# Heathrow Terminal 3 evacuated over suspicious item, disrupting key transport links



Thousands of passengers at London Heathrow Airport faced potential travel chaos after Terminal 3 was evacuated due to reports of a suspicious item discovered in a passenger's baggage. The incident prompted immediate police and emergency services response, drawing attention to ongoing concerns surrounding airport security and passenger safety.

As the heart of operations for several major airlines, including Virgin Atlantic, Delta, Emirates, and Cathay Pacific, Terminal 3 typically buzzes with activity, especially during peak travel times in the afternoon. The nature of the suspicious item, however, remains unclear; it was either flagged during a security search or found in the arrivals area. A spokesperson for Heathrow stated, “This afternoon, our teams responded to a potentially suspicious article in Terminal 3. As a precaution, a small part of Terminal 3 was temporarily evacuated while the authorities conducted the appropriate checks. The issue has now been safely resolved.” They apologised for any disruption experienced by travellers.

Alongside the terminal's evacuation, services on the Heathrow Express and the Elizabeth Line, both of which run beneath Terminal 3, were significantly affected. Reports indicated that over 20 trains were cancelled, though some cancellations were already in place due to a prior rail defect. Fortunately, the adjacent Heathrow Central station on the Piccadilly Line remained operational and unaffected.

This incident echoes a similar occurrence in November 2024, when Gatwick Airport's South Terminal was closed following the discovery of a suspicious item. That situation led to extensive delays for thousands of passengers, although later it was clarified that the traveller and their item were permitted to continue their journey. Such events highlight the fine balance airports must maintain between ensuring security and minimising inconvenience to passengers. Under current regulations, airlines are obliged to provide alternative travel arrangements or accommodations in the event of significant disruptions such as a bomb scare.

Heathrow maintains a history of prioritising security. Prior incidents have tested this, such as the evacuation of Terminal 4 in September 2023 after the discovery of a suspicious package, which on that occasion also involved armed police and led to temporary disruptions. Similarly, in March 2019, the airport dealt with three suspicious packages across major transportation hubs, which ultimately were linked to a larger investigation involving improvised explosive devices. Authorities responded swiftly, indicative of their commitment to rigorous safety measures at a critical global transport nexus.

As threats continue to evolve, and with recent breakthroughs in surveillance and threat detection, security officials remain on high alert. Passengers are routinely reminded to stay attuned to updates from their airlines during such incidents. This vigilance not only reassures the public but also plays a pivotal role in overall safety strategies at major airports like Heathrow.

Notably, past experiences like the decorative grenade incident in January 2021, which led to the evacuation of Terminal 2, further stress the importance of compliance with security protocols at airports. The swift police intervention in that case emphasised the need for all travellers to be mindful of airport regulations, ensuring public safety remains paramount.

As this latest incident unfolds, passengers and authorities alike will continue to navigate the complex landscape of airport security, where the balance between thorough checks and seamless travel experiences is critical.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/heathrow-terminal-3-evacuated-b2760185.html), [[3]](https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/uk-police-checking-report-of-suspicious-item-at-heathrow-airport-489866)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/heathrow-terminal-3-evacuated-b2760185.html), [[4]](https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/uk-news/2023/09/13/heathrow-terminal-4-evacuated-due-to-suspicious-package/), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/may/05/heathrow-briefly-suspends-flights-after-suspicious-item-found)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/heathrow-terminal-3-evacuated-b2760185.html), [[5]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/london-security-alert-three-suspicious-packages-found-at-waterloo-station-and-heathrow-and-london-city-airports-were-explosive-devices-a4083506.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/may/05/heathrow-briefly-suspends-flights-after-suspicious-item-found), [[3]](https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/uk-police-checking-report-of-suspicious-item-at-heathrow-airport-489866)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hayes_substation_fire), [[7]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/heathrow-evacuation-terminal-2-grenade-b899969.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/heathrow-terminal-3-evacuated-b2760185.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/may/05/heathrow-briefly-suspends-flights-after-suspicious-item-found> - In May 2017, Heathrow Airport's Terminal 3 was briefly evacuated after a suspicious item was detected during a luggage X-ray. The Metropolitan Police collaborated with airport authorities to investigate the incident, which led to temporary flight suspensions and significant passenger delays. The airport's spokesperson emphasised the importance of passenger safety and security during such events. Passengers were advised to check with their airlines for updates on flight statuses. The incident underscored the airport's commitment to stringent security measures to ensure traveller safety.
3. <https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/uk-police-checking-report-of-suspicious-item-at-heathrow-airport-489866> - In May 2017, British police investigated a report of a suspicious item detected during a baggage check at London's Heathrow Airport. The discovery led to the temporary closure of one of its terminals. The Metropolitan Police worked alongside airport authorities to assess the situation, ensuring the safety of passengers and staff. The incident highlighted the airport's proactive approach to security, swiftly addressing potential threats to maintain public safety. Passengers were advised to stay informed through official channels for updates on the situation.
4. <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/uk-news/2023/09/13/heathrow-terminal-4-evacuated-due-to-suspicious-package/> - In September 2023, Heathrow Airport's Terminal 4 was evacuated following the discovery of a suspicious package. Armed police were dispatched to investigate the reports, leading to temporary disruptions for passengers. The incident underscored the airport's commitment to passenger safety, with authorities taking swift action to address potential threats. Passengers were advised to stay updated through official channels for information on the situation. The event highlighted the ongoing vigilance and security measures in place at major transportation hubs to ensure public safety.
5. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/london-security-alert-three-suspicious-packages-found-at-waterloo-station-and-heathrow-and-london-city-airports-were-explosive-devices-a4083506.html> - In March 2019, three suspicious packages were discovered at major London transport hubs, including Heathrow Airport. The packages were assessed by specialist officers and found to be small improvised explosive devices capable of igniting a small fire when opened. The Metropolitan Police Counter Terrorism Command launched an investigation, treating the incidents as a linked series. The event led to heightened security measures at transport stations and airports, with authorities working to ensure public safety and prevent potential threats.
6. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hayes_substation_fire> - In March 2025, a fire near the Hayes substation disrupted train services to and from Heathrow Airport, including all Heathrow Express services and parts of the Elizabeth line. The incident led to the evacuation of at least 150 people and caused power outages affecting over 16,000 homes. The National Energy System Operator conducted an investigation, ruling out suspicious activity as the cause, though the root cause of the fire remained unidentified. The event highlighted the vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure and the importance of prompt response to such incidents.
7. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/heathrow-evacuation-terminal-2-grenade-b899969.html> - In January 2021, a teenager was arrested at Heathrow Airport after a 'decorative grenade' was found in his luggage, leading to the evacuation of Terminal 2. Police responded promptly, and the item was investigated, determining it posed no threat. The 19-year-old was arrested for carrying a prohibited item in an aerodrome. The incident caused temporary disruption for passengers, with the airport advising travellers to check with their airlines for updates. The event underscored the importance of adhering to airport security regulations to ensure public safety.