

County of Santa Clara

Public Health Department
Disease Prevention and Control

2220 Moorpark Avenue
San Jose, California 95128



Guidelines for Handling and Opening Mail At the Workplace

The most important first step in handling and opening mail is to be aware and identify any suspicious letters or packages you receive in the mail.

Identifying Suspicious Mail

The following information, provided by the FBI, can help you identify suspicious mail.

- ◆ Excessive string, tape or postage.
- ◆ Oily stains, discolored packaging, strange odor, or crystallization on the wrapper.
- ◆ Rigid, bulky, lopsided or uneven packaging.
- ◆ No return address with restrictive markings like personal, confidential or special delivery.
- ◆ Return address and postmark are different locations.
- ◆ Wrong title with your name or addressed to your title only.
- ◆ Possibly mailed from a foreign country.
- ◆ Possibly misspelled words, badly typed or written words.

Handling and Opening Mail

The following guidelines have been developed jointly by health professionals, the FBI, the California Office of Emergency Services. Please remember that the risk of contracting anthrax from an envelope is extremely low. General awareness of one's surroundings and suspicious mail is always appropriate. These are some common sense steps to take in the workplace and general precautions for those who handle large volumes of mail:

- ◆ Wash your hands with warm soap and water before and after handling mail.
- ◆ Do not eat, drink or smoke around mail.
- ◆ If you have open cuts or skin lesions on your hands, disposable plastic or rubber gloves may be appropriate.
- ◆ Surgical masks, eye protection or gowns are NOT necessary or recommended.

If a letter is received that contains powder or contains a written threat:

1. Do not shake or empty the envelope.
2. Isolate the specific area of the workplace so that no one disturbs the item.
3. Evacuation of the entire workplace is NOT necessary at this point.

(more information on the following page)

Guidelines for Handling and Opening Mail At the Workplace (*cont'd*)

Letter received cont'd

4. Have someone call 911 and tell them what you have received and what you have done with it. (Law Enforcement should place a call to the local office of the FBI and tell them the same information.) Indicate whether the envelope contains any visible powder or if the powder was released.
5. Wash your hands with warm water and soap for one minute.
6. Do not allow anyone to leave that might have touched the envelope.
7. When emergency responders arrive, they will provide further instructions on what to do.

Important to Remember

- ◆ Do not panic.
- ◆ Do not walk around with the letter or shake it.
- ◆ Do not merely discard the letter.

If you suspect the mail item is an explosive device, evacuate immediately and call 911.

Instructions for Removing Gloves for Employees Who Choose to Wear Them

1. Avoid touching the inside of the gloves, or your skin, with the outside of the gloves.
2. Pull each glove half way off by pulling at the fingertips.
3. Pull off one glove by the fingertips using the gloved hand.
4. With the ungloved hand, grab from the inside the other glove. Remove the glove by turning it inside out, with the second glove being kept inside the first glove (like you would a pair of socks).
5. Discard the gloves in a plastic bag.
6. If a suspicious substance was found when opening the mail with your gloves on, place gloves in an empty plastic bag. Make sure the bag contains only the gloves and that it can be made available to law enforcement officials.

The Santa Clara County Public Health Department has established a bioterrorism information line. The number is **408.885.3980**. Additional information is available on the Public Health Department web site: www.sccphd.org

For more information about handling mail, contact the following web sites:

U.S Postal Services: www.usps.gov

Centers for Disease Control: www.bt.cdc.gov

The California Highway Patrol mail handling training video is available at:
www.dot.ca.gov/safety/

For more information about anthrax, contact the following web sites:

Santa Clara County Public Health Department: www.sccphd.org

Centers for Disease Control: www.bt.cdc.gov