



Suspicious Mail

The Risk

Recently there have been reported cases where the mail stream has been used by unscrupulous individuals to send potential toxic substances and explosive devices. These devices are designed to activate only when the letter or parcel is opened and the contents are being removed. Most often it is in the hands of the intended victim, and the senders take precautions to ensure that the items reach their victims. To exacerbate the concern, there are also increasingly frequent incidents of packages purposefully made to look hazardous, delivered to target organization's as a hoax, or to gain media exposure by special interests.

Although the likelihood of you or your mailroom ever receiving one of these devices is remote, it is essential to understand how to identify suspicious mail and know the necessary precautions. It is important to remember that these materials can be enclosed in either an envelope or a parcel, and the outward appearance may not easily identify the contents.

How to Identify Suspicious Mailings

Canada Post and the United States Postal Service have developed indicators for suspicious letters and packages as follows:

- 1) **Letters. Suspicious mail indicators for letters include:**
 - a) Restrictive markings such as "confidential" or "personal"
 - b) Mailed from a foreign country
 - c) Excessive postage
 - d) Misspelled words
 - e) Addressed to a title only
 - f) Rigid or bulky
 - g) Badly typed or written
 - h) Holes in the envelope
- 2) **Packages. Suspicious mail indicators for packages include:**
 - a) Fictitious, unfamiliar, or no return address
 - b) Strange odour
 - c) Wrong title with name
 - d) Package is lopsided
 - e) Protruding wires
 - f) Package has oily stains on wrapping

What to do with Suspicious Mailings

If you are suspicious of an item:

- 1) DO NOT OPEN IT!
- 2) Isolate the item and evacuate the immediate area.
- 3) Do not put the item in water or a confined space such as a desk drawer or filing cabinet.
- 4) If possible, open windows in the immediate area to assist in ventilating potential gases.
- 5) If you have any reason to believe an item is suspicious, contact your immediate supervisor, who will in turn notify the proper authorities.

For additional information on how to manage this potential risk, log on to:

www.usps.com or www.pssd.gov.bc.ca/bcmail/general/danger.htm

Indicators of a Suspicious Mailing

