

Mandatory stand-up talk

February 6, 2004

The events of this week remind us how important it is to be alert for suspicious mail – and do the right things if we come across it. As we saw in one of the week's events, an alert employee took the right actions after noticing a suspicious powder spilling from a letter. Doing the right things greatly minimized any risk to employees working at the facility where the letter was found.

Following the proper procedures if you see suspicious mail will protect you and those you work with. They can also reduce any service impact. With the recent events fresh in our minds, this is a good time to go over what to look for - and what to – in the event of suspicious mail. Remember, your safety is our primary concern.

What are characteristics of suspicious packages and letters?

There are four broad categories of suspicious characteristics. An easy way to remember these is by the acronym SLAP: unusual **S**hape, **L**ook, **A**ddress features or **P**ackaging.

Unusual Shape

- Rigid, uneven, irregular or lopsided package.
- Package with soft spots, bulges or excessive weight.

Unusual Look (odor or sound)

- Discoloration, oily stains or an unusual odor.
- Crystals, power or powder-like residue on the package or spilling out from the package.
- Protruding wires or aluminum foil.
- Ticking sound.

Unusual Address features

- Suspicious or threatening language on the outside of the package or letter.
- Postmark that doesn't match the return address or no return address.
- Restrictive endorsements such as "Personal" or "Confidential."
- Distorted handwriting, block-printed or poorly typed addresses.
- Excessive postage.
- Title but no name or incorrect title.
- Misspelled addressee's name, title or location.
- Misspelled common words.
- Addressee unknown or no longer with organization.
- Unexpected mail from a foreign country.

Unusual Packaging

- Excessive tape or string.

If I discover a suspicious letter or package, what should I do?

You can look at the process of dealing with a suspicious package or letter as three simple steps — Package, People, Plan.

- Package — don't handle it. Isolate the area.
- People — evacuate the area around the package and notify your supervisor.
- Plan — per your facility emergency plans, contact the Inspection Service, local police and community first-responders.