

## ***SAFETY MEASURES FOR DEALING WITH “UNUSUAL” PACKAGES OR LETTERS***

The threat to Manitoba remains low and our province remains a safe place to live, however it is important that we continue to be vigilant in our security planning and awareness. Recent worldwide events have increased concern about safe handling procedures when receiving shipments or mailings.

Certain kinds of packages or letters might increase suspicion and should be handled with care.

In general, those workplaces which draw national or international attention may be the most likely targets for criminal acts. These workplaces should institute comprehensive plans and procedures for the safe handling of suspicious packages. However, it would be prudent for all workplaces to review their mail handling and receiving procedures.

The following guidelines are suggested for dealing with suspicious mail or packages. Consideration should be given to include them in your own workplace procedures.

### **Guidelines for handling suspicious mail or packages:**

- Each organization should assess whether it is a possible target for criminal acts.
- Every business and organization should assess and review its protocols for handling mail.
- Restricting the opening of mail to a limited number of trained individuals may be an option.
- Common sense and care should be used in inspecting and opening mail or packages.
- Examine unopened envelopes for foreign properties or powder
- Use a letter opener for opening letters.
- Open letters and packages with a minimum of movement to avoid spilling any contents.

### **Be wary of envelopes or packages:**

- ✓ that have suspicious or threatening messages written on it,
- ✓ with oily stains,
- ✓ which are lopsided, rigid, bulky, discoloured or have a strange odour,
- ✓ with no return address,
- ✓ that are unexpectedly received from foreign countries,
- ✓ with no postage or non-cancelled postage,
- ✓ with improper spelling of common names places or titles or absence of the recipient's name.

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**If you do get a suspicious letter or package:**

- Do not open it.
- Leave it and evacuate the room.
- Keep others from entering.
- Notify your supervisor who should call the local police.

**For packages that are opened and which contain suspicious material:**

- Do not panic
- Biological agents such as viruses or bacteria do not cause immediate symptoms. These agents have to get into a person’s body before illness can occur; i.e by **direct contact**: through broken skin, swallowing or inhaling. Anthrax organisms can cause skin infection, gastrointestinal infection or pulmonary infection. To do so, the organism must be rubbed into abraded skin, swallowed, or inhaled as a fine aerosolized mist. Anthrax cannot be easily aerosolized out of an envelope or package containing powder.
- Antibiotics are available for treating anthrax infection.

**To contain exposure from suspicious contents:**

- Avoiding direct contact is the most important way for preventing exposure.
- Close off the room and do not let anyone enter.
- Do not clean powder up.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or other part of your body.
- Wash your hands ASAP: soap and water is sufficient.
- If clothing is contaminated, do not brush or shake: carefully remove garments and put in a plastic bag.
- The building’s heating or ventilation system may need to be closed down.
- A list of all people who had actual contact with the powder or liquid should be made. This will facilitate investigations and assist Public Health authorities to provide advice for medical interventions.