

## CONTAMINATION SCORES

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

The purpose of these guidelines is to explain what Anthrax is and what the correct procedures are for handling such incidents should they occur here.

#### IT MUST BE EMPHASISED THAT:

**THERE IS NO INFORMATION TO SUGGEST THAT WE ARE TO BE THE TARGETS OF SUCH AN ATTACK, HOWEVER, IT IS SENSIBLE TO BE PREPARED.**

#### ANTHRAX FACTS

**What is it?** Anthrax is an acute infectious disease caused by the spore-forming bacterium *Bacillus anthracis*. Anthrax most commonly occurs in hoofed mammals and can also infect humans.

**How it works:** Humans become infected by coming into contact with spores, either by touch or inhalation. The spore then produces a toxin that can be fatal.

**Symptoms:** Symptoms of disease vary depending on how the disease was contracted, but usually occur within 7 days after exposure. There are three types of human anthrax: inhalation anthrax, cutaneous anthrax, and intestinal anthrax. Initial symptoms of inhalation anthrax infection may be mild and non-specific with a cough and fever. After several days, the symptoms may progress to severe breathing problems and shock.

**Treatment:** Antibiotics, including penicillin

#### DO NOT PANIC

1. 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, aerosolised 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.**
2. For anthrax to be effective as a covert agent, it must be aerosolised 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.

#### SUSPICIOUS UNOPENED LETTER OR PACKAGE MARKED WITH THREATENING MESSAGE SUCH AS "ANTHRAX":

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 any container, then COVER the envelope or package with anything (e.g., clothing, paper, waste paper bin, etc.) and do not remove this cover.
4. Then LEAVE the room and CLOSE the door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering (i.e., keep others away).
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 the police, **and** notify the Head of Security or your line manager.
7. 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 police for follow-up investigations and advice.

#### **ENVELOPE WITH POWDER AND POWDER SPILLS OUT ONTO SURFACE:**

1. DO NOT try to CLEAN UP the powder. COVER the spilled contents immediately with anything (e.g., clothing, paper, waste paper bin, 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...
  - If you are at **HOME**, then report the incident to local police.
  - If you are at **WORK**, then report the incident the police, **and** notify the Head of Security or your line manager.
5. 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.
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. Give this list to both the local public health authorities so that proper instructions can be given for medical follow-up, the police for further investigation.

## HOW TO IDENTIFY SUSPICIOUS PACKAGES AND LETTERS

Some 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 odour
- No return address
- Excessive weight
- Lopsided or uneven envelope
- Protruding wires or aluminium 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 postmark that does not match the return address