



# **SPECIAL SECURITY BULLETIN - HOW TO HANDLE ANTHRAX AND OTHER BIOLOGICAL AGENT THREATS**

**October 15, 2001**

## **Background:**

**This bulletin serves to provide guidance to GSA-controlled properties concerning the handling of suspicious letters and packages which could be tainted with anthrax or other biological agents.**

## **General Precautions for Mail Handling:**

- **Examine unopened envelopes for foreign bodies or powders**
- **Use a letter opener to open mail; do not use your hands**
- **Based upon the sensitivity of Agency mission, consider precautions such as restricting the opening of mail to a limited number of trained personnel and/or requiring handlers to wear protective gloves and a protective mask.**

## **Types of suspect mail:**

- **Excessive postage, no postage, or non-canceled postage**
- **No return address or fictitious return address**
- **Improper spelling of addressee names, titles, or locations**
- **Unexpected envelopes from foreign countries**
- **Suspicious or threatening messages written on packages**
- **Postmark showing different location than return address**
- **Distorted handwriting or cut and paste lettering**
- **Unprofessionally wrapped packages or excessive use of tape, strings, etc.**

- Packages marked as “Fragile - - Handle with Care”, “Rush - - Do Not Delay”, “Personal” or “Confidential”
- Rigid, uneven, irregular or lopsided packages
- Packages that are discolored, oily, or have an unusual odor
- Packages with soft spots, bulges or excessive weight
- Protruding wires or aluminum foil
- Visual distractions

**If you receive a suspicious package:**

- Do Not Open the Package
- Immediately Report the incident to the Western Region Security Office on 206-526-6653, 206-526-6571, 206-526-4317 or 206-526-4100 (24hr emergency number).

**For opened packages which contain suspicious materials:**

- DO NOT PANIC:

**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.**

**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.**

- Do not shake or empty the contents of the suspicious package
- Place the package in a plastic bag or some other type of container to prevent the leakage of contents. If no container is readily available, cover the package or envelope with anything available (eg, trash can, clothing, paper) and do not remove the cover
- Isolate the package and close off the room by shutting all doors and windows
- Leave the immediate area
- Keep others from entering the area

- **Do not touch your eyes, nose, or any other part of your body**
- **Wash hands vigorously with soap and water**
- **Make a list of all people who had contact with the package**
- **If possible, close down the building ventilation system**
- **If clothing is heavily contaminated, do not brush vigorously**
- **Immediately Report the incident to the Western Region Security Office on 206-526-6653, 206-526-6571, 206-526-4317 or 206-526-4100 (24hr emergency number).**