

ISSUED FOR STATE MANAGERS AND EMPLOYEES

October 17, 2001, May be Revised as Needed

STATE OF HAWAII **DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH** **GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING ANTHRAX SCARES OR THREATS IN** **LETTERS OR PACKAGES**

This is intended to help clarify what employees should do with suspicious letters or packages from a public health perspective. Please be aware that other safety, law enforcement, postal and facility issuances may apply, including internal departmental policies.

HOW TO IDENTIFY SUSPICIOUS PACKAGES AND LETTERS:

Some characteristics of suspicious packages and letters include the following:

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

SUSPICIOUS UNOPENED LETTER OR PACKAGE MARKED WITH THREATENING MESSAGE SUCH AS "ANTHRAX":

1. Do not shake or empty the contents of any suspicious envelope or package.
2. PLACE the envelope or package in a plastic bag or some other type of container or prevent leakage of contents.
3. If you do not have any container, then COVER the envelope or package with anything (e.g., clothing, paper, trash can, etc.) and do not remove this cover.
4. Then LEAVE the room and CLOSE the door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering (i.e., keep others away).
5. WASH your hands with **soap and water** to prevent spreading any powder to your face.
6. What to do next ... notify your supervisor and call 911.
7. LIST all people who were in the room or area when this suspicious letter or package was recognized. Give this list to both the police and the Department of Health authorities for follow-up investigations and advice.

**STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING ANTHRAX SCARES OR THREATS
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ENVELOPE WITH POWDER AND POWDER SPILLS OUT ONTO SURFACE:

1. DO NOT try to CLEAN UP the powder. COVER the spilled contents immediately with anything (e.g., clothing, paper, trash can, etc.) and do not remove this cover!
2. Then LEAVE the room and CLOSE the door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering (i.e., keep others away).
3. WASH your hands with **soap and water** to prevent spreading any powder to your face.
4. What to do next ... notify your supervisor and call 911.
5. REMOVE heavily contaminated clothing as soon as possible and place in a plastic bag, or some other container that can be sealed. This clothing bag should be given to the emergency responders for proper handling.
6. SHOWER with **soap and water** as soon as possible. *Do Not Use Bleach Or Other Disinfectant On Your Skin.*
7. If possible, list all people who were in the room or area, especially those who had actual contact with the powder. Give this list to both the police and Department of Health authorities so that proper instructions can be given for medical follow-up, and to law enforcement officials for further investigation.

Do not go to a clinic or emergency room unless you have illness serious enough that it would prompt such a visit under usual circumstances.

If you do have contact with health care providers, do not request testing for anthrax (e.g., a nasal swab culture) or treatment for anthrax (e.g., ciprofloxacin or other antibiotic) unless directed to do so by Department of Health authorities.

Be assured that the risk of actual exposure to anthrax through contact with a letter or package is extremely low.

DO NOT PANIC.

PLEASE BE PATIENT.

POLICE AND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AUTHORITIES WILL RESPOND AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

Policy related questions should be directed to Dr. Phil Bruno, Chief, Communicable Disease Division, State Department of Health, at 586-4580. However, the above guidelines should be followed in reporting individual cases.

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