

Mailroom Staff Guidelines for Suspicious Packages Including Biological Weapons

TRUE SECURITY INTEGRATION



A  **FIRSTSERVICE** COMPANY



MAILROOM STAFF GUIDELINES FOR SUSPICIOUS
PACKAGES INCLUDING BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

Could You or Your Organization Be a Victim?

If yes, consider the following helpful hints when opening mail at home or at work. Most dangerous packages exhibit unique characteristics, which should be helpful in identifying a suspect item.

In general, biological weapons or mail bombs will stand out from the normal flow of mail due to different or unusual packaging. For this reason, all mail should be processed by a person or group familiar with and/or who handle the company mail on a regular basis. This will allow them to 'benchmark' the profile of the company mail, and to permit them to compare suspicious articles to that 'benchmark'.

Dangerous items (e.g., biological weapons, mail bombs, etc.) can be contained in letters, books, and parcels of varying sizes, shapes and colours.

Suspicious Package Recognition Points

1. Letters feel rigid, appear lopsided, and are bulky/heavy for their size.
2. Stains, crystallization, or discolouration may be present on the envelope/wrapping.
3. An excessive amount of postage stamps.
4. The sender is unknown and there is no return address, or the return address and postmark do not correspond.
5. Unusual restricted endorsements such as:
 - 'Personal'
 - 'Private'
 - 'Confidential'
 - 'Beware, Bomb Inside' (or other threatening message)
 - 'Anthrax'
 - 'To Be Opened in Privacy'
 - 'Prize Enclosed', etc.
6. The addressee normally does not receive personal mail at the office.
7. Name and/or title of the addressee is not accurate, or the addressee no longer works here (e.g., correct name and wrong title, etc.).
8. The package is addressed to a title/position or to no one in particular.
9. The address has been prepared to ensure the anonymity of the sender (e.g., homemade labels, cut and paste lettering).



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Suspicious Package Recognition Points cont'd

10. The mailing emits a particular odour.
11. The mailing appears to be disassembled or re-glued.
12. Handwriting appears distorted.
13. Irregular or poor typing of address.
14. The mailing has powder on the outside.
15. Protruding wires, tinfoil, or string.
16. Pressure or resistance is noted when removing the contents.
17. Hand-delivered.
18. Any foreign writing, address or postage.
19. The outer container has an irregular or asymmetric shape, soft spots, or bulges.
20. The wrapping exhibits previous usage (e.g., traces of glue, mailing labels, return addresses, or tape).
21. Several combinations of tape, or excessive amounts of tape, are used to secure the parcel.
22. An unprofessionally-wrapped parcel is endorsed 'Fragile – Handle With Care' or 'Rush – Do Not Delay'.
23. The use of string to tie-up/secure the package. String is generally no longer used today for that purpose.
24. The package makes a buzzing or ticking noise, or the contents make a 'sloshing' sound.
25. You feel the onset of a pounding headache while handling the package (letter bomb).
26. Excessive wrapping and/or visual distractions such as pornography.
27. 'Foreign Mail', 'Air Mail', or 'Special Delivery' labels.

If you feel that the item may be a letter bomb, proceed as per Intercon's ***Letter Bomb Recognition Points Bulletin***.

*(Note: Procedures for successfully dealing with letter bombs are different from biological weapons. However, in both cases: **Do Not Open the Item. Contact the Recipient/Addressee for Clarification**).*

Remember, play it safe, trust your intuition and the intuition of your co-workers.



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Biological Weapons

The primary defensive tactic for biological weapons sent by mail is to **NOT** open suspicious items. However, not all suspicious items will be detected. It is therefore prudent to take a number of precautions with respect to the handling of mail.

1. Mail should be sorted in an enclosed area, well away from large concentrations of staff members, the computer room, and other sensitive areas. This area should have slab-to-slab partitions and a tight fitting door with a deadbolt lock. As well, this area should have a separate ventilation system that can be turned off when suspicious mail is detected. For quick access, the clearly-marked control switch should be located in the mail handling area.
2. Wear surgical gloves and a full-face shield when sorting or opening mail. Wash your hands using liquid soap and warm water after handling mail. Resist the urge to scratch or itch. If you need to scratch, remove your gloves by pulling them off inside out and dispose of them in an approved manner (e.g., a safe container controlled by a foot pedal). Put on new gloves.
3. Isolate the suspicious item in an airtight container or ideally, cover it with a transparent glass cover. Consider sealing the item in a clear, plastic, evidence bag (or other thick, sealable bag). **LEAVE THE AREA.** Unlike a letter bomb, close all doors in the immediate area. Ensure the item is identifiable to the police (e.g., the only package on a table). If the item is not emitting powder or fluid or does not appear to be very suspicious (e.g., meaning that it only has one or two suspicious characteristics), contact the recipient/addressee for clarification. They may recognize it as familiar or non-suspicious. If they do not recognize it, or if they do not wish to view it, evacuate the immediate area and call 911. Remember, any time your intuition tells you that you are in danger, cover the item and leave the area. Immediately notify nearby co-workers, your supervisor, and call 911.
4. Employees washing their hands after handling a suspicious item should plug the sink and save the wastewater for the authorities. Employees that have handled an item that has emitted a powder or fluid, or something that could otherwise be considered hazardous must not touch their face or anything else. They should avoid contact with co-workers. They must immediately wash their hands and call 911. **Do not** clean up leaked fluid or powder. Cover it. Remove soiled clothing and seal same in plastic bags. Give the bags to the authorities. **All** employees in the vicinity of the suspicious item when it was opened must be isolated in a pre-selected area, well away from all other staff, and await the authorities there. Make a list of the people present when the item was opened. Also, list the locations the package moved through in the building. Consider turning off the ventilation system in that area as well. While anthrax is not contagious from person to person, some other biological agents are.



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Biological Weapons cont'd

5. In companies with a large flow of mail, consider obtaining and using a laboratory-type isolation chamber (glove box) available from *Fisher Scientific (905) 479-8700*. Suspicious mail can be sealed in the chamber and safely opened from outside the chamber. Items emitting fluid or powder can be left inside the chamber for the authorities.
6. When opening non-suspicious or routine mail, **do not** use your fingers or a knife. Use a Zippy™ style, closed edge letter opener that will not disturb the contents. Hold the item away from your face, and upright to avoid spillage.
7. For general information on biological and chemical weapons, please see excerpts from the ***FBI's Chemical/Biological (C/B) Incident Contingency Plan*** available from your Intercon Account Executive.
8. Posters for this type of threat are available at *Secure Search (416) 492-5349*.

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