

How to Handle Suspicious Mail (Letters and Packages)

Characteristics of suspicious mail include:

- ➡ Powdery substance on the outside.
- ➡ Unexpected or from someone unfamiliar.
- ➡ Excessive postage – stamps in lieu of a meter strip.
- ➡ Handwritten or poorly typed address, incorrect titles or titles with no name, misspellings of common words or addressed to someone no longer with your organization or are otherwise outdated.
- ➡ Oily stains, discoloration, or odor.
- ➡ No return address, or has one that cannot be verified as legitimate.
- ➡ Excessive or unusual weight, given the size. Lopsided or oddly shaped.
- ➡ Protruding wires or aluminum foil.
- ➡ Excessive security materials (e.g. masking tape, string).
- ➡ Ticking sound.
- ➡ Marked with restrictive endorsements (e.g. “Personal” or “Confidential”).
- ➡ Postmark with city/state not matching return address.

If you receive packages or envelopes that meet several of the above criteria, contact:

State Patrol, Post 16 1-5608 (24/7)
Des Moines Policy Department, 283-4811 or 911
DAS Customer Services, 2-5120

If letter or package is open and/or a threat is identified:

- ➡ Do not shake or empty the contents. **HANDLE WITH CARE!**
- ➡ Place the envelope or container in a plastic bag or cover and do not remove this cover. If powder is present, do not try to clean it up.
- ➡ Turn off fans or ventilation units in the area.
- ➡ Evacuate the room and close the door.
- ➡ Wash hands, arms, and other exposed surfaces with soap and water. Do not use bleach or other disinfectant on your skin.
- ➡ Contact the local police department immediately.
- ➡ Notify your supervisor and building security official immediately.
- ➡ Remove contaminated clothing as soon as possible and place in a plastic bag. Give clothing bag to the emergency responders for proper handling.
- ➡ Shower with soap and water as soon as possible.
- ➡ List all people present in the room or area when the letter or package was discovered. Give this list to local public health authorities for medical follow-up and to local law enforcement officials for further investigation.

For detailed information regarding anthrax, please refer to:

www.redcross.org

www.idph.state.ia.us