

Document Summary

This document is a guideline for law enforcement officials and other initial responders to use when a suspicious letter, package or parcel is discovered, particularly those packages containing an unknown powder that presents the threat of exposure to a biologic (bioterrorism) agent such as *Bacillus anthracis*.

Contact Numbers

Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) Public Health Laboratory (PHL)	405-406-3511
Oklahoma Poison Control Center	1-800-222-1222
Federal Bureau of Investigation Weapons of Mass Destruction Coordinator	405-290-7770
Homeland Security Regional Hazmat Coordinator	405-420-5335

Threat and Credibility Assessment for a Suspicious Powder



Oklahoma State Department of Health
Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management
Oklahoma Office of Homeland Security
Oklahoma Department of Public Safety
Oklahoma Poison Control Center
Federal Bureau of Investigation

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CREDIBILITY ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

Important: If exposed persons are experiencing physical symptoms, call 911

Question #1: Are the exposed individuals experiencing symptoms immediately after exposure?

Yes →

IF YES: A chemical agent is most likely to cause immediate symptoms. The OSDH Public Health Laboratory will not test suspected chemical substances. Emergency medical services should be obtained for medical management of affected individuals. Emergency responders may consult with the Oklahoma Poison Control Center 24/7/365 at 1-800-222-1222.

Follow instructions on the next page for the caller and for those who handled the letter or package to minimize exposure to individuals.

No →

Question #2: Was the letter or package accompanied by an explicit threat?

Yes →

No →

Question #3: Does the letter or package, opened or unopened, have a suspicious powder or other suspicious material present that CANNOT be explained?

Explanations to determine:

- Is the powder unusual for such an item?
- Is the return address unrecognizable?
- Is the sender unavailable for explanation of the suspicious powder?

Yes →

No →

Question #4: Does the letter or package have suspicious characteristics (including but not limited to those listed below)?

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Excessive postage• Handwritten or poorly typed addresses• Misspellings of common words• No return address/unknown return address• Excessive security materials (e.g., heavily taped)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Restrictive endorsements (e.g., "Personal" or "Confidential")• Incorrect titles• Title but no name• Lopsided or uneven envelope• Excessive weight• Visual Distractions
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Yes →

No →

Yes: This is a Credible Threat!

- Instruct the caller:**
 - Do not handle the letter or package.
 - Do not smell, taste or touch package or material.
 - Do not try to clean up the powder.
 - Gently** cover letter, package or material with a wastebasket, box, etc.
 - Turn off fans or ventilation units in the room.
 - Leave the room.
 - Close the door and section off the area to prevent others from entering.
 - Report the incident to the supervisor or building security official if location is a business or agency.
- Instruct those who handled the letter or package:**
 - Anyone handling the item should wash his or her hands with soap and water.
 - If the material spilled onto clothing, remove contaminated clothing, place clothing in a plastic bag and seal it. Shower with soap and water as soon as possible. There is no need to use bleach or harsh disinfectant on your skin.
 - Obtain a list (name and contact information) of all persons who handled the letter/package or were in the room or area when the letter/package was recognized or opened. Local law enforcement officials will retain this list, which will be used if further investigation is required based on laboratory test results.
 - Exposed individuals should remain in the building in an isolated or safe area until they are appropriately decontaminated. Decontamination decisions should be made by the HAZMAT team.
 - Assure all involved parties that the appropriate authorities are being contacted.
- Call the Federal Bureau of Investigation Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Coordinator at 405-290-7770.
- Call the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) Public Health Laboratory (PHL) at 405-406-3511 (24 hour line) for collection and transport.
- If the OSDH-PHL approves receipt of suspicious powder for testing, contact the appropriate HAZMAT team or Homeland Security Regional HAZMAT coordinator at 405-420-5335. After appropriate field screening, entry into the isolated area for collection of samples should be restricted to properly trained HAZMAT personnel using appropriate personal protective equipment.

No: This is not a credible threat.

If the letter or package does not contain an observable threat or suspicious material, but the recipient is still concerned, local authorities should follow his/her agency's Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) for removal of the letter/package.