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Jeff Haller/DN

Fire Inspector Jim Ellis of the Lincoln Bureau of Fire Prevention laughs after detonating a suitcase at 16th and O streets Thursday night. Below: Lincoln Police Officer Dale Burrage looks at what was left of the suitcase.

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**Squad detonates strange suitcase**

By Jeff Zeleny  
Editor

Jim Ellis stayed on the job a little longer than he anticipated Thursday at the Lincoln Bureau of Fire Prevention.

A mysterious green, plastic suitcase on the corner of 16th and O streets in downtown Lincoln brought Ellis back to work about 7:15 p.m. Thursday night.

Police officers noticed the suitcase about 7 p.m. and labeled it suspicious, Ellis said. Crime scene tape was hung and traffic was blocked off to five city blocks.

With a yellow, 16-gauge wire in hand, Ellis slowly walked from the command post at 16th and N streets to the suitcase. After connecting the detonating cord to the suitcase, Ellis quickly returned to the safe zone.

About 8:12 p.m., "fire in the hole"

was called and a loud explosion scattered remnants of the suitcase outside the state office parking garage.

Ellis gave a smile of relief as firefighters removed his green protective bomb helmet.

"It's not a good feeling, I'll tell you," said Ellis, describing his experience.

Small crowds gathered about two blocks from the suitcase and watched it explode.

Many people attending the Thursday night Nebraska Builders Home and Garden Show at Pershing Auditorium, 226 Centennial Mall South, walked past the spectacle and applauded firefighters after the detonation.

The suitcase was empty, police and fire inspectors learned after examining it. Green plastic pieces littered the 16th Street sidewalk.



"Whoomp, there it is," Ellis said while holding the destroyed silver suitcase frame.

The streets were reopened to traffic about 8:20 p.m.

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