

UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO

SUBJECT: MANAGEMENT OF SUSPICIOUS PACKAGES

Procedure No: HM-08-032

PROCEDURE STATEMENT

Specific guidelines are in place to ensure proper management and distribution of campus mail and packages, and to provide for protection of those handling these materials.

PURPOSE OF PROCEDURE

To prevent inadvertent exposure of patients, staff, visitors, faculty, students and equipment from potential contamination resulting from receipt of suspicious packages.

PROCEDURE

Due to historical mail handling incidents around the country, the following information is provided as guidance to all individuals who open mail. Traditionally, the likelihood of receiving a package or letter containing suspicious substances or devices is remote. It is important to be alert for suspicious packages, but keep in mind that a letter or package containing a mail bomb or biological or chemical threat is an extremely rare occurrence. While we have good reason to feel safe within the University, everyone should exercise and maintain an increased level of vigilance, and make a practice of evaluating your mail prior to opening it.

Employee Guidelines

Be alert and aware of letters or packages that have any kind of suspicious trait. Below is a summary of mail handling guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and the U.S. Postal Service. These traits include one or more of the following.

A suspicious letter or package:

- Is one with no return address; handwritten or poorly typed address; misspellings; block printing; restrictive markings such as "Confidential," "Personal," "Do not x-ray," or has a strange "feel."
- Is unexpected, or from someone unfamiliar to you.
- Is addressed to someone no longer with your organization, or is otherwise outdated, or has incorrect or non-existent departments or position titles.
- Not addressed to a specific person, or has title without a name.
- Has no return address, or has one that cannot be verified as legitimate.
- Marked with any threatening language.
- Is of unusual weight for its size, or is lopsided or oddly shaped.
- Has a powdery substance felt on the inside, or visible on the outside.
- Shows a city or state in the postmark that does not match the return address.
- Has excessive postage.
- Has oily stains, discolorations, or strange odors.

If the letter or package is a mail bomb, the parcel or letter may also have: (See Procedure [EP-08-004 Code Black](#))

- Protruding wires or aluminum foil.
- Strange odors or stains.
- An unusual amount of tape.
- Buzzing, ticking or a sloshing sound.
- Irregular shape, soft spots, or bulges.
- Excessive weight for its size.
- Letter bombs may feel rigid, or appear uneven or lopsided.

Actions to Take Upon Receipt of a Suspicious Letter

If you identify a letter or package as being suspicious, DO NOT OPEN IT! Take the following steps:

- Do not panic.
- Do not shake or empty the contents of any suspicious envelope or package.
- Put the package or envelope down on a stable surface; do not touch, sniff, taste, or look closely at it or any contents that may have spilled.
- Alert others in the area, leave the room and close the door, and take actions to prevent others from entering.
- Wash your hands with soap and water.
- Call UT Police (UTPD) at 419-530-2600.
- Make a list of those who were in the area of the letter or parcel and give the list to UTPD.
- UTPD will contact local, state, and federal authorities as appropriate through consultation with the Environmental Health and Radiation Safety Department.

If you have opened a letter or package that contains powder, do not panic. Take the following steps.

If a letter or package contains an unknown substance:

- Do not smell or inhale it. Do not handle it further.
- Do not try to clean up the powder.
- Do not wave the letter in the air or ask others to look at it.
- Avoid any extra contact with the suspicious article.
- Alert others in the area, leave the room and close the door, and take actions to prevent others from entering.
- Wash your hands with soap and water to prevent spread of contamination.
- Call UTPD at 419-530-2600.
- Leave the area, and close the door if possible. Remain in a safe place in order to speak with the authorities when they arrive. Do not let anyone other than authorities into the room.
- Make a list of those who were in the area of the letter or parcel and give the list to UTPD.
- Remove, if possible, heavily contaminated clothing, and place in a bag or wastebasket. Give the clothing to the emergency responders for proper handling.
- Shower with soap and water as soon as possible. Do not use bleach or other disinfectant on your skin.

Emergency Response and Cleanup

During normal business hours UTPD will contact Environmental Health and Radiation Safety. After hours, UTPD will page the on-call person for spill response from the Environmental Health and Radiation Safety Department. If the suspicious mail is determined to be a potential bomb threat, UT Police will evacuate the building and follow the [Code Black Policy](#).

The response will proceed as follows:

- First responders report to scene, survey the area; identify the level of response, and notify Facilities Maintenance to ensure all air-handling units are turned off, if it is an airborne contaminant.
- Toledo Fire/HAZMAT will be notified and respond accordingly.
- UTPD will identify whether this is a credible threat and if involvement of local or federal law enforcement agencies is necessary.
- The response and decontamination will be conducted at the federal level.
- Environmental Health and Radiation Safety is responsible for providing notification of the contents test results to the concerned employees.
- If this incident has been identified as a credible biological or chemical terrorism incident, employees will be referred to Emergency Department for decontamination, medical testing and treatment per Procedure [EP-08-003 Code Orange](#). The University's Marketing and Communications Department will provide for the dissemination of all facts pertaining to the incident.
- A hazardous material incident report will be generated, documenting all aspects of the response of University personnel.
- A UTPD report will also document the response of the law enforcement personnel.

General precautions for handling mail

Any staff member who handles mail in bins, bags or other bulk containers – from either a courier delivery service, or distributing to an entire department or a number of offices - must participate in a training program consisting of the review of the contents of this policy.

If the package or letter is not suspicious, please adhere to the following guidelines:

- Face the package or mail away from you before opening it.
- Cover cuts or abrasions with bandages. If bandages are not sufficient, gloves are an alternative. Be aware that it is possible to have an allergic reaction to latex gloves. A better alternative is nitrile gloves.
- Wash your hands with soap and water (not hand sanitizer) after opening the mail.

Pranks and Hoaxes

Pranks or hoaxes involving false threats of agents of terror, including Anthrax or Ricin, disrupt lives, create serious safety concerns, and tax valuable University and community resources. They create illegitimate alarm in a time of legitimate concern. The University and law enforcement authorities take all such actions very seriously. The University has adopted a "zero tolerance" policy and will aggressively investigate any such incidents. Any individual found responsible for such acts will be subject to University disciplinary action, up to and including separation from the University, and prosecution under State and Federal law.

For More Information:

Contact Environmental Health and Radiation Safety at 419-530-3600.

Source: Safety & Health Committee

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