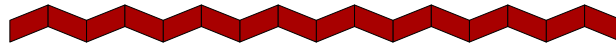




Mail Handling Safety and Security



Office of Safety and Security Fact Sheet

For those who handle mail:

Some physical characteristics of suspicious packages and letters include the following:

- Excessive postage
- Handwritten or poorly typed addresses
- Incorrect titles
- Title, but no name
- Misspellings of common words
- Oily stains, discoloration 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
- Foreign Mail, Air mail and Special Delivery

In addition to physical characteristics, consideration should also be given to the listed factors to help determine the likelihood of a threat:

- Is there a common sense explanation to the letter?
- Have all reasonable explanations been exhausted? For example, public safety personnel recently responded to a suspicious package that involved a letter from an unknown person in Florida. When prompted by questions from the officer, the citizen recalled they had registered with a timeshare in Florida. The unknown name listed on the return address was in fact the sales agent, hence eliminating the suspicion or need for further action.
- Is there a specific known threat?
- Is there a consistent threat pattern?
- Has there been any past experience of legitimate threats?
- Is there any relationship to the government (domestic or foreign) security, military, social, or religious activities?

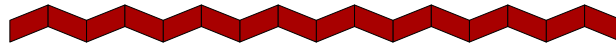
If you are unable to allay your suspicions, call the non-emergency police and fire line at 703-691-2131, or 911 for emergency situations.

Public Safety Communications Center personnel will engage the caller in conversation regarding the above listed physical characteristics and circumstances to determine the proper level of response. They recognize that a level of anxiety and fear may be associated with these types of issues. However, experience has shown that asking some basic questions provides a calming affect and in many cases helps identify a legitimate origin of the letter or package. This is a crucial process of risk and resource management.

When factors do not rule-out suspicion, the calltakers will determine the appropriate public safety response. They will likely ask you the location of the package and if it is open or closed. Depending on the circumstances they may also provide the following suggestions.



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IF THE LETTER OR PACKAGE IS SUSPICIOUS AND UNOPENED:

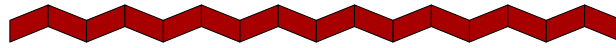
1. Do not shake or empty the contents of any suspicious envelope or package.
2. PLACE the envelope or package in a plastic bag or some other type of container to prevent leakage of contents.
3. If you do not have any container, then COVER the envelope or package with anything (e.g., clothing, paper, trashcan, etc.) and do not remove this cover.
4. Then have everyone LEAVE the immediate area and CLOSE any door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering (i.e., keep others away).
5. WASH your hands with soap and water to prevent spreading any powder to your face.
6. LIST all people who were in the room or area when this suspicious letter or package was recognized.

IF ENVELOPE OR PACKAGE CONTAINS 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, trashcan, etc.) and do not remove this cover!
2. Then have everyone LEAVE the room and CLOSE any 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. REMOVE heavily 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.
5. SHOWER with soap and water as soon as possible. Do Not Use Bleach or Other Disinfectant on Your Skin.
6. List all people who were in the room or area, especially those who had actual contact with the powder.



Mail Handling Safety and Security



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One of three things will likely occur if you call the Public Safety Communications Center:

- A reasonable explanation for the letter will be identified and no further action will be required by public safety personnel.
- Items that are suspicious, not known to contain any substance and are not yet opened will prompt a non-emergency response by a police officer. The police officer will ask questions comparable to those posed by the original calltaker. If the officer is unable to rule out any reasonable explanation for the letter without opening it, the officer will either suggest the letter be disposed of, or in rare situations the officer will take custody of the letter (it will be opened at a later date in a lab facility). You may not get the letter back.
- Items that are suspicious and contain an unknown substance will prompt a response from the Fire Department. The fire officials will ask questions comparable to those posed by the original calltaker. If unable to rule out any reasonable explanation for the letter they will determine the need for a HAZMAT (Fairfax County Fire & Rescue Department's Hazardous Materials Unit) response. This response will vary depending on the associated circumstances.

In each incident the responding public safety employee should be able to provide a description of any follow-up procedure, as relevant. While safety always comes first, it is also crucial that risk be properly managed by not improperly allocating resources. Try and remain calm and give some objective thoughts to the legitimate possibilities of the letter or package.

If you need assistance, call Douglass O'Neill in the safety section at 571-423-2010.