

Suspicious Packages

Screening for suspicious letters or packages:

A concern of many is the receipt of a letter or package containing explosives, anthrax spores or other biological agents. Many threats targeting individuals or departments can frequently be controlled by screening of materials and by following the procedures listed below. Responding Public Safety agencies have plans in place to deal with these types of threats. Following the procedures below will activate those plans and promote the highest level of safety while minimizing the disruption associated with these incidents.

Common features of threatening letters/packages are:

- No return address
- Hand written or poorly typed address
- Misspelling of common words
- Restrictive markings such as "Confidential", "Personal", etc.
- Excessive weight and/or feel of a powdery or foreign substance

If a letter or package exhibits any of these warning clues, **DO NOT OPEN IT**. No one is at risk provided there is nothing leaking from the package. No decontamination or treatment is necessary. Call Security or the Police Department to report the letter and tell the call taker that the envelope or package has not been opened and there is no substance leaking out. Follow the instructions of law enforcement personnel.

Biological threat background information

Anthrax is a disease caused by bacteria called *Bacillus anthracis*. The form of the disease that health authorities are concerned that a bioterrorist attack might produce is inhalational anthrax. Inhalational anthrax occurs when a person breathes in anthrax spores. As early as a day or two after exposure or as late as seven weeks afterward, the spores develop into bacteria and begin to grow rapidly and the victim develops fever, has difficulty breathing and feels miserable. Death typically occurs within a few days after these symptoms if the person doesn't receive medical treatment. It is believed that antibiotics can stop the disease if they are taken at the time the anthrax bacteria begin to grow or very soon thereafter. Vaccination against anthrax is not available to the general public.

Direct person-to-person spread of anthrax is extremely unlikely, if it occurs at all. Therefore, there is no need to immunize or treat acquaintances of an anthrax infected patient, such as; family, friends, or coworkers, unless they were also exposed to the same source of infection.

In the event of a bioterrorist attack, health authorities would conduct a rapid investigation, determine the place and time of the release, and identify individuals who need antibiotics. The federal government has stockpiled antibiotics for large-scale distribution in the event of a bioterrorist attack.

Threats involving Weapons of Mass Destruction (biological, chemical, or nuclear agents) is a FEDERAL offense.

The above information was collected from;

- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Anthrax Fact Sheet (<http://www.bt.cdc.gov>)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Domestic Preparedness, Template Anthrax Threat Advisory

If you receive AND OPEN a package, letter, or note threatening anthrax contamination or other suspect substance:

REMAIN CALM – Although any threatened use of biological agent must be treated as though it is real, experience has demonstrated that these are likely to be a HOAX. If the suspected biological agent is reported as anthrax, be assured that it is NOT contagious from person to person, and that treatment is available and effective if administered before the onset of symptoms.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO

1. If it is a package or letter that you have opened, set it down gently at the location where you first read it. You may place the envelope and contents in a zip-lock style plastic bag if one is available. If it is a note that you happen to find, LEAVE IT ALONE! Then move to an area that will minimize your exposure to others. If possible, **wash your hands with soap and water**. Avoid unnecessary contact with others, and remain in the area.
2. Contact Security and the Police Department
3. Close doors and windows and turn off any fans in the area of the letter/note.
4. Do not allow others into the area. If anyone enters, they should stay until instructed to leave by Security or other emergency personnel responders.
5. Exposure does not mean that you will become sick. Health responders will provide specific information and instructions.
6. Faculty or staff persons who are concerned about their health as a result of a workplace event should complete an Initial Statement. The Template may be located on the CCC website at; K:\Security\Security Forms.

WHAT YOU SHOULD NOT DO

1. Do not pass the letter or note to others to look at.

2. Do not move the letter or note.

3. Do not disturb any contents in the letter or note. Handling the letter may only spread the substance inside and increase the chances of it getting into the air.

4. Do not ignore the threat; it must be treated as real until properly evaluated.