

Suspicious Package Guidance

Environmental Health & Safety and the Department of Public Safety have developed this guidance to assist in responding to reports of suspicious packages. The information in this guidance has been obtained from the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the United States Postal Service and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

How to Identify Suspicious Packages and Letters:

Some characteristics of suspicious packages and letters include the following:

- Excessive postage
- Handwritten or poorly typed addresses
- Incorrect titles
- Title, but no name
- Misspellings of common words
- Oily stains, discolorations or odor
- No return address
- Excessive weight
- Lopsided or uneven envelope
- Protruding wires or aluminum foil
- Visual distractions
- Ticking sound
- Excessive security material such as masking tape, string, etc.
- Marked with restrictive endorsements, such as "Personal" or "Confidential"
- Shows a city or state in the postmark that does not match the return address

Actions that community members should take once a potential suspicious package has been identified:

1. Stay calm and try not to panic.
2. Do not move or handle a suspicious package. If it has been handled place it on a flat surface.
3. If unopened, do not open the package.
4. Leave the room or area.
5. Isolate the area where the package is located to ensure no one else comes in contact with it.
6. Call Public Safety at 401-863-4111 immediately.
7. Wait in a safe location where you can meet emergency responders.
8. Follow any additional guidance that the emergency responders provide.

Additional Resources

Federal Bureau of Investigation

https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/news/stories/2006/september/packages_092006

Centers for Disease Control Suspicious Package Information

<http://emergency.cdc.gov/planning/pdf/suspicious-package-biothreat.pdf>

Brown University Emergency Preparedness Website

<https://www.brown.edu/health-safety/brownready>