



## Handling Powder-Contaminated Letters or Packages

Supplement Guidance for Mail Rooms to United States Postal Service Poster 84

Handling contaminated letters or packages can put anyone, including trained professionals, at risk. If you receive suspicious mail, **call 911** immediately. For the safety of yourself and others, be sure to avoid:

- *Shaking or emptying the contents of the item.*
- *Showing the item to others or moving it once it has been placed on the nearest stable surface.*
- *Sniffing, touching, tasting, or inspecting the item or any contents that may have spilled.*

If you have opened an envelope or package and you **suspect** there is a **hazardous powder** present, **call 911** and:

1. Place the envelope or package (item) on the nearest stable surface.
2. The person(s) who handled the item should remain in the room, move slowly away from the item, and then move as little as possible until they receive instructions from law enforcement officials, emergency responders, or public health authorities. This will greatly reduce the risk of exposure to others.
3. The person(s) who handled the item should alert other persons in the area. Person(s) that did not handle the item should leave the room. No objects (e.g., handbags, knapsacks, coats) should be removed from the room.
4. Notify a supervisor or a security officer, and contact your local law enforcement agencies. Only allow law enforcement or first responders to examine the item.
5. People departing should close any doors to prevent others from entering the area. If possible, turn off any fans in the room and close any open windows.
6. People departing should wash hands and other exposed skin with soap and water.
7. People departing should remain in the immediate area outside of the room/building and wait for law enforcement officials, emergency responders, or public health authorities to provide decontamination and further evacuation instructions.
8. The safety officer or supervisor should create a list of persons who were in the room or area when the item was recognized and a list of persons who may have handled the item. Give the list to the local law enforcement officials, emergency responders, or public health authorities responding to the event.

The recommendations are based on a recent study, Kournikakas B et al. *Anthrax Letters in an Open Office Environment: Effects of Selected CDC Response Guidelines on Personal Exposure and Building Contamination*, published in the Journal of Occupational & Environmental Health Feb 2011.