

## Check it before you collect it

Regardless of your job, the rules for identifying and handling suspicious packages apply to everyone. Whether you're a sales and services associate accepting a package over the counter, a mail processing employee handling mail in a plant or Post Office or even a letter carrier on a Carrier Pickup stop, you should be on the lookout for suspicious mail and use the same precautions. And the precautions should be familiar to all of us by now.

Is it an unusually shaped package? Suspicious packages can be rigid, uneven, irregular or lopsided. Even packages with soft spots, bulges or excessive weight can be considered suspect.

The look of a package can include physical appearance, odor or sound. Discoloration, oily stains or an unusual odor are all causes for concern. Other characteristics include crystal powder or powder-like residue on or spilling from the package. Protruding wires, aluminum foil or a ticking sound? Definitely suspicious — handle it as such.

Addressing can be a clue as well. Suspicious or threatening language on the outside is a definite no-no. A postmark that doesn't match the return address and excessive postage also are a few things to look for when checking out the address.

If you do find a suspicious package or letter in your facility, remember the three "Ps" of dealing with it: 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.

Need more information? The Emergency Preparedness website has an entire section devoted to suspicious packages at

[http://blue.usps.gov/emergencypreparedness/ep\\_suspicious\\_mail.htm](http://blue.usps.gov/emergencypreparedness/ep_suspicious_mail.htm).