

CDC Public Guidelines for Responding to Anthrax Threats

Revised October 14, 2001

I. Advice to the Public

How To Handle Anthrax and Other Biological Agent Threats

Many facilities in communities around the country have received anthrax threat letters. Most were empty envelopes; some have contained powdery substances. The purpose of these guidelines is to recommend procedures for handling such incidents.

DO NOT PANIC

1. Anthrax organisms can cause infection in the skin, gastrointestinal system, or the lungs. To do, so the organism must be rubbed into abraded skin, swallowed, or inhaled as a fine, aerosolized mist. Disease can be prevented after exposure to the anthrax spores by early treatment with the appropriate antibiotics. Anthrax is not spread from one person to another person.
2. For anthrax to be effective as a covert agent, it must be aerosolized into very small particles. This is difficult to do, and requires a great deal of technical skill and special equipment. If these small particles are inhaled, life-threatening lung infection can occur, but prompt recognition and treatment are effective.

Suspicious Letter or Package

1. Do not shake or empty the contents of any suspicious envelope or package; **DO NOT** try to clean up powders or fluids..
2. **PLACE** the envelope or package in a plastic bag or some other type of container to prevent leakage of contents.
3. If you do not have any container, then **COVER** the envelope or package with anything (e.g., clothing, paper, trash can, etc.) and do not remove this cover.
4. Then **LEAVE** the room and **CLOSE** the door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering (i.e., keep others away).
5. **WASH** your hands with **soap and water** to prevent spreading any powder to your face or skin.
6. What to do next... If you are at **HOME**, then report the incident to local police.
 - If you are at **WORK**, then report the incident to local police, **and** notify your building security official or an available supervisor.
7. If possible, **LIST** all people who were in the room or area when this suspicious letter or package was recognized. Give this list to both the local public health authorities and law enforcement officials for follow-up investigations and advice.
8. Remove heavily contaminated clothing and place in a plastic bag that can be sealed; give the bag to law enforcement personnel.
9. Shower with soap and water as soon as possible. Do not use bleach or disinfectant on your skin.