

# SAFETY ALERT

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No. 01-02

SAFE MAIL HANDLING PROCEDURES

October 2001

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District schools and offices have expressed concern over recent news reports involving exposure to anthrax and other biological materials received via the postal service. It should be noted that the vast majority of the reported incidents have proven to be false alarms. However, greater vigilance in the handling of mail is appropriate.

Should anyone at an LAUSD school or office encounter suspicious packages or other mail, the following procedures, recommended by the Centers for Disease Control, should be followed:

1. 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 no container is available, cover the suspicious item with anything (e.g., clothing, paper, trash can, etc.)
2. If a suspicious substance, such as powder, spills out onto a surface, do not try to clean up the substance. Cover it immediately with clothing, paper, or a trash can, and leave the area immediately.
3. DO NOT PANIC. While exposure to anthrax spores can cause infection to the skin, gastrointestinal system, or lungs the disease can be prevented by early treatment with appropriate antibiotics. Anthrax is not spread from one person to another.
4. Call 911, School Police (213)625-6631 and the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (213)743-5086. Immediate intervention by law enforcement and trained response personnel is critical.
5. If an exposure is suspected, all personnel should leave the affected room immediately. Close the door or section, and label it "DO NOT ENTER" to prevent others from coming into contact with the substance.
6. Turn off local fans or ventilators in the area and shut down the building's air handling system, if possible.
7. Wash your hands with soap and water to prevent spreading the substance to your face. *Do not use bleach or other disinfectant on your skin.*
8. List all people who were in the room or area, especially those who had actual contact with the substance. This list will be used to ensure proper medical follow-up and for further investigation of the incident.

Individuals with open cuts or wounds on their hands may wish to wear protective latex gloves while handling mail. Latex gloves may be ordered from the District's Supplies and Equipment Catalog.

\*Examples of suspicious packages and letters include: no return address, oily stains, discoloration, odor, excessive security material such as masking tape or string, protruding wires or aluminum foil, or a lopsided, bulging or uneven envelope.

If you have questions regarding this safety precaution, please call the Office of Environmental Health and Safety at (213) 743-5086 or School Police at (213)625-6631.

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DISTRIBUTION: All Schools and Offices