

# Security SpotLight

## An Informational Guide for Security Clients

### Suspect Packaging

- Excessive postage, no postage, or non-canceled postage
- Return address is missing or fictitious
- Improper spelling of names, titles, or locations
- Unexpected envelopes from foreign countries
- Suspicious or threatening messages written on packages
- Postmark differs from location of return address
- Distorted handwriting or cut-and-paste lettering
- Unprofessionally wrapped packages or excessive use of tape, strings, or other wrapping
- Packages marked "Fragile: Handle with Care," "Rush: Do Not Delay," "Personal" or "Confidential"
- Rigid, uneven, irregular, or lopsided packages
- Packages that are discolored, oily or have an unusual odor
- Packages with soft spots, bulges, or excessive weight
- Protruding wires or aluminum foil



## Mail Handling Vigilance

Vigilance is an important part of mail handling. Vigilance means you are watchful and prepared to respond to incidents. Although the likelihood of receiving a package which has been tampered with is remote, they have been discovered, and can result in serious consequences if not properly handled. It is important that all employees understand the company's mail security procedures. This helps instill employee confidence in the safety of the letters or packages delivered to their desks.

### Mail Safety Procedures

Screen mail and packages for suspicious items while they are being sorted in the mailroom. Mailroom employees, typically the ones who perform these screenings, are more likely to notice a suspicious item.

Displaying a list of suspicious letter and package indicators in your mailroom and providing a copy to all staff can be a helpful tool and emphasizes the need for vigilance. The [U.S. Postal Service has a poster](#) that illustrates key characteristics of a suspicious or potentially dangerous mail item.

### Training and Awareness

It is important for employees to be aware of their surroundings and the mail they handle. Providing training about how to spot and handle suspicious packages helps promote a culture of security awareness. Key topics to address in a training program include the following:

- Basic security procedures.
- Recognition and reporting of suspicious letters or packages.
- Proper use of personal protection equipment.

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## Letter and Package Bombs

The odds of a letter or package bomb being delivered are extremely remote. Nevertheless, it is important to be aware of them and have a process to identify and handle them. Bombs can be designed for mailing in many shapes and sizes. Even letter-size mail can contain dangerous substances. Revenge or intimidation are the most common motivations for sending a letter or package bomb, or a bomb threat. The Postal Inspection Service can guide you in establishing a secure mail center and detecting letter and package bombs.

- Establish a letter and package bomb-screening program.
- Appoint a mail center security coordinator and an alternate to be responsible for developing and ensuring compliance with your screening plan.
- Develop screening procedures for all incoming letter and package deliveries and train employees in the procedures.
- Implement handling procedures for items identified as suspicious and dangerous.
- Establish procedures for isolating suspicious letters and packages.

- Response protocols for a chemical, biological, radiological, or bomb threat.

## Mail Management Best Practices

- Examine unopened envelopes and packages and look for suspicious features.
- Handle incoming mail in a designated separate mailroom.
- Wash your hands after mail is opened.
- Restrict mailroom access to authorized persons.

## Unexpected Mail

Be suspicious of unexpected letters and packages. In the event one is received, the following precautions are recommended.

- Check the return address.
- If you don't recognize the return address, follow your company procedures.
- Don't open the suspect item until a thorough examination proves it's harmless.

## How to Handle a Suspect Package

- Remain calm.
- Do not open the package or letter.
- Do not shake or empty the contents of a suspicious package or envelope.

- Do not carry the package or envelope, show it to others or allow others to examine it.
- Put the package or envelope on a stable surface; do not sniff, touch, taste, or look closely at it or any contents that may have spilled.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose, or other body parts.
- Shut off window air conditioning units and fans.
- Isolate the package and secure the room by shutting all doors and windows and limit access to the area.
- Thoroughly wash hands with soap and water and advise all persons who had contact with the letter to wash their hands with soap and water.
- Report the package to a supervisor and call 911.
- Make a list of all persons who had contact with the letter or package or who were in the area when the it was opened.

## Additional Resources

[Department of Homeland Security](#)

[USPS Guide to Mail Center Security](#)

Guidance on suspected chemical, biological, or radiological contamination from the [Centers for Disease Control](#).