

**Marshall, Kathy**

**From:** ||DA ARC MOS  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 05, 2009 4:24 PM  
**To:** #DA RO FOs All Dallas Region; #DA RO Comp All ORC; #DA RO All Center Directors  
**Subject:** Reminder of Management Responsibilities for Handling Suspicious Mail or Biohazard Materials  
**Attachments:** Suspect Pkg Advisory.doc; Proper Handling of Suspicious Mail and Materials.doc

Managers,

This message provides reminders on the handling of suspicious mail, packages, and materials received in SSA facilities. While most threats of dangerous materials and contamination are eventually proven to be unfounded, SSA managers and employees should choose to err on the side of caution. Every report of suspicious mail or biological contaminants should be taken seriously and handled effectively. Advisories from GSA and CDC, previously issued to all SSA offices, clearly state that suspicious materials **should not be moved, touched, or shaken, and the area around the suspicious item should be isolated** in order to limit possible exposure.

All managers are responsible for ensuring the following actions are taken:

- All employees must be instructed on the proper handling and notification processes required in the case of suspicious packages or materials. Offices should conduct an exercise or "role-play" of a suspicious package incident to reinforce understanding of proper response steps. Employees should be provided with the two attached handouts: the CDC Health Advisory (October, 2001) and Proper Handling of Suspicious Mail and Materials. Stress to all employees that suspicious material/packages should not be moved, touched, or shaken. These handouts on the handling of possible biological hazards reflect the recommendations from expert sources, including the CDC.
- Field office management should share this same material with your on-site contract guard. While Federal Protective Service has been made aware of improper guard responses in the above incidents, and has committed to provide refresher training, we are asking that you also share with your on-site guard the proper handling procedures.
- All offices should display the US Postal Service "Letter and Package Bomb Indicator" poster (USPS Poster 84) in their mail receiving area. This poster may be found and printed from the website [http://www.usps.com/news/\\_pdf/poster.pdf](http://www.usps.com/news/_pdf/poster.pdf).

In responding to suspicious materials or a biological threat situation, management and supervisory staff should first notify local emergency authorities for response and assistance. Second, the Federal Protective Service should be notified by calling their emergency 24-hour response center at 1-877-437-7411.

- Local SSA management should notify their immediate next line management (i.e., field offices should notify their Area Director Office).
- Second line management should notify the Center for Materiel Resources (CMR) and the

Center for Security and Integrity (CSI).

- CMR and CSI will coordinate notification of the Office on the Inspector General (OIG) at the Regional level or at the OIG field office level.

Until either the emergency response or law enforcement personnel arrive and take charge, the local management official is responsible for controlling the response action and directing the activities of the potentially exposed individuals. A secured perimeter should be established at a safe distance from the room or scene of the assumed release of contaminated material. In addition, this is considered a crime scene and the protection of evidence must be ensured.

Once the law enforcement or emergency response personnel arrive at the scene, their instructions should be followed precisely, e.g., turning off the heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system. The responding law enforcement organization will, if necessary, contact the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which has exclusive jurisdiction for investigation activities and the handling of evidence. Collectively, these response personnel will conduct a thorough risk assessment through direct testing and investigative processes.

When a report of possible exposure is received days after the date of the actual event, securing and controlling the scene may not be necessary. However, reporting the potential exposure to the emergency services or law enforcement entity, line management, and the OIG is still applicable and will lead to an investigation and possible testing. In this case, the local management official should assist and cooperate as requested by the representative of the responding organization.

If you have any questions on physical security procedures, please call Cedric McKenzie at 214-767-3093, Chad Long at 214-767-3304, or Tom Tijerina at 214-767-1448 in Management and Operations Support, Center for Materiel Resources.

Vita Casavantes-G  
ARC MOS

This is an official

# CDC Health Advisory

Distributed via Health Alert Network    October 12, 2001, 21:00 EDT (9:00 PM EDT)

## HOW TO HANDLE ANTHRAX AND OTHER BIOLOGICAL AGENT THREATS

Many facilities in communities around the country have received anthrax threat letters. Most were empty envelopes; some have contained powdery substances. The purpose of these guidelines is to recommend procedures for handling such incidents.

### DO NOT PANIC

1. Anthrax organisms can cause infection in the skin, gastrointestinal system, or the lungs. To do, so the organism must be rubbed into abraded skin, swallowed, or inhaled as a fine, aerosolized mist. Disease can be prevented after exposure to the anthrax spores by early treatment with the appropriate antibiotics. Anthrax is not spread from one person to another person.
2. For anthrax to be effective as a covert agent, it must be aerosolized into very small particles. This is difficult to do, and requires a great deal of technical skill and special equipment. If these small particles are inhaled, life-threatening lung infection can occur, but prompt recognition and treatment are effective.

### Suspicious unopened letter or package marked with a threatening message such as "ANTHRAX".

1. **Do not shake, open or empty the contents** of any suspicious envelope or package.
2. **PLACE** the envelope or package in a plastic bag or some other type of container to prevent leakage of contents.
3. If you do not have any container, then **COVER** the envelope or package with anything (e.g., clothing, paper, trash can, etc.) and do not remove this cover.
4. Then **LEAVE** the room and **CLOSE** the door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering (i.e., keep others away).
5. **WASH** your hands with **soap and water** to prevent spreading any powder to your face.
6. What to do next...
  - If you are at **work**, then report the incident to your building security official or an available supervisor who should notify police and other authorities.
  - If you are at **home**, then report the incident to local police.
7. **LIST** all people who were in the room or area when this suspicious letter or package was recognized. Give this list to both the local public health authorities and law enforcement officials for follow-up investigations and advice.

**How likely is it that someone would receive anthrax or other terrorist-related biological agents in the mail?**

Data from the US Postal Service shows that over 200 billion pieces of mail are delivered each year. During the last year, of these billions of pieces of mail, they only received approximately 60 threats or hoaxes which included anthrax, hoof and mouth disease, the Klingerman virus hoax and others.

Local, state, and Federal health and emergency program officials are prepared to deal with terrorist activities involving release of anthrax spores. The Postal Service is coordinating with these officials to ensure quick and effective response to any such activities. The remote, but real, possibility that anthrax will be introduced into the mail stream requires that the above outlined procedures be strictly followed.

**What constitutes a "suspicious parcel"?**

Some typical characteristics Postal Inspectors have detected over the years, which ought to trigger suspicion, include parcels that:

- are unexpected or from someone unfamiliar to you.
- are addressed to someone no longer with your organization or are otherwise outdated.
- have no return address, or have one that can't be verified as legitimate.
- are of unusual weight, given their size, or are lopsided or oddly shaped.
- are marked with restrictive endorsements, such as "Personal" or "Confidential."
- have protruding wires, strange odors or stains.
- show a city or state in the postmark that doesn't match the return address.

If you encounter a suspicious looking mail piece(s), follow the procedures outlined and report it to your supervisor/manager immediately.

## **Proper Handling of Suspicious Mail and Materials**

This information and guidance should be used in the event of a possible encounter with a biological or chemical substance or other contaminant when opening mail or packages.

- All offices should display the US Postal Service "Letter and Package Bomb Indicator" poster (USPS Poster 84) in their mail receiving area.
- All offices should review their mail receiving and handling procedures to ensure compliance with AIMS MRM 02.02.04.D.
- At least once a year, training should be provided to all employees on proper recognition and handling of suspicious packages.
- Handling of suspicious packages is discussed in AIMS 11.03.08. Additional information may be obtained from your local USPS Postmaster.

### **Protective Mail Handling Procedures:**

The information below provides guidance on how employees identify suspicious mail and instructs them on what to do should they receive a suspicious letter or package. Employees should:

- Protect yourself from threats by staying alert to any unusual characteristics of mail or packages.
- Look for strange odors, stains, or leaking substances or a return address different from the postmark location.
- Identify letters marked "Personal" or to be opened by a specific individual, unprofessional looking letters or packages, and excessive postage.
- Handle and open mail gently. Wash your hands after opening mail and always prior to eating.
- Identify possible contaminated mail and packages which contain powders, dust, dirt or moist material. Look for items that are not in keeping with what is expected.

### **If you receive a suspicious letter or package, you should:**

- Respond to possible exposure by staying calm to help minimize the exposure.
- Do not open, shake or empty the contents of any suspicious envelope or package.
- Do not breathe in dust which might have been discharged by opening the letter.
- Do not smell the substance.

- Lay the letter down gently.
- Keep your hands away from your face and eyes.
- Contain the threat and cover it with something, gently to avoid distributing the agent.

**If employees receive a suspicious letter or package, they should:**

- Respond to possible exposure by staying calm to minimize exposure.
- Not open, shake or empty the contents of any suspicious envelope or package.
- Not breathe in dust, which might have been discharged by opening the letter.
- Not smell the substance.
- Lay the letter or package down gently. Keep their hands away from their faces and eyes. Be aware that other items on the work surface may now be contaminated and avoid contact with these items as well. **DO NOT** try to clean up the powder. If possible cover the spilled contents immediately (e.g., paper, trashcan);
- Then **LEAVE** the room and **CLOSE** the door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering;
- Contact the nearest supervisor immediately, or in that person's absence a fellow employee, if there was direct contact with a possible biological/chemical material;
  1. Shut off air handling system to room if possible;
  2. **WASH** hands with soap and water;
  3. **REMOVE** heavily contaminated clothing as soon as possible and place in a plastic bag, or sealed container.
  4. Shower with soap and water as soon as possible. *Do not use bleach or other disinfectant on your skin.*

**Management Responsibilities**

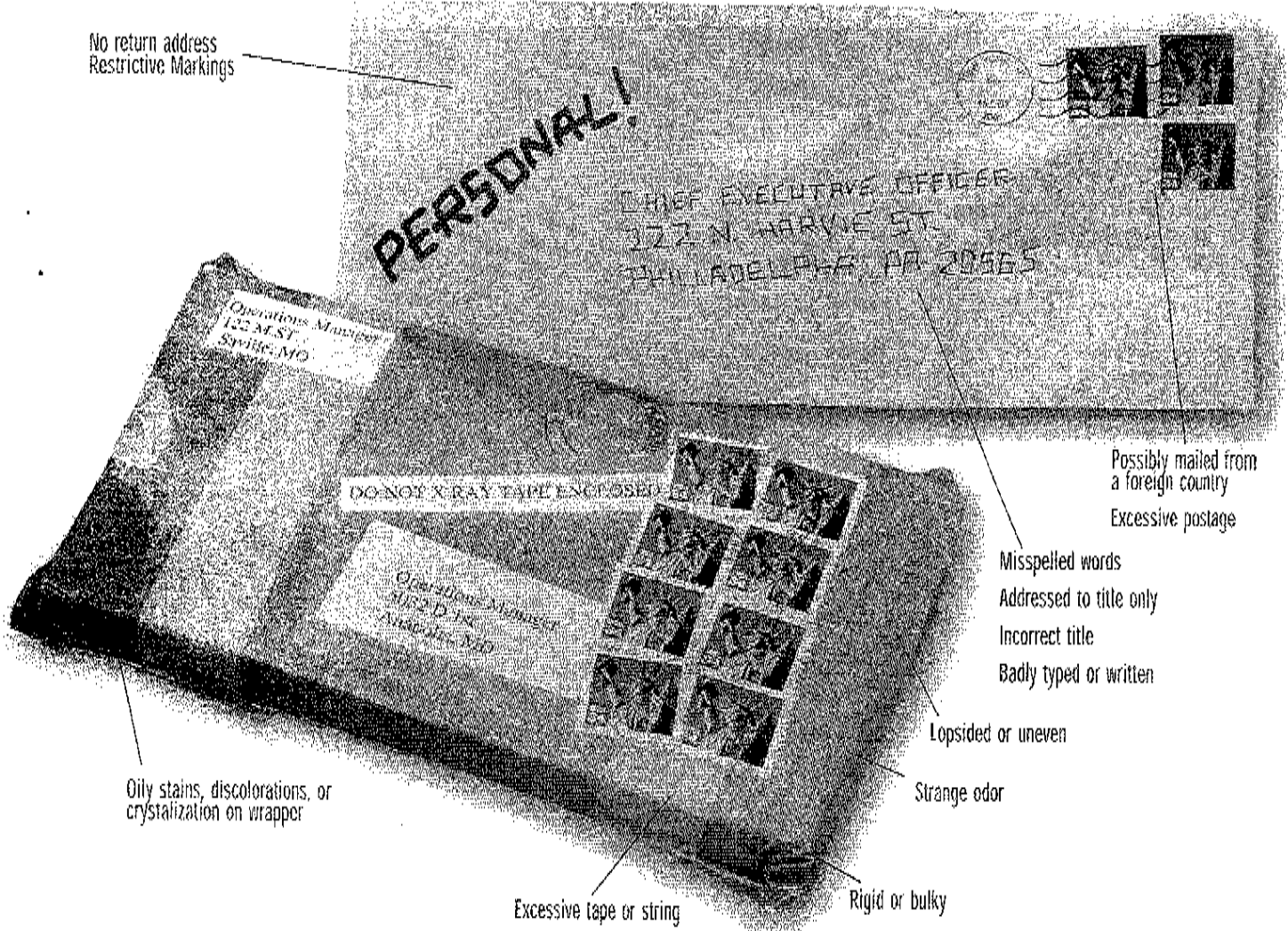
If an employee reports an incident of possible exposure to a biological or chemical contaminant, the on-site management official is responsible for notifying authorities in the following order of priority:

1. The appropriate emergency response entity, e.g., 911, Local Law Enforcement/Fire Department/Emergency Medical Service as designated in the facility Physical Security Action Plan (PSAP).
2. The applicable law enforcement organization that has jurisdiction for the facility. It is either the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Protective Service or a local police or Sheriff's department. The designated agency and its contact information are to be identified in the SAP.
3. Next level line management (i.e. field offices should notify the Area Director Office)



# SUSPICIOUS MAIL ALERT

## If you receive a suspicious letter or package:



- 1** Handle with care. Don't shake or bump.
- 2** Isolate it immediately
- 3** Don't open, smell, touch or taste.
- 4** Treat it as suspect. Call local law enforcement authorities

### If a parcel is open and/or a threat is identified . . .

**For a Bomb:**  
Evacuate Immediately  
Call Police  
Contact Postal Inspectors  
Call Local Fire Department/HAZMAT Unit

**For Radiological:**  
Limit Exposure - Don't Handle  
Evacuate Area  
Shield Yourself From Object  
Call Police  
Contact Postal Inspectors  
Call Local Fire Department/HAZMAT Unit

**For Biological or Chemical:**  
Isolate - Don't Handle  
Evacuate Immediate Area  
Wash Your Hands With Soap and Warm Water  
Call Police  
Contact Postal Inspectors  
Call Local Fire Department/HAZMAT Unit