

How to Handle Anthrax and Other Bioterrorism Threats

In recent weeks many facilities in communities around this country and the world have received anthrax threat letters. For the most part many of these were only empty envelopes, however some contained powdery substances. The purpose of these guidelines is to recommend procedures for handling such incidents.

DO NOT PANIC

1. The first step in protecting yourself from an Anthrax exposure is to understand how the organism works.
2. People can be exposed to anthrax through their skin, mouth or lungs. Once exposed, Anthrax organisms can cause infection in the skin, gastrointestinal system, or the lungs. To do, so the organism must be rubbed into broken skin, swallowed, or inhaled as a fine, aerosolized mist. Disease can be prevented after exposure to the anthrax spores by early treatment with the appropriate antibiotics. **Anthrax is not contagious and cannot be spread from one person to another person.**
3. For anthrax to be effective as a covert agent, it must be aerosolized into very small particles. This is difficult to do, and requires a great deal of technical skill and special equipment. If these small particles are inhaled, life-threatening lung infection can occur, but prompt recognition and treatment are effective.

Protocol for suspicious unopened Letter or Package marked with threatening message such as “Anthrax.”

2. Do not shake or empty the contents of any suspicious envelope or package.
3. **Place** the envelope or package in a plastic bag or some other type of container to prevent leakage of contents.
4. If you do not have any container, then **Cover** the envelope or package with anything (e.g., clothing, paper, trash can, etc.) and do not remove this cover.
5. Then **Leave** the room and **Close** the door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering (i.e., keep others away).
6. **Wash** your hands with soap and water to prevent spreading any powder to your face.
7. What to do next...
 - a. If you are at **HOME**, then report the incident to local police.
 - b. If you are at **WORK**, then report the incident to local police, and notify your building security official or an available supervisor.
8. **LIST** all people who were in the room or area when this suspicious letter or package was recognized. Give this list to both the local public health authorities and law enforcement officials for follow-up investigations and advice.

Protocol for Envelope with powder and powder spills out onto surface

1. **Do NOT** try to CLEAN UP the powder. **Cover** the spilled contents immediately with anything (e.g., clothing, paper, trash can, etc.) and do not remove this cover!
2. Then **Leave** the room and **Close** the door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering (i.e., keep others away).
3. **Wash** your hands with soap and water to prevent spreading any powder to your face.
4. What to do next...
 - a. If you are at **HOME**, then report the incident to local police.
 - b. If you are at **WORK**, then report the incident to local police, and notify your building security official or an available supervisor.
5. **Remove** contaminated clothing as soon as possible and place in a plastic bag, or some other container that can be sealed. This clothing bag should be given to the emergency responders for proper handling.
6. **Shower** with soap and water as soon as possible. Do Not Use Bleach Or Other Disinfectant On Your Skin.
7. If possible, list all people who were in the room or area, especially those who had actual contact with the powder. Give this list to both the local public health authorities so that proper instructions can be given for medical follow-up, and to law enforcement officials for further investigation.

Protocol for possible contamination by aerosolization of biological agent **(Spraying)**

1. For example: if a small device is triggered, a warning is given that an air handling system is contaminated, or warning is given that a biological agent released in a public space.
2. **Turn off** local fans or ventilation units in the area.
3. **Leave** area immediately.
4. **Close** the door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering (i.e., keep others away).
5. **What to do next...**
 - a. If you are at **HOME**, then dial "911" to report the incident to local police and the local FBI field office.
 - b. If you are at **WORK**, then dial "911" to report the incident to local police and the local FBI field office, and notify your building security official or an available supervisor.
6. **SHUT** down air handling system in the building, if possible.
7. If possible, list all people who were in the room or area. Give this list to both the local public health authorities so that proper instructions can be given for medical follow-up, and to law enforcement officials for further investigation.

How to identify suspicious packages and letters as possible bio-terrorists agents.

Suspicious packages and letters include could include the following:

- Excessive postage
- Handwritten or poorly typed addresses
- Incorrect titles
- Title, but no name
- Misspellings of common words
- Oily stains, discolorations or odor
- No return address
- Excessive weight
- Lopsided or uneven envelope
- Protruding wires or aluminum foil
- Excessive security material such as masking tape, string, etc.
- Visual distractions
- Ticking sound
- Marked with restrictive endorsements, such as "Personal" or "Confidential"
- Shows a city or state in the postmark that does not match the return address