 Responsibilities of Personnel

Personnel who wish to have a duress alarm device installed shall complete the following steps:

1. Submit a duress button request to the IT Service Desk at ITServiceDesk@umb.edu directed to telecom.
2. Be approved for a duress alarm by Emergency Management, working as necessary UMB PD
3. Receive training during install and copy of policy which can be found online at https://www.umb.edu/preparedness/documents-plans-policies/
4. Understand the response procedures once the alarm is activated
5. Participate in annual testing
6. Notify the IT Service Desk at ITServiceDesk@umb.edu or 617-287-5220 if you have issues with duress button, or if office space is relocated, furniture/desk is moved, or the duress button is no longer needed

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Office of Emergency Management, UMB PD, SATS, and IT with recommended changes forwarded to the Vice Chancellor of Administration and Finance for consideration.