

Health & Safety Watch

How to handle suspicious mail

Everyone is asked to exercise extreme caution in dealing with suspicious envelopes or packages.

If you encounter a suspicious envelope or package, or suffer what you believe may have been exposed to hazardous material, immediately call UCSF Police at 9-911. The police will in turn consult appropriate experts as the circumstance demands.

Some characteristics of suspicious packages and letters include:

- Are unexpected or from someone unknown to you
- Are of unusual weight or are lopsided or oddly shaped
- Handwritten or poorly typed addresses
- Use incorrect titles or are addressed to someone who has left the organization
- Misspellings of common words
- Oily stains, discolorations or odor
- No return address or have one that can't be verified as legitimate
- Lopsided or uneven envelope
- Excessive postage
- Excessive security material such as masking tape, string, etc.
- Marked with restrictive endorsements, such as "Personal" or "Confidential"
- A city or state in the postmark that does not match the return address

If you encounter an envelope with powder or powder spills:

- **DO NOT** try to **CLEAN UP** the powder. **COVER** the spilled contents immediately with anything (e.g., clothing, paper, trashcan, etc.) and do not remove this cover.
- Then **LEAVE** the room and **CLOSE** the door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering.
- To avoid spread of contamination: Take your shoes off as you exit the work area, or cover them with a plastic bag to avoid tracking any substance around the building.
- Avoid touching door handles, ask someone to open the doors for you.
- **WASH** your hands with soap and water to prevent spreading any powder to your face.
- Call Campus **Police at 9-911** and **Bio-Safety Officer Brynte Johnson at 476-2097**.
- **REMOVE** heavily contaminated clothing as soon as possible and place in a plastic bag, or some other container that can be sealed. This clothing bag should be given to the emergency responders for proper handling.
- **SHOWER** with soap and water as soon as possible. Do not use bleach or other disinfectant on your skin.
- If possible, list all people who were in the room or area, especially those who had actual contact with the powder. Give this list to Bio-Safety Officer Johnson so that proper instructions can be given for medical follow-up, as well as to UCSF Police for further investigation.

Staff who want to use gloves when handling the mail, can find them in most critical areas and research laboratories. Those who do not have access to gloves can call the Environmental Health and Safety office at 476-1300. Medical Center departments may call 353-1837 at Parnassus and 885-7536 at Mount Zion for gloves.