Handling Suspicious Mail



Why should I be aware of the mail received at the workplace?

In most cases, when discussing suspicious mail, it is mail that may contain a bomb, or a chemical, biological, radioactive or nuclear substance. It is good practice to screen mail you have received for unusual features.

What would suspicious mail look like?

You know what kind of mail and packages you usually get. Look for things that are out of the ordinary. Something may be suspicious if several of these features are present:

- There is too much postage using many low-value stamps.
- The return address is missing, foreign and/or indecipherable.
- The name, title or address is not correct or not spelled correctly. They may display distorted handwriting, or the name and address may be made with homemade labels or cut-and-paste letters.
- There is too much wrap, binding, tape, or tying material.
- You can feel wiring, aluminum foil or powder inside and/or protruding from the package.
- The letter or package feels too heavy. They may have an irregular shape with soft spots or bulges.
- The letter or package is dirty, oil- or grease-stained or leaking.
- There is a funny smell or noise or a sloshing sound.
- Cancellation or post marks may indicate a different location than the return address or that the item was mailed from a foreign country.
- Letter bombs may feel rigid, or appear uneven or lopsided.
- Bombs in parcels may be addressed to specific individuals, and could have restrictive notes such as “Personal”, “Private”, “To be opened only by” or notes such as “Fragile – Handle with Care”, or “Rush – Do not delay”.

What mail should be okay?

There is generally no need to be worried about:

- Mail and packages you receive from people you know.
- Mail and packages you receive from businesses you know.
- Items you have ordered from stores, such as books, food, or clothing.

What do I do if I suspect a bomb?

If you are suspicious that a letter or package may contain a bomb, you may refuse to accept it.

If it is already on your premises:

- **DO NOT OPEN IT.**
- Isolate it.
- Leave the area immediately.
- Do not put the item in water, or a confined space such as a desk drawer or filing cabinet.
- Notify your supervisor.
- Dial 911.

What do I do if I suspect a harmful chemical or biological substance?

If you are suspicious that a letter or package may contain a harmful chemical or biological substance, you may refuse to accept it.

- Remain calm.
- Do not open the letter or package.
- Cover the letter or package with a plastic sheet or raincoat or if none is available, leave the package where it is.
- Get everyone out of the room and close all doors and windows.
- Isolate the area where the package is.
- Notify your supervisor.
- Dial 911.
- Wait in a safe place (another area) that has a telephone until the emergency responders arrive.

Should I worry if I already opened the package?

The contents of a letter or package may cause concern if:

- You see powder or a liquid.
- It contains a threatening note.
- It contains an object that you did not expect to receive or cannot identify.

If you touched a letter or package that possibly contains a harmful substance or got some on your clothes:

- Remain calm.
- Leave the letter or package where it is.
- Wash your hands well.
- Remove any clothing that has powder or liquid on it and seal it in a plastic bag.
- Get everyone out of the room and close the door.
- Wash your hands again or shower with soap and water.
- Notify your supervisor.
- Dial 911.
- Wait in a safe place (another area) that has a telephone until the emergency responders arrive.

What happens next?

The police, other emergency workers, and public health authorities will give you advice about what to do next.

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