

SUSPICIOUS PACKAGES AND ENVELOPES

POLICY:

It is the policy of the Omaha Police Department (OPD) that all employees will take appropriate precautions to protect themselves and others from exposure to the potentially harmful contents of suspicious packages and envelopes.

DEFINITIONS:

Aerosolize: To convert into a fine spray or colloidal suspension in air.

Bacillus anthracis: The bacterium that causes anthrax. Bacillus anthracis is a white powdery substance that may cause infection if swallowed, rubbed into a skin abrasion, or inhaled as a fine, aerosol mist. If treated early, appropriate antibiotics can prevent disease caused by exposure to this bacterium.

Biological Threat: Any disease-causing organism such as smallpox, botulinum toxin, bacillus anthracis (anthrax), and ricin. These substances may adversely affect human health in a variety of ways, ranging from relatively mild allergic reactions to serious medical conditions, and even death.

Chemical Threat: Any substance intended to cause death or serious injury through release, dissemination, or impact of toxic poisonous chemicals, or their precursors. Examples include mustard gas, nerve agents, and sarin gas. Injury severity depends on the type and amount of chemical agent and the duration of exposure.

Explosive Threat: Threat that is generally designed to kill or maim but may also be designed to cause mass casualties and structural damage. An explosive threat can often be triggered by any slight attempt to open the outer packaging.

Radiological Threat: Any substance designed to release harmful radiation. Radiation can cause mild effects such as skin reddening, as well as more serious effects such as cancer and death. Injury severity depends on the amount of radiation absorbed by the body, the type of radiation, and the duration of exposure.

PROCEDURE:

I. Departmental Mail - Identifying a Suspicious Package or Envelope

- A. Suspicious packages and envelopes may contain explosive, radiological, biological, or chemical threats.
- B. Employees handling department mail will be alert for packages and envelopes with inappropriate or unusual labeling, unusual appearance, or other suspicious indicators.
 1. Examples of inappropriate or unusual labeling includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. Excessive postage.
 - b. Handwritten or poorly typed addresses.
 - c. Misspelling of common words.
 - d. Strange return address or no return address.
 - e. Incorrect title or professional title without a name.
 - f. Not addressed to a specific person.
 - g. Written restrictions such as "Personal," "Confidential," or "Do Not X-ray."

- h. Marked with any threatening language.
 - i. Postmarked from a city or state that does not match the return address.
 - 2. Examples of unusual appearance includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. Powdery substance felt through or appearing on the package or envelope.
 - b. Oily stains, discoloration, or odor.
 - c. Crystalization on wrapping.
 - d. Rigid or bulky.
 - e. Lopsided or uneven envelope.
 - f. Excessive packaging material (i.e., masking tape, string, etc.)
 - 3. Examples of other suspicious signs includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. Excessive weight.
 - b. Ticking sound.
 - c. Protruding wires or aluminum foil.
- C. The above lists are not exhaustive. Employees handling department mail will use common sense. If the condition of a package or envelope causes a safety concern for any reason, the employee will follow the instructions below for handling suspicious packages and envelopes.

II. Handling a Suspicious Package or Envelope

- A. Safety kits (biohazard bags, gloves, a mask, and antibacterial gel) and equipment will be available in the following areas:
 - 1. Mail sorting areas.
 - a. These kits are available for employees responsible for sorting and opening mail.
 - 2. Police Supply Unit.
- B. Plastic gloves will be available at the primary mail distribution areas on the third and sixth floors of Central Headquarters.
- C. Explosive Threat
 - 1. If an employee suspects that a suspicious package or envelope contains an explosive device, the employee shall evacuate the area immediately and call 911.
- D. Radiological Threat
 - 1. If an employee suspects that a suspicious package or envelope contains radiological material, the employee will follow these guidelines:
 - a. The employee SHALL NOT handle the package or envelope.
 - b. The employee will shield themselves from the package or envelope.
 - c. The employee will evacuate the area immediately.

- d. The employee will call 911 and notify an OPD supervisor.
 - (a) 911 will contact the OFD Hazardous Material Response Team.
 - (b) The OPD supervisor will notify all appropriate law enforcement resources.

E. Biological or Chemical Threat

- 1. If an employee suspects that a suspicious package or envelope contains dangerous biological or chemical agents, the employee will follow these guidelines:
 - a. UNOPENED Package or Envelope
 - (1) Employees SHALL NOT:
 - (a) Open the package or envelope.
 - (b) Shake or empty the contents of the package or envelope.
 - (c) Carry the package or envelope, show it to others, or allow others to examine it.
 - (d) Sniff, taste, or look closely at the package or envelope, or at any contents that may have spilled.
 - (2) Employees will:
 - (a) Handle the package or envelope gently.
 - (b) Place the package or envelope in a plastic bag (provided at mail-opening areas) to prevent the contents from leaking, and place the item on a stable surface. If no plastic bag is available, employees will cover the item with anything (paper, clothing, trash can, etc.) and will not remove the cover.
 - (c) Advise others in the area to evacuate.
 - (d) Leave the area, close any doors, and take action to prevent others from entering the area.
 - (e) If possible, shut of the ventilation system.
 - (f) Wash hands with soap and water to prevent spreading potentially infectious materials.
 - (g) Report the incident to both 911 and an OPD supervisor.
 - i. 911 will contact the OFD Hazardous Material Response Team.
 - ii. The OPD supervisor will notify all appropriate law enforcement resources.
 - (h) List all people who were in proximity when the package or envelope was recognized as suspicious, as well as those who may have handled the item at any point.
 - (i) Provide the list to responding emergency personnel.

b. OPENED Package or Envelope, or a Package or Envelope that has SPILLED a Suspicious Substance

(1) Employees SHALL NOT:

- (a) Shake or empty the contents of the package or envelope.
- (b) Carry the package or envelope, show it to others, or allow others to examine it.
- (c) Sniff, taste, blow into, or look closely at the package or envelope, or at any contents that may have spilled.
- (d) Attempt to clean up any type of spilled substance.

(2) Employees will:

- (a) Close the package or envelope and place it gently on a stable surface.
- (b) Cover the package or envelope and any spilled contents immediately using anything available (clothing, paper, trash can, etc.). Employees will not remove the cover.
- (c) Advise others in the area to evacuate.
- (d) Leave the area, close any doors, and take action to prevent others from entering the area.
- (e) Shut off the ventilation system, if possible.
- (f) Wash hands with soap and water to prevent spreading potentially infectious materials.
- (g) Report the incident to both 911 and an OPD supervisor.
 - i. 911 will contact the OFD Hazardous Material Response Team.
 - ii. The OPD supervisor will notify all appropriate law enforcement resources.
- (h) Remove any contaminated clothing and place the clothing in a plastic bag or some other sealable container. This clothing bag or container will be given to emergency responders for proper handling.
- (i) Shower with soap and water.

NOTE: Employees should not use bleach or any other disinfectant on bare skin.

- (j) List all people who had contact with the suspicious substance, or were in proximity when the package or envelope was recognized as suspicious, as well as those who may have handled the package or envelope at any point.
- (k) Provide the list to emergency responders.

2. If a suspicious biological or chemical substance is aerosolized employees will:

- a. Turn off local fans and/or ventilation units in the area.
- b. Evacuate the area and advise others to evacuate.
- c. Close the door or section off the area to prevent others from entering.
- d. Report the incident to both 911 and an OPD supervisor.
 - (1) 911 will contact the OFD Hazardous Material Response Team.
 - (2) The OPD supervisor will notify all appropriate law enforcement resources.
- e. Shut down the air handling system, if possible.
- f. List all people who were in proximity when the substance achieved aerosolization, or who may have otherwise been exposed to aerosolization, as well as those who may have handled the package or envelope at any time.
- g. Provide this list to emergency responders.

REFERENCES:

I. Previous OPD Orders

- A. Previous General Orders include: #12-12 and #80-17.