

Suspicious Package Response Guidance

The Office of Environmental Health & Safety and the Department of Public Safety have developed this guidance to assist in responding to reports of suspicious packages. The information in this guidance has been obtained from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) the Department of Homeland Security and the United States Postal Service. We have inserted some specific University phone numbers and procedures to help if presented with the situations described.

How to Identify Suspicious Packages and Letters:

Some characteristics of suspicious packages and letters include the following:

- Excessive postage
- Handwritten or poorly typed addresses
- Incorrect titles
- Title, but no name
- Misspellings of common words
- Oily stains, discolorations or odor
- No return address
- Excessive weight
- Lopsided or uneven envelope
- Protruding wires or aluminum foil
- Visual distractions
- Ticking sound
- Excessive security material such as masking tape, string, etc.
- Marked with restrictive endorsements, such as "Personal" or "Confidential"
- Shows a city or state in the postmark that does not match the return address

Actions to Take Once a Potential Suspicious Package Has Been Identified:

1. Stay Calm - Do Not Panic.
2. Do Not Move or Handle a Suspicious Package.
3. Call Public Safety at 401-863-4111 immediately. Public Safety will contact the Office of Environmental Health & Safety to assist with the response at 863-3353. EHS has staff on call after hours. Facilities Management Service Response may be called as needed at 863-7800.
4. If there is reason to suspect that a package may contain an explosive device based on characteristics described above, do not handle the package. Leave the area and contact Brown Public Safety.
5. If the suspicious letter or package is marked with a threatening message (*such as "anthrax"*) or if a suspicious powder or substance is spilled out of a package or envelope, follow these guidelines:
 - a. DO NOT CLEAN up a Suspicious Powder.
 - b. TURN OFF local fans or ventilation units in the area if you suspect that a device has been activated and the fan/ventilation switches are quickly and easily accessible.
 - c. LEAVE the room and close the door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering. Call for help and keep others away from the area.
 - d. WASH your hands with soap and water to prevent spreading any powder to your face.
 - e. REMOVE heavily contaminated clothing as soon as possible and place in a plastic bag, or some other container that can be sealed. Give clothing bag to the emergency responders.
 - f. SHOWER with soap and water as soon as possible if contaminated. Do Not Use Bleach Or Other Disinfectant On Your Skin.
 - g. LIST all people who were in the area when the suspicious package was recognized.
 - h. PROVIDE this list of people to Public Safety for follow-up investigations and to obtain advice from local public health authorities and outside law enforcement officials.

The Emergency Responders from EHS and Public Safety will assess the situation. If the suspicious letter or package is marked with a threatening message (*such as "anthrax"*) or if a suspicious powder or substance has spilled, they will follow these guidelines:

- a. Don the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) which should include respiratory protection, gloves, and possibly protective coverings for body and shoes. A PPE assessment should be made and will be based on the specific circumstances.
- b. Do not shake or empty the contents of any suspicious envelope or package.
- c. PLACE the envelope or package carefully in a plastic bag or other type of container to prevent leakage of contents.

If there is reason to suspect Room Contamination by Aerosolization (For example: small device triggered, a "warning" or "threat" that air-handling system is contaminated, or warning that a biological agent was released in a public space). Emergency Responders will coordinate a response which may include:

- a. TURN OFF local fans or ventilation units in the area.
- b. LEAVE area immediately.
- c. CLOSE the door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering.
- d. SHUT down air handling system in the building, if possible. Call Facilities Management at 863-7800 for assistance with HVAC and other building issues.
- e. LIST all people who were in the room or area when this suspicious letter or package was recognized.
- f. PROVIDE this list of people to Public Safety for follow-up investigations and to obtain advice from local public health authorities and outside law enforcement officials.

Additional Resources

Federal Bureau of Investigation Advisory

<http://www.fbi.gov/pressrel/pressrel01/mail3.pdf>

Centers for Disease Control Anthrax Fact Sheet

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/anthrax/needtoknow.asp>

Centers for Disease Control Anthrax Handling Advisory

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/DocumentsApp/Anthrax/10312001/han50.asp>

United States Postal Service Anthrax Information

http://www.usps.com/news/2001/press/pr01_1010tips.htm

Rhode Island Department of Health Bioterrorism Preparedness Program

<http://www.health.state.ri.us/environment/biot/index.php>

Brown University Emergency Preparedness Website

http://www.brown.edu/Administration/EHS/emergency_preparedness/