



Title: Biological, Chemical & Radiological Threats Received in the Mail

Purpose

This Safety Directive addresses concerns and provides guidance regarding biological, chemical and radiological terrorist acts committed through the mail. This Safety Directive includes information on precautionary steps a Department can take if suspicious mail or mail packages are encountered by employees. Following these guidelines can minimize the risk of contact with certain harmful biological, chemical and radiological agents that may be present in the mail.

Introduction

Employees responsible for the opening or distribution of mail should be guided by precautions set forth in this Directive. These precautions and procedures include guidance from the Philadelphia Police Department Homeland Security Unit; Philadelphia Fire Department Hazmat Unit; Philadelphia Department of Public Health; the United States Postal Service and the Centers for Disease Control.

Definitions

Biological – Any substance involving a disease organism, such as smallpox, botulinum toxin, anthrax or ricin.

Chemical – Any substance designed or intended to cause death or serious bodily injury through the release, dissemination, or impact of toxic or poisonous chemicals, or their precursors, such as mustard gas, nerve agents and sarin gas.

Radiological – Any substance designed to release radiation.

Responsibilities

Building Management - Building Management will become a part of the communication process during an incident involving suspicious mail or mail packages. Building Management will assist in providing any pertinent information required in the investigation with regard to the property, employees and reasons why the incident occurred if known. In major incidents, Building Management may become a part of the unified command structure. The Building Management representative should be an individual with express knowledge of the building's HVAC systems, power plants, structure, layout, etc.

Manager / Supervisor on Duty – The Manager/Supervisor on Duty will be responsible for initiating the call to 9-1-1 and providing guidance to employees on the proper procedure to follow when suspicious mail or mail packages are discovered. The Manager/Supervisor on Duty will also assist in providing any pertinent information required in the investigation to authorities.

Employees – Employees are responsible for following the procedures set forth in this Safety

Directive #P-9. This responsibility includes notifying the Manager/Supervisor on Duty of any suspicious mail or mail packages immediately.

Procedures

Preparations for Opening Mail and Mail Packages

1. If possible, use an isolated or controlled area when opening mail and mail packages.
2. An employee should be aware of the Manager/Supervisor on duty who is available to assist should there be any problems or concerns with the mail.
3. Have disposable powderless nitrile gloves available for employee use.

Opening Mail & Mail Packages

1. Pay attention to the mail and mail packages that are received, noticing any indications of suspicious conditions. Possible indicators of suspicious mail and mail packages include the following characteristics/conditions:
 - a. Mail that is addressed to someone no longer part of your organization or is otherwise outdated.
 - b. Mail that has no return address, or has one that can't be verified as legitimate.
 - c. Mail that has a threatening message such as "ANTHRAX" or "Americans will die".
 - d. Mail that is of unusual weight, given its size, or is lopsided, oddly shaped or padded.
 - e. Mail that is marked with restrictive endorsements, such as "Personal" or "Confidential".
 - f. Mail that has protruding wires, strange odors, and/or stains.
 - g. Mail that shows a city or state in the postmark that doesn't match the return address.
2. *Appendix A* contains the United States Postal Service guidance on suspicious mail and mail packages.
3. Those employees responsible for opening large quantities of mail and mail packages should use a letter opener and should wear protective gloves. It is recommended that employees wear a powderless nitrile glove to avoid latex allergy problems.

Response to Suspicious Mail or Mail Packages

1. The initial response after a call to 9-1-1 will dispatch a Philadelphia Police Patrol Officer from the local district of occurrence and/or the Philadelphia Fire Department Hazmat Unit.
 - a. It is expected that the facility have a maintenance or building management representative with knowledge of the building mechanics and access to the building available to meet responding Police and Fire Department personnel to provide information about the facility layout, ventilation and operation.
2. Police Department response includes the following:
 - a. Upon arrival, the Police Officer will gather as much information as possible with regard to the suspect object(s).
 - b. The responding Police Officer will then notify police radio to make notifications regarding Police response. Depending on the circumstances as well as the object and threat level, the appropriate response will then follow.
 - c. If it is determined that the mail or mail packages are in fact suspect, the responding Police Officer(s) will notify Police Homeland Security via police/fire radio.

3. The Fire Department Hazmat Unit holds primary jurisdiction in the City for these types of incidents. The Hazmat Unit will provide the following services and support:
 - a. Assess the scene and possible need for decontamination and/or emergency medical assistance.
 - b. Conduct testing on site to determine the nature of any suspect biological, chemical, or radiological materials in their mobile lab truck.
 - i. If the suspect material is found to be preliminarily positive in the field for a hazardous material, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) will be contacted.
 - ii. The Hazmat Unit and/or FBI will collect and arrange for transport of the sample to the Pennsylvania Department of Health Bureau of Laboratories for confirmatory testing.
 - iii. If the material is suspected or found to be explosive, the Police Department Bomb Disposal Unit will be notified and specific procedures to handle bomb threats will be followed, see Risk Management Safety Directive #P-7, Bomb Threat Procedures.
 - c. If necessary, the Philadelphia Fire Department's Hazardous Materials Unit will decontaminate any suspect biological materials in direct contact with the letter or its contents with a 5-10% bleach solution (e.g., one part household bleach to 10 parts water), following the crime scene investigation or they may require a certified environmental contractor for clean up. Individuals may decontaminate personal effects similarly. Bleach solutions will not be used on employees. Soap and water are adequate to decontaminate skin.
4. The Police Department will provide the following support:
 - a. Assistance in the form of crowd control, evacuation (if necessary), traffic control and support.
 - b. Homeland Security will respond depending on the circumstances indentified by the responding Police Officers.
5. The Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) will provide the following support:
 - a. If a substance found in the suspect mail or mail package is positive on site for chemical, biological or radiological contamination, the Health Department will guide individuals who may have been exposed through proper treatment protocol including recommendations regarding prophylaxis and the need for medical follow-up.
 - b. PDPH will also address concerns and collect contact information from all potentially exposed persons

Direction for Employees on Mail or Mail Packages with Suspect Powders, Dusts or Liquids

1. If a threatening or "suspect" letter or package containing powder or dust is opened, REMAIN CALM. Most biological agents have an incubation period of 1-10 days, and there is no immediate risk of injury following exposure. Moreover, agents such as anthrax are most harmful when aerosolized, or released into the air, not when contained in an envelope or residing on an environmental surface. Try to minimize spread or dispersal of the powder or agent. DO NOT smell it, touch it, or taste it.
2. Do not shake or empty the contents of any suspicious envelope or package.

3. If you are still holding the envelope, (without walking around) place the envelope or package on a stable surface and cover it if possible; do not sniff, touch, taste, or look closely at it or any contents that may have spilled.
4. Call **911**, or have a supervisor call **911**, and explain the situation to the dispatcher. The 911 dispatcher will notify the Philadelphia Police Department and Philadelphia Fire Department to respond.
5. Contact (or direct someone to contact) the Building Manager or an equivalent, and explain the situation. Notify the Building Manager to shut down the ventilation system for the area. If your building or organization has a Safety Officer, contact that individual.
6. CLOSE the door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering (i.e., keep others away). DO NOT CLEAN UP THE SPILLED SUBSTANCE. Notify others not to enter the area. Turn off any portable or stationary fans and close any nearby windows.
7. If you are contaminated with a biological, chemical or radiological agent, REMAIN CALM. Do not brush your clothing and do not leave the area. Try to minimize the number of people who come into contact with the contaminant. Remember, help is on the way.
 - i. If you have medical concerns due to irritation, burns, etc wash your hands or other exposed skin immediately with soap and water.
8. Do not throw away anything – the substance and the letter or package in which it came are all evidence and will be collected for analysis.
9. Wait for emergency personnel to arrive.
10. Once you have been cleared by emergency personnel to leave the area, wash your hands with soap and water to prevent spreading any contaminant to your face. To minimize possible contamination, ask for assistance. Follow any other directions give by emergency personnel.

Training /Education

Training and/or education on this Safety Directive shall be provided to all Department employees as appropriate based upon their potential for exposure:

1. Upon initial assignment.
2. Whenever this Safety Directive is revised.

Recordkeeping

Training records will be maintained by the Department for a period of five (5) years.

APPENDIX A

United States Postal Service Suspicious Mail or Packages Poster (publication 166)

SUSPICIOUS MAIL OR PACKAGES

Protect yourself, your business, and your mailroom.

If you receive a suspicious letter or package:

- Stop. Don't handle.
- Isolate it immediately.
- Don't open, smell, or taste.
- Activate your emergency plan. Notify a supervisor.

The illustration shows a white envelope and a brown cardboard box. The envelope is addressed to 'PERSONAL! CHEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE 222 N. HARVE ST PHILADELPHIA'. The box is addressed to 'Operations Manager 1000 E 131th Ave Philadelphia, PA'. Various signs are labeled with lines pointing to them: 'Reductive markings' on the envelope, 'No return address' on the envelope, 'Sealed with tape' on the box, 'Misspelled words, badly typed or written' on the envelope, 'Unknown powder or suspicious substance' on the box, 'Possibly mailed from a foreign country, excessive postage' on the envelope, 'Excessive bags' on the box, 'Oily stains, discoloration, crystallization or wrapper' on the box, 'Change size' on the box, 'Incorrect title or addressee to file only' on the box, 'Rigid or bulky' on the box, 'Lopsided or uneven' on the box, and 'Protruding wires' on the box. A label on the box says 'DO NOT USE RAY TAPE OR DRYLOID'.

If you suspect the mail or package contains a bomb (explosive), or radiological, biological, or chemical threat:

- Isolate area immediately
- Call 911
- Wash your hands with soap and water



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