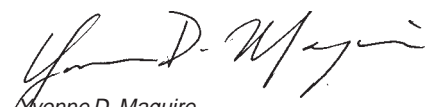


# Management Instruction

## Emergency Response to Mail Allegedly Containing Anthrax

This instruction provides emergency response procedures and management guidelines for incidents in which letters or parcels are received that allegedly contain anthrax, a biologically hazardous material.

Date	October 4, 1999
Effective	Immediately
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Obsoletes	None
Unit	Safety and Health

  
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## Background

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### Recent Incidents

In 1998 and 1999 there have been several instances where Postal customers have reported receiving letters or parcels that allegedly contained a specific biologically hazardous material, anthrax. Represented thus, all of these incidents were undeclared prohibited mailings, even though they were considered to be hoaxes.

Hoaxes can leave employees and the community in need of information and counseling, and the possibility of bioterrorism cannot be ignored.

### Anthrax

Anthrax is an acute infectious disease caused by *bacillus anthracis*. Spores enter the body through open wounds, cuts, or mucous membranes (mouth, nose) or are inhaled or ingested. Humans usually get the disease by coming into contact with spores of infected animals (cattle, sheep, goats) or their products. It is probably not transmitted from person to person, and a person with anthrax is not contagious. *Bacillus anthracis* spores can cause disease in 2 to 60 days.

Individuals who have been identified as having had an exposure to anthrax may be treated by medication.

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# Policy

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## General

The Postal Service is committed to providing a safe and healthful work environment for its employees. Suspected bioterrorism threats or suspicious incidents require prompt action by health, safety, law enforcement, and laboratory personnel. Coordination and communication are essential to protect first responders and employees.

## Responsibilities

### Postal Service Management

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has jurisdiction for bioterrorism response, and the Inspection Service coordinates with the FBI. It is management's responsibility to minimize potential exposures through quick *isolation and evacuation* until emergency response and law enforcement can arrive and take control of the incident.

Managers must ensure the following:

1. All employees, through safety talks, hazardous materials first-responder training, and emergency action plan training, must be instructed on initial actions to take if there has been a suspected exposure to anthrax (or other biologically hazardous material).
2. Emergency action plans, crisis management plans, hazardous materials spills response instructions, medical service standing orders, and other related standard operating procedures must be modified to incorporate appropriate guidance.

Crisis management plans must be revised to do the following:

- a. Include appropriate actions to ensure initial coordination with the FBI and outside responders through the Inspection Service.
- b. Detail other initial actions to isolate and contain potential contamination and deal with potentially exposed employees.
- c. Cover subsequent actions, including proper medical treatment (using current Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines), employee counseling, and media liaison.

The emergency action plan must include the telephone numbers of the initial and secondary contacts.

## **Contractors and Suppliers**

Contractors and suppliers who handle and transport mail and function outside of postal facilities must have in place and be able to demonstrate proficiency and compliance with state required and approved hazardous cargo, bloodborne pathogen, and related hazard response protocols, including international airport response procedures.

Any incident that falls within these requirements must be reported to the Postal Service immediately upon notification of the hazard.

## **Emergency Response Procedures**

### ***Employees Who Suspect Mail Is Contaminated***

- 1> Do not handle the mailpiece or package suspected of contamination.
- 2> Notify the postal supervisor, who will immediately contact the facility safety office or other designated person.
- 3> Make sure that damaged or suspicious packages are isolated and the immediate area cordoned off.

### ***Individuals Who May Have Touched a Contaminated Mailpiece***

- >> Wash your hands and wait for further instruction from management and, ultimately, outside emergency response experts.

### ***Internal Postal Spill and Leak Teams***

- >> Do **not** handle suspect packages, clean areas, or take any response action other than to retreat, isolate, and notify management in accordance with the facility standard operating procedures.

### ***Facility Management***

- 1> Alert employees to stay in evacuation areas and not leave postal property so that they can receive necessary information and medical follow-up if appropriate.

- 2>** Invoke the emergency action plan, including the following:
- a. Effecting mechanical shutdowns (including air handling equipment), isolation, and evacuation.
  - b. Notifying the Inspection Service.
  - c. Notifying Postal Service Aviation Mail Security Office.
  - d. Notifying postal and local community emergency responders, which may include the health department, fire department, or local law enforcement.