



3.18 SUSPECT PACKAGES

Guidance and Procedures

The use of explosive/incendiary devices and chemical/biological agents by various groups of subversive elements causes great concern. Familiar objects such as brief cases, shopping bags, plastic bags and envelopes, can contain these items. All employees can greatly assist in reducing the likelihood of these items being planted in buildings by being observant and vigilant at all times and by reporting any suspect packages or parcels, or persons loitering in the vicinity of Council buildings and also complying with any security arrangement already in place i.e. don't tail gate through access controlled doors and ensure they are closed behind you. If you discover a suspect package do not disturb it and report it to a senior manger immediately.

Managers with responsibility for buildings will need to consider what contingency plans are needed for handling mail and suspect packages and put in place response plans in the event of receiving a suspect letter or package, these plans must be regularly rehearsed.

As part of any contingency planning you will need to have measures in place to quickly trace a suspect letter or parcel back through the mail handling system. This will assist in identifying anyone in the workplace who may have been exposed to a risk to their health and safety so they can be treated quickly.

General Mail Handling - What to Look For

Suspect packages can come in any shape or size, and anything suspicious should be reported. These devices may explode on opening, so be alert for: -

- **The Postmark** - especially if foreign, and any name and address of sender.
- **The Writing** - which may be of a foreign style.
- **The Balance** - which if uneven is suspect.
- **The Weight** - if it seems excessive for size, treat it as suspect.
- **The Feel** - which if "springy" or stiff with cardboard may indicate a trap.

- **Any Protruding Wires** - (even the best prepared devices can go adrift in transit), treat it as suspect.
- **Any Holes** - (like pin holes) in wrapping or envelope.
- **Greasy Marks** - on wrapping or envelope, which could be from "sweating" explosive.
- **The Smell** - some explosives have an aroma of marzipan or almonds.
- **The "Booby" Trap** - could be one envelope tightly taped or tied with string inside another; examine both for indications listed above.
- **Powder** - Envelopes may have traces of powder-like residue
- **Excessive Postage/ Packaging** - tape or string
- **Postmark** - that does not match return address
- **Restrictive Endorsements** - such as "Personal" or "Confidential"
- **Misspellings** - of common words, incorrect titles, title but no name
- **Addressed Incorrect** - to individual no longer with organisation

General Mail Handling – What To Do

- Open all mail with a letter opener or other method that is least likely to disturb contents.
- Open packages/envelopes with a minimum amount of movement.
- Do not blow into envelopes.
- Do not shake or pour out contents.
- Keep hands away from nose and mouth while opening mail.
- Wash hands after handling mail.
- Remain calm.
- Do not touch the package further or move it to another location.
- Shut windows and doors in the room and leave the room, but keep yourself separate from others and available for medical examination.
- Switch off any room air conditioning system.

- Do not touch eyes, nose or any other part of the body.
- Wash your hands in ordinary soap where facilities are provided, but staff movement outside contained locations should be avoided as much as possible.
- Notify police immediately using the 999 system.
- Keep all persons exposed to the material separate from others and available for medical attention.

Bomb Threats

Threats concerning the planting of explosives are in most cases made by telephone, and a time limit may be given. The message may be a hoax to cause maximum disruption of work, but it is unlikely that a reliable assessment of whether the call is genuine can be made. It is therefore essential that all such calls are treated seriously and dealt with urgently.

Any person receiving a bomb-threat telephone call should take the following action:

- Remain calm.
- Let the person finish the message without interruption.
- Whilst the caller is talking write down the message **exactly**.
- Note conditions affecting speech such as drunkenness, laughter, anger, excitement, and incoherency.
- Note peculiarities of speech such as foreign accent, mispronunciation, speech impediment, tone and pitch of voice.
- Listen for background noises audible during the call, such as music, traffic, talking and machinery.

After the caller has given the message, try to keep them in conversation. If possible, ask the following key questions:

- Where is the bomb located?
- What time will it explode?
- When was it placed?
- Why was it placed?

Evacuation

Where a decision is made, the evacuation of the building will be exactly the same procedure taken in case of fire, and will be signalled by sounding the fire alarm. Any individual identifying, on evacuation, a suspect package should immediately inform the Evacuation Warden/Controller who will then notify the appropriate officers of its description and location. Once evacuation is complete, a search of the premises may then be undertaken with the assistance and advice of the police.