

Crime Prevention News

To Enhance the Safety of Faculty, Staff and Students

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FBI Advisory

If you receive a suspicious letter or package

What should you do?

1. Handle with care. Don't touch or handle.
2. Isolate and lock for indicators.
3. Don't Open, Smell or Taste.
4. Think if no suspect, call 911.



If parcel is open and/or a threat is identified...

For a report: For biological: For chemical or explosive: For a report: For biological: For chemical or explosive:



Division Department
State Department
Local FBI Office

Suspicious Packages

By Officer Brad Allison

If you decide the letter or package is suspicious, you should not handle it. Do not open it, smell it, or taste it. Do not shake or bump it. Notify your supervisor, who should immediately contact the Department of Public Safety. Make sure that damaged or suspicious packages are isolated.

Due to recent news reports of bio-hazards being sent through the

mail the following is offered to assist The University of Iowa community. Keep in mind that the U.S. mail handles 208 billion pieces of mail per year and only a few pieces to date has contained anthrax. Although there is no need for hysteria, awareness is always prudent.

When handling mail delivered to your work area or residence look for these indicators.

- Unexpected items from someone familiar.
- Items with an unfamiliar return address, a return address that cannot be verified.
- Items with a postmark that does not match the return address.
- Items with a correct name but incorrect title.
- Something addressed to someone who no longer works with your organization.
- Items that say a certain person should open the package.
- Items that are marked personal or confidential.
- Items mailed from a foreign country.
- Items with misspelled words.
- Items with strange wires.
- Items that are overweight, lopsided, or oddly shaped.
- Items with oily stains, discolorations, or crystallization on the wrapper.

If you become suspicious after opening an item you should:

- Isolate the object. Make sure that nobody else goes near the item. If someone did handle it, record the name of the individual and the circumstances, then ask them to remain in the area. You will need to provide officials with contact information.
- Anyone who has handled the item needs to wash his or her hands vigorously.
- Notify the Department of Public Safety Police Division at 335-5022
- As soon as practical, shower with soap and water.

After authorities collect the mail and other items, they will assess the threat situation and coordinate with the proper agency. They will also work with designated officials to notify local, county, and state health departments, and the state emergency manager. ■

F.B.I. Advisory



"To Serve and Protect"

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Ph. (319) 335-5022
www.uiowa.edu/~pubsfty

Suspicious Packages, DPS protocol

PROTOCOL FOR HANDLING CALLS FOR UNOPENED LETTERS/PACKAGES

If DPS receives phone calls about letters/packages (L/P) **that have not been opened**, please be advised that these phone calls **SHALL** be handled by supervisors only.

If DPS receives a call about a suspicious **UNOPENED** L/P, DPS will adhere to the following guidelines.

1. After obtaining name, location, phone # and other pertinent information, the reporting person will be asked to confirm that there is **NO VISIBLE HAZARD** connected with the L/P such as powder, liquid or anything of a biological nature on the L/P.
2. DPS will ask why the reporting party considers the L/P to be suspicious.
3. DPS will obtain and document a complete description of the L/P in question.
 - a) Return address
 - b) Postmark and date
 - c) Addressee of the L/P
 - d) Description of the L/P – approximate size, color, and material (i.e. regular business envelope, brown paper wrapping, cardboard box, etc.)
4. DPS will attempt to **assess the threat** by asking the following questions. If the answer to any of these questions is yes, we will consider the L/P to be a credible threat. DPS will advise the caller to immediately lay the L/P down, leave and isolate the area.
 - a) Is there a threat message associated with the L/P? (Is there a written threat, threatening phone call or verbal threat associated with the L/P?)
 - b) Does the L/P appear to contain any substance other than printed matter?
 - Does there appear to be any liquid, powder or granular material in or on it?
 - Is it lumpy, of uneven thickness or lopsided?
 - Are there any protruding wires?
 - Are there any stains, spots, discolorations or crystallizations on the outside?
 - Is there any strange odor associated with the L/P?
 - Is there any leakage or anything oozing from the L/P?
 - c) Does the return address or originating postmark present any threat potential in and of itself? (Letters or packages from Trenton, NJ or from Middle Eastern countries, Malaysia, Philippines or other overseas locations **may** present heightened threat potential.)
5. If the answer to **all** the questions under #4 is “**NO**”, DPS will then advise the caller that the L/P should be treated as they would treat any unsolicited junk mail. The reporting party can simply throw it away if they do not wish to open it (This is in keeping with instructions received from the FBI and the Commissioner for the State Department of Public Safety.) If the reporting party inquires about other items that may have raised their concern such as missing return address over or under postage, and other items that may or may not appear on the list sent to Deans and Directors, DPS will inform them that while those items may be “**suspicious**”, it is the questions under #4 that will determine if it is a “**credible**” threat.
6. If the reporting party wants to open the item, DPS will let them know that it is prudent to do so slowly and cautiously using scissors rather than a letter opener. DPS will instruct the reporting party to leave the item right where it is and call us back if they have any concerns after opening the L/P.



Suspicious Packages, DPS protocol (cont.)

7. If the reporting party chooses to simply throw it away they can do so immediately in the regular trash. Bagging will not be necessary nor will DPS need to respond.
8. If the reporting party wants the L/P opened and examined (**provided that the L/P shows no signs of biological contamination**), DPS will inform them that we will come and transport the item to the Hygienic lab for storage and eventual opening/examination. However, DPS will advise the reporting party that the ***HYGIENIC LAB WILL NOT RETURN ANY ITEMS!*** They will examine for contamination only. If the lab finds no contamination, they will destroy all submitted items regardless of content. If they do find contamination, the reporting party will be contacted for the purpose of giving them the option of seeking medical attention.

PROTOCOL FOR TRANSPORTING UNOPENED LETTERS AND PACKAGES

After going through the PROTOCOL FOR HANDLING CALLS FOR UNOPENED LETTERS/PACKAGES, if DPS is called upon to transport an UNOPENED L/P that shows no visible signs of outside contamination DPS will adhere to the following guidelines.

1. DPS will take as many kits as needed to respond to the call.
2. The officer providing transport will take an evidence sheet to use as a property transfer sheet that must be signed by the individual receiving the L/P.
3. Protection will be provided for each officer to respond to transport calls.
4. L/Ps will be triple bagged for maximum protection; bags shall be identified with tags indicating location, date/time and reporting person.

(At this time the officer providing transport will contact DPS dispatch before going to the next step. DPS will advise dispatch to call University Hygienic Lab (UHL) central receiving to prepare for receipt of a suspicious L/P; call 5-4270. Once dispatch has confirmed that UHL is expecting the item, DPS will go to the next step. If UHL central receiving is NOT responding, DPS will advise the reporting party that the bagged item presents no known threat and will have to remain at the present location until such time when UHL can take possession of the L/P. Look for as secure a location as possible within the immediate area and note location and person to contact for eventual transport.)

5. DPS will place the bagged item in the transport cooler and secure.
6. DPS will place the cooler in the squad car in such a way to minimize toppling.
7. The officer will deliver the L/P to UHL central receiving at the Oakdale Hall/Hygienic Lab building.
8. DPS will have the person receiving the L/P date, sign and print their name on the evidence/property sheet.
9. The evidence/property sheets will be attached to the appropriate documentation and appropriately filed.

NOTE: Open packages will be assessed to the risk level by the Department of Public Safety and the Health Protection Office along with the University State Hygienic Lab will be notified.