

# RESPONDING TO THE RECEIPT OF ENVELOPES OR PACKAGES SUSPECTED TO CONTAIN ANTHRAX

The purpose of these guidelines is to recommend procedures for handling such incidents at home or at the workplace. Decisions about the need for decontamination and initiation of antibiotics should be made by health officials responsible for the jurisdiction in which the incident occurs. In most circumstances, the decision of whether to initiate antibiotics can be delayed until the presence or absence of anthrax bacteria or spores is determined by the State Public Health Laboratory. State and local health department officials should be involved in the decision-making process when a potential exposure has occurred. A risk assessment for those persons involved in the incident should also be coordinated by law enforcement personnel.

## ***What You Should Know About Anthrax***

1. Anthrax organisms can cause skin infection, gastrointestinal infection or pulmonary infection. To do so, the organism must be rubbed into abraded skin, swallowed, or inhaled as a fine, aerosolized mist. All forms of disease are generally treatable with antibiotics, if detected in a timely manner. If the exposure was real, symptoms would usually develop within two to six days.
2. For anthrax to be effective as a biological agent it must be aerosolized into tiny particles smaller than a red blood cell. 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.

## ***What To Do If You Encounter A Suspicious Letter Or Package - DO NOT PANIC***

### **Suspicious Unopened Letter**

1. Place envelope in a plastic bag.
2. **WASH** hands with soap and water.
3. **NOTIFY** your supervisor, who may then notify the Police and the FBI.
4. If at home, call the Police regarding the letter.

### **Powder Spills Out Of An Envelope**

1. **DO NOT** clean powder up. Keep others away (including pets, if at home).
2. **GENTLY** invert a container, such as an empty trash can, **OVER** the envelope and powder to avoid dispersal. The district health department and/or law enforcement officials may encourage sample testing to determine the contents of the powder.
3. **NOTIFY** your supervisor who may contact the District Health Department epidemiologist, the Police and the FBI who may respond to the scene. If you are at home, call the Police for further assistance.
4. Avoid the area containing the envelope but **REMAIN** on premises and wait for further instructions from your supervisor or emergency responders.
5. Anyone who contacted the powder should **WASH** their hands with soap and water immediately.
6. **DO NOT** brush off your clothes.
7. **SHUT OFF** direct air sources or notify someone who can, to avoid unnecessary dispersal (air conditioners, fans, central air, etc...)
8. **MAKE** a list of all people who had contact with the powder and a list of your movements after handling the suspicious letter (ex: office cubicle, rest room, elevator, etc...) and give both lists to the emergency responders. Further medical follow-up for yourself and exposed associates and surface decontamination may be required.

### **Package Marked With Threatening Message Such As "Anthrax"**

1. **DO NOT OPEN!**
2. **LEAVE** it and **EVACUATE** the room.
3. **KEEP** others from entering.
4. **NOTIFY** your supervisor who may contact the Police and the FBI. If at home, contact the Police.
5. Avoid the area containing the package but remain on premises and wait for further instructions from your supervisor or emergency responders.

### **Aerosolization, Small Explosion, Or Letter Stating Anthrax In Ventilation System**

1. **LEAVE** room immediately and secure entry.
2. **NOTIFY** your supervisor, who may contact the Police and the FBI.
3. **SHUT** down air handling system or contact someone that can.
4. **REMAIN** on premises until responders arrive to make sure that all potentially exposed persons are accounted for.
5. **MAKE** a list of all people who were in your work area at the time of the threat and give the list to the emergency responders. Further medical follow-up may be required for yourself and exposed associates.

**FOR ALL SUSPICIOUS UNLABELED MAIL NOTIFY THE STATE POLICE. DO NOT OPEN.**

Contact Numbers: FBI BOISE field office (208)-344-7843, Idaho State Police (208) 846-7500