

Mat, Here are some other possibilities for a heading and a few changes to the story.

Better Safe than Sorry
Generation Gap Dangers
Toon in Toon out

You know how kids like to discuss little controversies? “Is so” and “Is not” they argue, each with certainty that he or she is correct. Eventually, as they grow, they gain insight and as they do, their minds change on some of these matters. For instance, I can remember discussing fire drills with my brother. At one point I could not understand why it would be against the law or wrong to call out “Fire!” when there wasn’t one. Later, at an older age, I could clearly see just how dangerous it could be to put people into a panic without true cause.

One year ago, the Halifax town hall was in a bit of a panic. We were told to evacuate the building so that emergency responders could check out a suspicious package. The package arrived with all the ordinary mail. As someone from the clerk’s office proceeded with sorting the mail, she could not help notice that one package was odd. In a town hall or postal office, with frequent reminders of terrorism, unusual packages are the equivalent of suspicious package.

The package was, indeed, suspicious. It was a clear tube filled with shredded paper. It was addressed to the police chief, was sent to the town hall rather than the police department and it did not have a return address.

When the police department was notified, it was decided that the town hall should evacuate and the Fire and Police Department would determine whether or not the suspicious package was a bomb.

When we were told to evacuate, we did so in an orderly fashion. After all, we have practiced this from time to time in fire drills. And yet, despite the practice, the woman in front of me broke both of her ankles as she stepped down off that last step into the frozen ground. We weren’t rushing. It was just that the ground was frozen and lumpy and she lost her balance. I saw her legs crumple from under her and I heard her ankle make an awful crunching noise.

What was the cause of this injury? Did our Fire and Police Departments go overboard in their response? Or was the injury a result of the marketing person who had the not so bright idea of advertising tax preparation inside a tube filled with shredded paper? When the tube was opened and the shredded paper pushed aside, you could finally read the offer that you could shred your tax filing documents by allowing someone else to prepare them for you.

Does this scenario sound familiar? Doesn’t it remind you of the controversial lit-up panels placed around Boston recently? The panels were advertising a cartoon but to those who were unfamiliar with the image, they were unusual objects placed in public places without authorization. Once noticed, these objects appeared suspicious and in today’s climate of heightened awareness, suspicious objects call for action. With their swift response, Massachusetts demonstrated that training pays off. If they had been bombs, we’d be thanking them for saving us.

My daughter, who is in college, loves the cartoon. (I am not willing to give them more advertisement by naming it.) She thinks we might benefit by checking it out and trying to keep in touch with young people by watching more of what they watch. Keeping up with young people’s taste in cartoons, graphic designs, catch phrases and music? Understanding the world through their eyes? Is that even possible? I don’t know but it is looking like homeland security might have to add it to their list of goals and training requirements. I can’t wait to see the acronyms. TMR = The Moon Rules. EEM = Explosion of Extraordinary Magnitude. Hmmm.... Responding to

suspicious packages and potential bombs is sounding moresane than ever.