

# Suspect Packages: Guidance from Torbay's Health & Safety Team

## 1. Assessing the Threat

*The following criteria may assist in assessing the threat:*

*Who is involved?*

- Recipient - VIP target
- Witnesses
- Victims

*What is involved?*

- Nature of suspicious item
- Where has it come from
- How did it get there
- Has it been packaged to reach the venue
- Is it unsolicited
- Have enquiries been made of its origin / sender

*Why is there suspicion?*

- Who says it is suspicious?
- Are there any previous similar reports
- Is there a connected threat/demand



If you wish to discuss any of the following points or seek advice please contact:

Torbay Council's Health & Safety Team: 20 7161 \ 7170

Please refer also to your [Health and Safety Manual](#)

## 2. Minimising the Risk of a Successful Attack

*The following practical steps can be taken:*

- review your procedures for dealing with all mail.
- have one dedicated area for the receipt of incoming mail
- check all mail for suspicious signs
- if equipment is available, scan or x-ray all mail
- if you perceive that your business is at risk from contaminated mail, you may wish to consider:
- using a letter opener and avoid spilling any contents
- having protective equipment available for staff e.g. latex gloves and dust masks
- having airtight containers available for the deposit of such packages

## 3. Dealing with postal bombs

### **(i) Definition**

**Letter and parcel bombs are envelopes and packages designed to kill or injure people when they are opened. They may not come through the post. They may be delivered by hand.**

### **(ii) Signs**

**Any of the following signs should warn you that a letter or package might contain a bomb:**

- There may be grease marks on the envelope or wrapping
- The envelope or package might smell like marzipan or machine oil.
- You might be able to see wires or foil, especially if the letter or package is damaged.
- The envelope or package may feel heavy for its size.
- It may be heavier in some places than others.
- The envelope may be soft but the contents will feel hard.
- The package may have been delivered by hand by somebody you do not know.
- The package may be wrapped more than normal.
- There may be poor handwriting, spelling or typing.
- The envelope or package may be wrongly addressed.
- It may come from somewhere unexpected.
- There may be too many stamps for the weight of the package.

If you are suspicious about a package, and there is an address on it, try to contact the sender. You should also ask whether anyone you work with is expecting a package.

### **(iii) Dealing with postal bombs**

If for any reason you suspect that a letter or package may contain a bomb:

- Put it down gently and walk away from it
- Get everyone to leave the area
- Go through the procedures for notifying the chief Executive/Senior Managers in the buildings as if receiving a bomb threat phone call.

# Suspect Packages: Guidance from Torbay's Health & Safety Team

**Do not put the letter or package into anything (including water) and do not put anything on top of it.**

## **4. Dealing with postal Chemical / biological threats**

### **(i) Signs**

Terrorist or criminal incidents of this nature are extremely rare. However, if there is a concern that a suspect chemical / biological package has been received, sensible steps can be taken to minimise exposure to risk and the possibility of harm. The overall message to the business community is to remain calm.

*The first indication that a chemical / biological incident may have occurred could be:*

- A suspicious object.
- A strong smell of noxious fumes.
- Groups of people suddenly feeling unwell / collapsing.
- Groups of people experiencing sudden skin blisters.\*

*AND*

- There is no obvious explanation evident e.g. accidental chemical tanker spillage or nearby factory etc.

*\*Not all blister agents cause immediate blistering upon contact with the skin.*

### **(ii) Preparing for the Possibility**

*Planning for the delivery of chemical / biological materials by post is based on two features:*

- it will already have undergone some fairly rough handling by the Post Office.
- the package is designed to reach its intended target.

### **(iii) Dealing with Suspected Contaminated Packages**

*Contaminated package received through the post*

- place the package in a sealed bag or container shut windows in the room
- evacuate the room, closing the door switch off the air conditioning system
- notify police immediately using the 999 system
- notify a senior officer in the building

*In addition to the above, consider 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
- evacuate the building - where evacuation is not possible, for example where the evacuation route is through the contaminated area, move staff away from the hazard and await instructions from the emergency services

*Contaminated package outside the building*

- switch off the air conditioning system
- close all fire doors in the building close all windows in the building
- move all occupants away from the hazard and await instructions from the emergency services
- notify the police immediately using the 999 system clearly stating why you believe a chemical / biological material is involved.

*Persons exposed to chemical / biological material*

- do not over react
- do not touch your eyes, nose or any other part of your body
- wash hands in soapy water
- keep all persons finding and exposed to the material separate from others and available for medical attention
- try to ascertain how many people may have been exposed - keep a record including details of their family doctor
- people should be encouraged to stay calm and remain near the scene for further specialist treatment and advice.