



GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING MAIL

Many people have questions about how mailrooms and offices should handle mail that may contain a written threat of chemical or biological material inside, or mail that may contain some form of powder. Following are common sense steps to take in the workplace. They have been developed jointly by health professionals, the FBI, and the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services.

Be Aware

The risk of contracting any disease from an envelope is extremely low. General awareness of one's surroundings and suspicious mail is appropriate.

General precautions for those who handle large volumes of mail:

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

Safety Guidelines

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.
4. Have someone call 9-1-1 and tell them what you received and what you have done with it. 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 the office that might have touched the envelope.
7. When emergency responders arrive, they will provide further instructions on what to do.

Important:

- Do not panic.
- Do not walk around with the letter or shake it.
- Do not merely discard the letter.
- Do not open, smell, or taste the powder.

Suspicious Mail:

- No Return Address
- Excessive Postage
- Misspelled Words
- Protruding Wires
- Strange Odor
- Oily Stains, Discoloration on Wrapper
- Excessive Tape or String