OCHC bomb scare not deliberate

Christopher Johnson

A suspicious device found inside the Oneida Community Health Center (OCHC) on Tuesday, Nov. 1, led to the evacuation of all employees and patients while the Oneida Police Department (OPD) and Brown and Outagamie County Bomb Squad were called in to investigate.

At approximately 8:30 a.m. clinic staff found an electronic device with an object glued to the top of it and wires protruding from it. All OCHC staff and patients were removed from the facility for precautionary measures while the bomb squad investigated.

“Upon the bomb squad responding and the evacuation of the building it was determined that the device was simply a radio that had some additional batteries glued onto it,” OPD Chief Rich Van Boxtel said. “It was left out by the cleaning crew the night before for use by them as a matter of convenience so they didn’t have to plug something in. There were additional batteries on it because the batteries inside it weren’t very good so they rigged it so it had an external battery on it.”

While the device did look suspicious there was never any real threat or intent to scare staff or patients at the facility by any members of the cleaning crew. “This was an exercise in due diligence by the health center staff in finding something suspicious and reporting it,” Van Boxtel said. “It did look like a suspicious device but at the end of the day it was simply a radio and there was never any intent to scare anybody and nobody was at risk of being harmed.”

“Our evacuation procedures were implemented immediately and we had everyone including patients cleared from the building within two to three minutes,” Comprehensive Health Division Director Debbie Danforth said. “This was the first time this type of thing has happened but we have our emergency procedures in place that were followed so we’re very happy that everything went well. It’s better to be safe than sorry.”

By approximately 10:30 a.m. the bomb squad had removed the device and given the all-clear for the OCHC to resume their normal daily operations. The pharmacy reopened shortly thereafter and patients were being seen as scheduled by noon. Patients with scheduled appointments who were affected by the evacuation will be contacted to reschedule those appointments.