

## HOW TO HANDLE ANTHRAX AND OTHER BIOLOGICAL AGENT THREATS



There have been numerous reports of suspicious packages and anthrax threat letters being received in British Columbia. Most were empty envelopes; some contained powdery substances. No cases of anthrax have been discovered to date in Canada.

### DO NOT PANIC

- Anthrax organisms can cause infection in the skin, gastrointestinal system, or the lungs; however, disease can be prevented after exposure to the anthrax spores by early treatment with the appropriate antibiotics.
- Anthrax is not spread from one person to another person.
- Police, health and emergency management organizations have developed a protocol for responding to potential bioterrorism situations.
- If a suspicious package or situation is discovered we advise staff to observe the following protocol.

#### **If you receive or discover a suspicious envelope or package:**

1. Do not shake or empty the contents of any suspicious envelope or package.
2. PLACE the envelope or package in a plastic bag or some other type of container to prevent leakage of contents.
3. If you do not have a container, then COVER the envelope or package with anything (e.g., clothing, paper, trash can, etc.) and do not remove the cover.
4. Section off the area to prevent others from entering (i.e., keep others away). Remain away from other people until otherwise instructed.
5. WASH your hands with soap and water to prevent spreading any powder to your face.
6. What to do next...
  - If you are at HOME, then report the incident to local police.
  - If you are at WORK, then report the incident to local police, and notify your building security official or an available supervisor.

7. LIST all people who were in the room or area when this suspicious letter or package was recognized. Keep this list as it may be required by local public health authorities or law enforcement officials.
8. The police, in consultation with other BC emergency service providers, will recommend any further action that should be taken.

**If you open an envelope or package and you find a threat and it contains powder, what should you do?**

1. DO NOT try to CLEAN UP the powder. COVER the spilled contents immediately with anything (e.g., clothing, paper, trash can, etc.) and do not remove this cover!
2. Then LEAVE the room and CLOSE the door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering (i.e., keep others away).
3. WASH your hands with soap and water to prevent spreading any powder to your face.
4. What to do next...
  - Stay where you are and:
    - if you are at HOME, then report the incident to local police.
    - if you are at WORK, then report the incident to local police, and notify your building security official or an available supervisor.
5. REMOVE ONLY heavily contaminated outer clothing as soon as possible and place in a plastic bag, or some other container that can be sealed. This clothing should be kept in the bag/container until further instructions are given.
6. SHOWER with soap and water as soon as possible. Do Not Use Bleach Or Other Disinfectant On Your Skin.
7. If possible, list all people who were in the room or area, especially those who had actual contact with the powder. Keep this list as it may be required by local public health authorities or law enforcement officials.
8. The police, in consultation with other BC emergency service providers, will recommend any further action that should be taken.

**If there is a concern or question of room contamination by aerosolization (warning that air-handling system is contaminated, or warning that a biological agent has been released in a public space) what should you do?**

1. Turn off local fans or ventilation units in the area.
2. LEAVE area immediately.
3. CLOSE the door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering (i.e., keep others away).
4. What to do next...
  - If you are at HOME, dial “911” or report the incident to local police.
  - If you are at WORK, dial “911” or report the incident to local police and notify your building security official or an available supervisor.

5. If appropriate SHUT down air handling system in the area, if possible.
6. If possible, list all people who were in the room or area. Keep this list as it may be required by local public **health** authorities or law enforcement officials.
7. The police, in consultation with other BC emergency service providers, will recommend any further action that should be taken.