

Guidance

January 2018

Dealing with Suspect Letters and Packages

Occupational Health & Safety
Service
HSD102M (rev 3)

**If you are in any doubt about a
package, letter or parcel, do not
touch it, move it or open it.**

**Call Security immediately:
Phone 31818**



**UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

Chemical/Biological/Radiological Threats by Post

Where it is felt appropriate those responsible for opening letters or packages should be made aware of the following guidance beforehand:

NB: There is no specific threat against this University from chemical, biological or radiological attack. However, you should be aware of the practical steps to take immediately if you receive a suspect package of any kind.

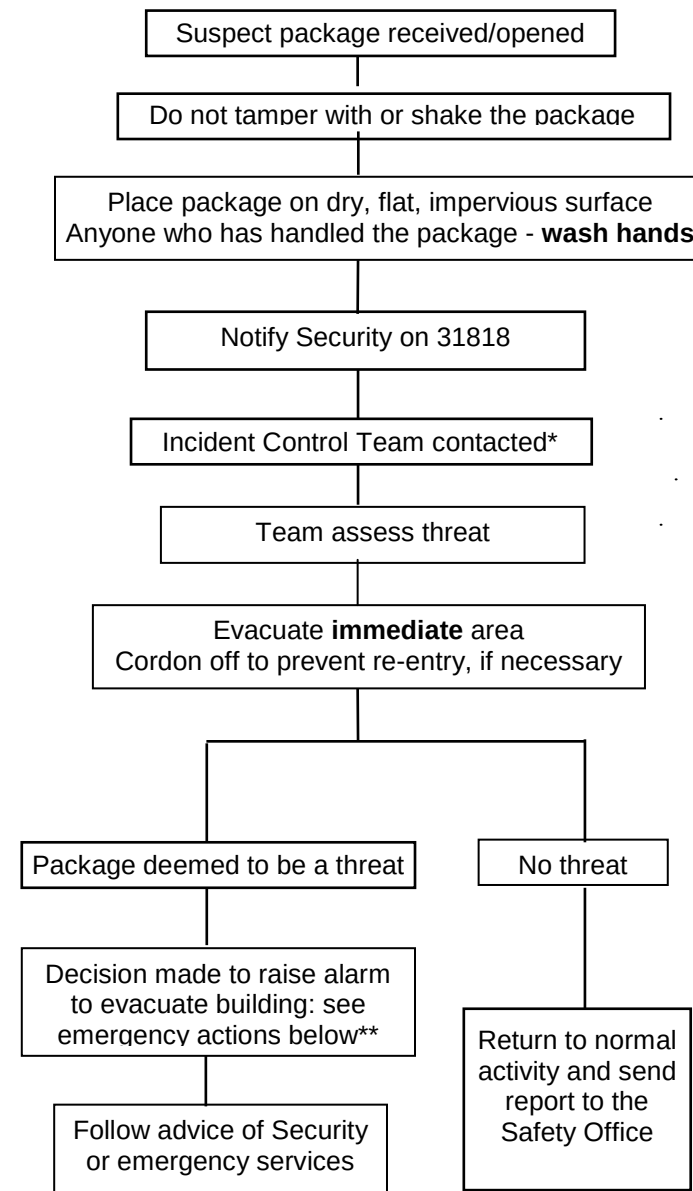
Terrorist or criminal incidents of this nature are extremely rare, more common are hoax events or unintentionally causing concern by such actions as leaving hazard labels on empty boxes and stockpiling them. However, if there is a concern that a suspect chemical/biological/radiological package has been received, sensible steps can be taken to minimise the risk of exposure and the possibility of harm.

The overall message is to **remain calm**.

General Mail Handling:

- Look out for suspicious envelopes or packages, see warning signs below.
- Open all mail with a letter opener or other method that is least likely to disturb the contents.
- Open packages/envelopes with a minimum amount of movement.
- Do not blow into envelopes.
- Do not shake or pour out contents.
- Keep hands away from nose and mouth whilst handling mail.
- Wash hands after handling mail.

Suspect Package Received/ Delivered/ Opened



** This will consist of security personnel, and appropriate University or Departmental personnel*

A suspect package could contain explosive devices, chemical or biological agents or radiological material.

Letter bombs do not conform to any particular shape or size and therefore may come in the form of a padded envelope or small box. They are designed to EXPLODE when opened.

Some pointers to be aware of are:

- Discolouration, crystals on the surface, strange odours or oily stains
- Envelope with powder or powder-like residue
- Excessive tape or string
- Unusual size or unusual weight given the size
- Lop-sided or oddly-shaped/uneven envelope
- Postmark that does not match return address
- Restrictive endorsements such as “Personal” or “Confidential”
- Excessive postage
- Title but no name
- Misspelling of common words
- Addressed to an individual no longer at the University
- Unusual place of origin
- Inaccurate addressee information or “cut and paste” lettering
- Package may contain liquids
- **Remember:**

If you are in **any doubt** about a package, letter or parcel, **do not** touch it, move it or open it.

Call **Security** immediately:
Phone **31818**

Emergency Actions

In the unlikely event that a ‘substance’ (eg powder) is released from a suspect package/letter, the following action should be taken:

- **Remain calm**
- **Do not touch your eyes, nose or any other part of your body**
- **Wash hands in mild soapy water**
- **Call Security**
- Keep all persons finding and exposed to the material separate from others and available for medical attention
- ****Consider the ‘mode of evacuation’**
For instance the ‘Fire Alarm’ may cause people to evacuate via, or close to the location of the incident and point of potential danger
 - Where a central mail handling facility exists, consideration should be given to potential evacuation procedures before any incident has arisen, ask yourself ‘*what if?*’
- Other people should assemble at a safe distance from the incident and continue to be guided by Security and other emergency services
- In addition to the above, a decision may be made to take the following action if any material may have been released in the building:
 - Close all fire doors
 - Close all windows in the rest of the building
 - Turn off ventilation system in building

Even a hoax package will cause distress and disruption; however always assume that if something looks ‘suspicious’, **it is ‘suspect’ until proven otherwise.**

Contact Information:

Remember, the risk from chemical, biological or radiological agents being sent to the University is extremely low.

Following the guidelines laid out in this leaflet will reduce any remaining risk.

However, if you have **ANY** concerns that may not have been addressed by this guidance, please contact:

University Security Adviser

Phone: 39513

Director of Health and Safety

Phone: 39512

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Greenwich House
Madingley Road
Cambridge
CB3 0TX**

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