

FACT SHEET 5

Fentanyl and Dangerous Substances IN THE MAIL

There are many poisonous chemicals and substances that enter the mail stream – some legal, others illegal. In 2001, Anthrax powder killed two postal workers and sickened others. A new and rising danger is the chemical Fentanyl, often sent through the mail from both foreign and domestic sources.



What is Fentanyl?

Fentanyl is a dangerous and deadly synthetic opioid. Legally, it is prescribed as a pain killer. Illegally, it is being distributed as an illicit hard drug. Exposure amounts of two grains of salt can be fatal.

Fentanyl can come in many forms: powder, blotter paper, tablets and spray. It is easily absorbed into the body, through the skin or by inhaling.

Fentanyl is so dangerous that law enforcement and first responders are now routinely provided Naloxone – a treatment to be administered and to counter Fentanyl exposure or overdose. In response to the insistence from the APWU, the USPS is beginning to place naloxone in some of their offices. However, anything short of naloxone availability in every postal facility is insufficient and places employees at unnecessary risk.

In Case of Exposure

If you are exposed to powders or chemical substances from the contents of packages, flats or letters, immediately leave the mail and the area and contact your supervisor, postmaster or manager.

USPS Publication 167-B (“Response Checklist for Suspicious Mail and Unknown Powders or Substances”) instructs postal management to take immediate actions, including:

- Clear the area and not let any employees enter
- Don't try to clean up the powders/substances
- Instruct exposed employees to wash hands and any other exposed skin
- Note the names of the workers in the area
- Shut down all equipment in area as well as ventilation and air conditioning systems
- Take protective actions based on the local emergency plan
- Call 911 in the event there are reactions to the exposure.

Stand up for Yourself and Co-workers

Ask local management to keep a supply of naloxone in your office and train employees in proper use. In the event of suspicious powders and substances, take potential exposure seriously. If there are no management personnel in your office, or management is not responding in accordance with their own protocols, call the Postal Inspection Service at 877-876-2455 to report the incident and say emergency when prompted. If you have reason to believe it is a medical emergency, call 911.

HERE'S THE BOTTOM LINE:

The life you save could be your own!