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MINISTRY OF CIVIL SERVICE AFFAIRS  
AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS  
MAURITIUS

**IMMEDIATE**

31 October, 2001

Ministry of Civil Service Affairs and Administrative Reforms  
Circular Letter No 36. of 2001  
E/428/7/01

From: Secretary for Public Service Affairs

To: Supervising Officers i/c Ministries/Departments

**Anthrax and Other Biological Agents Threats**

Following representations made by the Federation of Civil Service Unions, a meeting was held on 24 October, 2001 under the chairmanship of the Permanent Secretary of this Ministry with the representatives of the Federation, the Postal Services, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Technology and N.R., to discuss the measures which should be taken by officers in the handling of parcels and letters in connection with anthrax and other biological threats.

2. Although it is noted that there is no evidence of the presence of anthrax in Mauritius, officers are advised that they should take certain basic precautions in the handling of suspicious letters or parcels. In case an officer is in presence of a suspected letter or parcel, the precautions to be taken, as set out in Annex A, should be followed.
4. The attention of members of your staff should be drawn thereto accordingly.
5. As regards all those officers who are at risk in the handling of suspicious letters or parcels, immediate arrangements should be made to make available to the staff concerned the protective equipment and material, as listed in Annex B.
6. Your co-operation in this matter would be highly appreciated.

D.P. Ruhee  
Secretary for Public Service Affairs

Copy to:

Secretary to the Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service  
Acting Secretary for Home Affairs, Prime Minister's Office



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## This is an official CDC Health Advisory

Delivered via Health Alert Network  
 October 12, 2001, 21:00 EDT (9:00 PM EDT)

### HOW TO HANDLE ANTHRAX AND OTHER BIOLOGICAL AGENT THREATS

Communities in communities around the country have received anthrax threat letters. Most were empty envelopes; some contained powdery substances. The purpose of these guidelines is to recommend procedures for handling such

#### DO NOT PANIC

Anthrax organisms can cause infection in the skin, gastrointestinal system, or the lungs. To do so the organism must be rubbed into abraded skin, swallowed, or inhaled as a fine, aerosolized mist. 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.

For anthrax to be effective as a covert agent, it must be aerosolized into very small particles. This is difficult to do, and requires a great deal of technical skill and special equipment. If these small particles are inhaled, life-threatening lung infection can occur, but prompt recognition and treatment are effective.

#### IF YOU RECEIVE A SUSPICIOUS UNOPENED LETTER OR PACKAGE MARKED WITH THREATENING MESSAGE SUCH AS "ANTHRAX":

Do not shake or empty the contents of any suspicious envelope or package.

PLACE the envelope or package in a plastic bag or some other type of container to prevent leakage of contents.

If you do not have any container, then COVER the envelope or package with anything (e.g., clothing, paper, trash can, 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 (i.e., keep others away).

WASH your hands with soap and water to prevent spreading any powder to your face.

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.

LIST all people who were in the room or area when this suspicious letter or package was recognized. Give this list to both the local public health authorities and law enforcement officials for follow-up investigations and advice.

#### IF YOU RECEIVE A SUSPICIOUS UNOPENED ENVELOPE WITH POWDER AND POWDER SPILLS OUT ONTO SURFACE:

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!

Then LEAVE the room and CLOSE the door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering (i.e., keep others away).

WASH your hands with soap and water to prevent spreading any powder to your face.

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.

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 both the local public health authorities so that proper instructions can be given for medical follow-up, and to law enforcement officials for further investigation.

#### CONTAMINATION OF ROOM BY AEROSOLIZATION:

Example: small device triggered, warning that air handling system is contaminated, or warning that a biological agent is released in a public space.

Turn off local fans or ventilation units in the area.

LEAVE area immediately.

CLOSE the door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering (i.e., keep others away).

What to do next...

If you are at HOME, then dial "911" to report the incident to local police and the local FBI field office.

If you are at WORK, then dial "911" to report the incident to local police and the local FBI field office, and notify your building security official or an available supervisor.

SHUT down air handling system in the building, if possible.

If possible, list all people who were in the room or area. Give this list to both the local public health authorities so that proper instructions can be given for medical follow-up, and to law enforcement officials for further investigation.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF SUSPICIOUS PACKAGES AND LETTERS

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
- Excessive security material such as masking tape, string, etc.
- Visual distractions
- Ticking sound
- Marked with restrictive endorsements, such as "Personal" or "Confidential"
- Shows a city or state in the postmark that does not match the return address

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You have received this message based upon the information contained within our emergency notification data base. If you have a different or additional e-mail or fax address that you would like us to use please notify us as soon as possible by e-mail at [healthalert@cdc.gov](mailto:healthalert@cdc.gov).  
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Protective Equipment and Material Needed

1. Full sleeve shirt should be worn.
2. Rubber/latex gloves non sterile.
3. Disposable simple moulded respirator mask with exhalation valve fitted with elastic headbands and metal nose band.

Note:

- (a) The FF2 Affinity Plus with Exhalation valve and FFP1 (S) available on local market.
- (b) Similar FF2 type mask with exhalation valve is also available.
- (c) The respirator mask should be discarded if it becomes difficult to breathe or after exposure to suspect material.
- (d) Good personal hygiene should be maintained, e.g, washing of hands and face before eating, drinking and smoking.

For any further information, please contact Mr J. Paul, Tel No. 211-9664.