



The Office of Fire Safety and Injury Prevention Education

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Suspicious Packages What Should You Do?

How do I identify a suspicious package, what are the general characteristics?

- The package contains excessive postage.
- The address is poorly handwritten or poorly typed, possibly with no return address.
- The title is incorrect or there is only a title and no name.
- Misspelling of common words.
- Oily stains, discoloration or odor.
- Excessive weight.
- Lopsided or uneven envelope.
- Protruding wires or aluminum foil.
- Ticking sound.
- Excessive amounts of packing material, such as masking tape, string....
- Markings depicting an explosion, chemical or biological agent release.
- Marked with restrictive endorsements, such as "Personal" or "Confidential."
- The postmark does not agree with the return address.
- The package was not expected.

1 Handle with Care
Don't shake or bump

2 Do NOT open,
smell or taste

3 Isolate and look
for indicators

4 Treat it as suspect
Call 9-1-1



Source: FBI

Mix common sense with caution....

- Junk mail that is typically received should not be considered "suspicious," simply discard.
- If you have seen the mail before and consider it normal, discard as usual
- If your intuition alerts you based on the aforementioned characteristics, treat as suspicious.

Fact Sheet

Suspicious Packages

What Should You Do?

What do I do if I find a suspicious package:

Do not panic, biological agents can cause infection in the skin, gastrointestinal system or the lungs. In order for this to occur, the organism must be rubbed into abraded skin, swallowed or inhaled as a fine, aerosolized mist. The disease can be prevented, after exposure to anthrax spores, by early treatment with the appropriate antibiotics. Anthrax is not contagious and is not spread person-to-person.

- Do not shake, open or empty the contents of any suspicious envelope or package.
- Place the envelope or package in a clear, plastic zip lock bag, then place in a second bag. If a zip lock bag is not available, any clear container may be used, providing it is leak proof. If a container is not available, cover the package or envelope with an article of clothing, paper, trash can etc.... Once covered, do not remove the cover.
- **Do not bring the item to a fire station, police station, hospital... exposure should be limited.**
- Leave the room, close the door and section off the area, isolating the area, others should be prevented from entering.
- Wash your hands with soap and water, take care not to spread the contaminants to the face.
- Report the incident - dial 9-1-1, if you are at work- notify building security, as well as your supervisor.
- Make a list of anyone who was in the room or area when the suspicious letter or package was discovered. Be prepared to provide the list to fire and police officers.
- When emergency personnel arrive, you will be asked if you have packaged the item and your actions leading up to calling 9-1-1. Emergency personnel will direct you to bring the package to them for inspection and they will begin to document the event. The Police will take custody of the package and after ninety (90) days, if no investigative need is necessary the package will be destroyed. Hoaxes will be investigated and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.
- If the package can not be bagged by the homeowner or business, fire department personnel will retrieve the package, wearing protective clothing, package the item and turn over to the Police or Fire Marshal Officer.

What should I do if I believe I have been exposed?

- Report the incident - dial 9-1-1, if you are at work- notify building security as well as your supervisor.
- Wash your hands with soap and water, taking care not to spread the contaminants to your face.
- Remove heavily contaminated clothing as soon as possible and place in a plastic bag or some other container that can be sealed. Shower with soap and water as soon as possible. Do not use bleach or other disinfectants on your skin. If you are not in an area where a shower is available, a Fire Department decontamination shower will be made available.
- Fire Department officials will collect and dispose of the clothing. If you are not at home, clothing will be provided by the Fire Department.
- Make a list of anyone who was in the room or area when the suspicious letter or package was discovered. Be prepared to provide the list to fire and police officers. This will assist with the investigation, as well as providing instructions for medical follow up.