

University of California, Irvine

Protocol for Identifying and Handling a Suspicious Package

1.0 Purpose

The following information is provided as guidance to all individuals who handle packages and mail. We are aware of the increased concerns on the part of University employees handling mail. While we have good reason to feel safe within the University, everyone should exercise and maintain an increased level of vigilance. Use a common sense approach to your evaluation of the mail. You cannot and should not worry about EVERY piece of mail entering your department or crossing your desk. There are certain types of mail all departments receive on a regular basis. However, be alert for mail from locations or people you would not normally hear from. Make a practice of evaluating your mail prior to opening it. Distribution Services also screens for suspicious packages as part of their routine handling of mail.

2.0 Identifying a Suspicious Package

A suspicious letter or package might have some of the following indicators:

- Origin - Postmark doesn't match the city of the return address, or name of sender is unusual or unknown, or no return address is given.
- Postage - Excessive or inadequate postage.
- Balance - The letter is lopsided or unusually thick weight - The letter or package seems heavy for its size.
- Contents - Stiffness or springiness of contents; protruding wires or components; oily outer wrapping or envelope; feels like it contains powdery substance.
- Smell - Particularly almond or other suspicious odors.
- Writing - Handwriting of sender is not familiar or indicates a foreign style not normally received by recipient, or cut-and-paste or rub-on-block letters are used. Common words, names, or titles are misspelled, or special instructions like "fragile," "confidential," or "do not delay" are present.

If the letter or package is a mail bomb, the letter or package may also have:

- Protruding wires, 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.

3.0 Actions to Take Upon Receipt of a Suspicious Package

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 into a plastic bin; 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 action to prevent others from entering.
- Wash your hands with soap and water.
- Call UCI Police Department (UCIPD) at 824-5223 or 911 from a campus phone.
- Make a list of those who were in the area of the letter or parcel and give the list to UCIPD.

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.
- Put the package or envelope into a plastic bin; do not touch, sniff, taste, or look closely at it or any contents that may have spilled.

- Do not try to clean up the powder.
- Do not wave the letter in the air or ask others to come look at it.
- Avoid any extra contact with the suspicious article.
- Alert others in the area, leave the room and close the door, take action to prevent others from entering.
- Wash your hands with soap and water to prevent spread of contamination.
- Call EH&S at 824-6200 or UCIPD at 824-5223 or 911 from a campus phone.
- Stay in the area (outside of the affected area, but close by) so you can speak with the authorities. 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 UCIPD.
- 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.

4.0 Notification

- Notify Supervisor
- Notify the UCI Police Department at 824-5223 or 911 from a campus phone.
- Notify Environmental Health and Safety at 824-6200

5.0 Containment

- Minimize activities until the appropriate response staff arrive. If absolutely necessary, move impacted individuals into nearest bathroom facility on floor.

- Non-impacted individuals on the impacted floor should be evacuated and await further instructions from the appropriate response staff.
- The response team will notify Facilities Management if the HVAC system, (heating and ventilation system) should be immediately turned off for impacted areas, adjacent areas, and bathrooms.
- Isolate impacted area(s), e.g., shut door during exit. Do not allow any unprotected personnel into the impacted area.
- Retain all impacted material for the response team.

6.0 Police and EH&S Threat Assessment and Response Guidelines

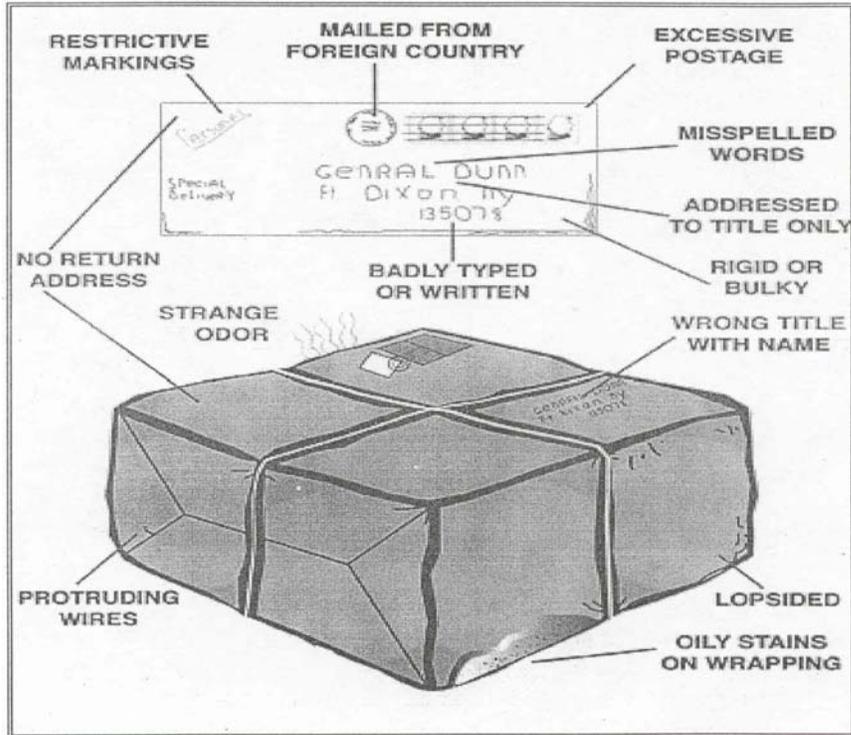
- 6.1** The police dispatcher or police officer will question the caller to determine the circumstances giving rise to a suspicion that the mail or package may be hazardous. In doing this assessment, the indicators noted in **Section 2.0** will help to determine if a credible threat exists.
- 6.2** If the police dispatcher or police officer determines that there is no evidence to suggest a credible threat or a presence of a hazardous material and the call is non-criminal in nature, the dispatcher/police officer may advise the department or individual that the mail/package may be opened, returned to the post office, or disposed of unopened as the department chooses.
- 6.3** If the screening determines, after questioning, that the circumstances warrant a scene investigation due to a suspicious credible threat or the caller insists upon a response, a police officer will be dispatched to the scene. The caller should be told to leave the mail/package where it is, go to another room until the officer arrives, and wash his/her hands in warm water and soap. The

caller should be encouraged not to panic since the probability of an actual contamination or bomb package is extremely low.

- 6.4** If the responding personnel determines after investigation that no evidence is present to establish a credible threat, he/she should inform the reporting person that the letter/package appears benign and may be opened, returned to the post office/shipper, or disposed of unopened as the person chooses.
- 6.5** If the reporting person, in spite of the lack of a credible threat, insists that the mail/package be removed; the responding officer will receive it as found property for disposal. The reporting person will be informed that the property is being received for disposal only and will not be subjected to testing or returned.
- 6.6** If the responding personnel determines, based upon the totality of circumstances revealed by the investigation, that there is a credible threat of the presence of a hazardous material; the officer will notify the EH&S Emergency Response Team to conduct further investigation and mitigation.
- 6.7** If the responding officer determines that there is credible evidence that the package may be a bomb, the officer should take steps to request a response by the fire department bomb squad.
- 6.8** If the scene investigation reveals a significant probability that a criminal delivery of hazardous materials for terrorist or other purposes has occurred, the police officer will notify the FBI to request assistance in the investigation.

For additional information, please contact the UCI Police Department at 824-5223 or Environmental Health and Safety at 824-6200.

Some characteristics of a suspicious package are provided in the illustration below:



Package Received

Identifying a suspicious package

Indicators of a suspicious package

Additional bomb indicators

- Origin - Postmark doesn't match the city of the return address, or name of sender is unusual or unknown, or no return address is given.
 - Postage - Excessive or inadequate postage
 - Balance - Lopsided or unusually thick
 - Weight- Package seems heavy for its size
 - Contents - Stiffness or springiness of contents: protruding wires or components; oily outer wrapping or envelope.
 - Smell - Particularly almond or other suspicious odors
 - Writing - Handwriting of sender is not familiar or indicates a foreign style not normally received by recipient or cut-and-paste or rub-on block letters are used. Common words are misspelled or special instructions like "fragile", "confidential", or "do not delay" are present
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- Protruding wires
 - An unusual amount of tape
 - Buzzing, ticking or 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 if it is determined to be suspicious

Unopened

Opened

- Do not open it
- Do not panic
- Do not shake or empty the contents
- Place package on stable surface or into a plastic bin; do not touch, sniff or taste
- Look for contents that may have spilled or leaked
- Alert others in the area, leave the room & close the door
- Wash hands with soap and water
- Call UCI Police Department (UCIPD)
- Make a list of who was in the area of the package and give to UCIPD

- Unknown Substance:
- Do not smell or inhale it
- Do not try and clean the powder
- Place package on stable surface or into a plastic bin; do not touch, sniff or taste
- Do not wave the letter in the air or ask others to look at it
- Avoid extra contact
- Alert others in the area, leave the room & close the door
- Wash hands with soap and water
- Call UCI Police Department (UCIPD)
- Make a list of who was in the area of the package and give to UCIPD
- Stay in the area so you can speak with authorities
- Remove if possible, heavily contaminated clothing and place in bag or waste can. Give clothing to ER responders for handling.
- Shower with soap and water as soon as possible. Do not use bleach or other disinfectant on your skin.

Notification

- Notify Supervisor
- Notify UCIPD
- Notify Environmental Health and Safety

Police and EH&S Threat Assessment and Response Guidelines

- The police dispatcher, police officer, or EH&S will question the caller to determine the circumstances giving rise to a suspicion that the mail or package may be hazardous. In doing this assessment, the indicators noted in Section II will help to determine if a credible threat exists.
- If the police dispatcher, police officer, or EH&S determines after questioning that there is no evidence to suggest a credible threat or a presence of a hazardous material and the call is non-criminal in nature, the dispatcher/police officer may advise the department or individual that the mail/package may be opened, returned to the post office, or disposed of unopened as the department chooses.
- If the screening determines, after questioning, that the circumstances warrant a scene investigation due to a suspicious credible threat or the caller insists upon a response, a police officer or EH&S personnel will be dispatched to the scene. The caller should be told to leave the mail/package where it is, go to another room until the officer arrives, and wash his/her hands in warm water and soap. The caller should be encouraged not to panic since the probability of an actual contamination or bomb package is extremely low.
- If the responding personnel determines after investigation that no evidence is present to establish a credible threat, he/she should inform the reporting person that the letter/package appears benign and may be opened, returned to the post office or shipper, or disposed of unopened as the person chooses.
- If the reporting person, in spite of the lack of a credible threat, insists that the mail/package be removed, the responding officer will receive it as found property for disposal. The reporting person will be informed that the property is being received for disposal only and will not be subjected to testing or returned.
- If the responding personnel determines, based upon the totality of circumstances revealed by the investigation, that there is a credible threat of the presence of a hazardous material; the officer will notify EH&S Emergency Response Team to conduct further investigation and mitigation.
- If the responding officer determines that there is credible evidence that the package may be a bomb, the officer should take steps to request a response by the fire department bomb squad.
- If the scene investigation reveals a significant probability that a criminal delivery of hazardous materials for terrorist or other purposes has occurred, the police officer will notify the FBI to request assistance in the investigation.

Containment

Minimize activities until appropriate response staff arrive. If absolutely necessary, move impacted individuals into nearest bathroom facility on floor.