

Due to recent suspicious/hazardous mail packages in Maryland and Washington D.C., plus false internet rumors about anthrax in sample size laundry detergent packages, the MSU Police are offering the following guidelines for handling suspicious packages.

IDENTIFYING SUSPECT MAIL OR PARCELS

Pay attention to any mail or packages with the following if they are unusual in your unit:

- No return address or a strange or unexpected return address.
- Postmark does not match the return address.
- Mail directed to persons who no longer work for your unit.
- Mail marked “Personal” or “Confidential”.
- Postmarks from a foreign country or the use of excessive postage.
- Misspelled words, improper addressing.
- Mail addressed to a Title or Office only, or to an incorrect Title or Office.
- Items that are oversized, lopsided or uneven.
- Items that are rigid or bulky.
- Items with a strange odor, stains, discoloration, leaking substance (powder, oil, etc).
- Protruding wires.
- Excessive tape.

IF YOU ARE UNCOMFORTABLE ABOUT A PACKAGE OR LETTER:

- Do not open it.
- Do not shake it or empty out its contents.
- Place the item in a box or plastic bag. An airtight plastic storage container is suggested.
- If a container is not available, cover the item and leave it covered.
- Leave the area and keep others away from the item.
- If possible, clean your hands with an antibacterial product.
- Notify your supervisor about the item.
- Prepare a list of persons in your area that may have handled the item.
- If your supervisor has concerns about the safety of the item, they will contact the MSU Police at 355-2221.

IF YOU OPEN AN ENVELOPE OR PARCEL AND ENCOUNTER AN UNIDENTIFIED SUBSTANCE:

- Do not panic, remain calm.
- Do not touch, smell, taste or try to analyze the substance.
- Carefully put the item down and step away. Do not carry the item to another location.
- Remain in the immediate area to minimize the spread of the substance.
- Alert others to keep away from your area.
- Turn off any circulating fans, air conditioners or heaters.
- Notify the MSU Police at 9-1-1.
- Do not touch, handle or attempt to clean up the substance.
- If you touched the substance with your hands, do not touch your face.
- Wait for trained emergency personnel to arrive.
- Be ready to inform emergency responders regarding who has had contact with the substance.

IF YOU SUSPECT THE PACKAGE IS FLAMMABLE OR EXPLOSIVE:

- Do not move, touch, shake or disturb the package.
- Evacuate all personnel from the area.
- Call 9-1-1 from a safe location.

INFORMATION ON ANTHRAX

Effective dispersal of anthrax is difficult due to the processes required to create the spores that result in a weapons grade product. One possible method of delivery is through letters or packages. Anthrax in its natural form is a brownish colored powder. In the majority of anthrax scares, the suspected substance has been a white substance. However, substance color alone should never be used to distinguish a true incident from a hoax.

Anthrax spores infect only if inhaled, ingested or introduced into an open wound or the eyes. The disease is caused by the spore forming bacterium *Bacillus anthracis*. Symptoms of the disease vary depending on how the disease was contracted, but usually occur within 7 days after exposure.

Initial symptoms of inhalation anthrax infection may resemble a common cold. After several days, the symptoms may progress to severe breathing problems and shock.

Ingested anthrax symptoms are characterized by an acute inflammation of the intestinal tract. Initial signs of nausea, loss of appetite, vomiting and fever are followed by abdominal pain, vomiting of blood and severe diarrhea.

Cutaneous exposure initially resembles an itchy bump with swelling at the site of the infection that is similar to an insect bite. Within 1-2 days, it ulcerates and develops a dead, black center.

Anthrax cannot be spread from one person to another. Anthrax is treatable with antibiotics if identified early.