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## Bio-Hazard Safety Precautions - Mail Handling Facilities

### **Purpose**

Maintaining a safe work environment for those employees working in mail handling facilities is a primary concern due to recent detection of Anthrax spores in mailrooms in Florida, Washington, D.C., New York and New Jersey. While, generally speaking, there is an extremely low risk of exposure to Anthrax in our operations, a widely implemented program of training and communication on risk, package screening and emergency response is our primary defense. This guide is broken into three sections (please review all sections prior to providing any training or discussion with employees): 1.) *The Occupational Safety & Health Administration guidelines for the "Safe Handling of Suspicious Letters and Packages"*, 2.) *Use of Personal Protective Equipment*, 3.) *Housekeeping Guidelines*. **All managers should train all mail handling staff on the procedures described in all three (3) sections.**

### **Application**

This management guideline applies to all Pitney Bowes' locations where employees are performing any assigned duties or responsibilities involving mail handling.

### **I. OSHA Guidelines for the Safe Handling of Suspicious Letters and Packages**

#### **General Mail Handling:**

- Be observant for suspicious envelopes or packages.
- Open all mail with a letter opener or method that is least likely to disturb the contents. Do not use your hands.
- Open packages/envelopes with a minimum amount of movement.
- Do not blow air into envelopes.
- Do not shake or pour out the contents.
- Keep hands away from your nose and mouth while opening mail.
- Wash your hands after handling mail.



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### **Some items that can trigger concern about a mail item:**

- Discoloration, crystallization, strange odors or oily stains
- Envelope with powder or powder-like residue
- Protruding wires or aluminum foil
- Excessive tape or string
- Unusual size or weight given size
- Lopsided or oddly shaped envelope
- Postmark that does not match return address
- Restrictive endorsements such as "Personal" or "Confidential"
- Excessive postage [stamps]
- Handwritten, block-printed or poorly typed addresses
- Incorrect titles
- Title but no name
- Misspellings of common words
- No return address
- Addressed to an individual no longer with the organization

### **How to handle a suspect package or letter:**

- Stay calm.
- Do not shake or empty the contents of any suspicious package or letter.
- Keep hands away from mouth, nose and eyes.
- Isolate the package or letter.
- Gently cover the envelope or package with anything available nearby (e.g. clothing, paper, inverted trash can, etc.) and do not remove the cover.



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- If an unknown substance spills from the package/envelope, do not try to clean up substance.
- Avoid creating air currents.
- Do not handle package/envelope any further.
- If material spills on floor avoid stepping near it. Avoid tracking any spilled materials to other locations.
- Wash your hands with soap and water.
- Do not remove any potentially contaminated items from area.
- If contaminated, keep movements within the building to a minimum. This will keep contamination of the building to a minimum. Remove heavily contaminated clothing gently as soon as possible to minimize dispersal.
  - If shower facilities are in the immediate area, remove clothing in shower under a water stream. Place clothing into a plastic bag or other container that can be sealed. This bag should be given to responders for proper handling.
  - *If shower facilities are not available*, stay calm and wait for the Emergency Response personnel who will assist with decontamination of clothing and application of a water stream.
- Contact supervisor/designated responder.
  - Supervisors/ designated responders will determine if further action is necessary such as:
    - Notify others in the room, turn off any fans/portable heaters, evacuate the room and close the door.
    - Ensure no one enters the room until proper authorities arrive.
    - Report incident to security and to the local police so they may notify appropriate authorities.
    - Report incident to facility management so they can shut down the room's ventilation system.



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### **How to handle a suspect package or letter:** (continued)

- List all people who were in the room or area when the package or letter was recognized. Give this list to the health and law enforcement officials.

## **II. Use of Personal Protective Equipment**

### ***Gloves:***

*The current level of risk of exposure to Anthrax in the in-bound mail-handling environment is extremely low. However, the use of personal protective equipment would provide an increased level of protection. In addition, it is recognized that the use of the appropriate gloves would give employees an increased sense of control over the potential skin exposure associated with the handling of mail. Therefore, the local management will make gloves available to employees to wear voluntarily. Information on where to order these products is listed below.*

### **Recommended Protection from Skin Contact with Anthrax Spores:**

1. The recommended protective glove materials for Anthrax include nitrile or vinyl.
2. Avoid using latex gloves because of the potential for skin sensitization reactions.
3. Additional considerations include glove size, thickness, comfort and durability.
4. Disposable nitrile or vinyl gloves are thin and can be worn alone or under heavy work gloves.
5. Thin cotton gloves can be worn underneath nitrile or vinyl gloves to prevent skin irritation.
6. Gloves must be provided in a range of sizes.
7. Gloves should not be used if they present an additional hazard (e.g., hazard of being caught in machinery).
8. Gloves must be replaced if they are damaged or visibly worn.
9. Used or damaged gloves can be disposed of in the normal trash (unless the wearer has come in contact with a suspicious substance – See above section on “How to Handle a Suspicious Package or Letter”).
10. Employees must be given and follow the manufacturer’s guidelines on the proper use, limitations and maintenance of the protective gloves.
11. Hands should be washed with soap and water after gloves are removed, before eating, and when replacing worn or damaged gloves.
12. For additional protection from skin exposure, employees may use long-sleeve clothing.
13. The site manager should provide the gloves at no cost to the employee.



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### **Respirators:**

The risk of exposure to Anthrax in the mail stream is extremely low. The use of a respirator requires more consideration because of the added stress on the respiratory system. Their use would provide an increased level of protection in the unlikely event of an exposure.

### **Recommended Respiratory Protection from Inhalable Anthrax Spores:**

Site managers should provide employees respirators upon request. The **N95 type respirator** is recommended and can be ordered from our vendor **Safety Today, Inc.** by calling them at the number shown under the "How to Order Safety Equipment" caption. The following recommendations and requirements apply to each site using respiratory protection:

1. An employee's *voluntary use* of respiratory protection is limited to the N95 type available from our Safety Today supply vendor. **NO OTHER TYPE OF RESPIRATOR IS APPROVED AT THIS TIME.**
2. Instruct employees that facial hair obstructs the face-to-respirator seal, causing the respirator to leak, defeating the purpose of wearing a respirator.
3. The site manager must provide each employee using a respirator voluntarily a copy of the attached **VOLUNTARY RESPIRATOR INFORMATION FORM**. This form must also be posted in the immediate work area.
4. Ensure each employee receives, understands and follows all instructions provided by the manufacturer on use, maintenance, cleaning, care and warnings regarding the respirators limitations.
5. Under normal conditions, the average useful life of an N95 respirator is approximately 5-days.
6. Respirators shall not be shared.
7. Each employee must initial, date and keep track of his or her own respirator.
8. Respirators come in varying sizes and should be considered for your workforce needs.
9. If an employee experiences discomfort while wearing a respirator, the supervisor should be contacted immediately to ensure a proper fit has been established. If the complaint involves respiratory distress due to restricted airflow, Corporate Medical should be contacted at 203-351-6934. These employees should be instructed not to wear a respirator until approved by Corporate Medical.



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### What to Order:

**Gloves:** Opt for Nitrile gloves first, vinyl second. Order in several sizes based on your specific need. The sales representatives at Safety Today, Inc. will assist you.

**Respirators:** While N95 respirators have many models to choose from, we recommend as a starting point the use of a respirator with an exhalation/cooling valve. If none is available, only order and use N95 style respirators. There are currently no substitutes.

### How to Order Safety Equipment:

Our national safety vendor that provides discount pricing is:

Safety Today, Inc. @ phone #: 888-247-0277

- Non-PBMS sites should call direct.
- PBMS should purchase safety equipment through the Tampa ASC. They will place the order for all PBMS sites.



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### VOLUNTARY RESPIRATOR INFORMATION FORM

#### **Mandatory Information for Employees Using Respirators When Not Required**

Respirators are an effective method of protection against designated hazards when properly selected and worn. Respirator use is encouraged, even when exposures are below the exposure limit, to provide an additional level of comfort and protection for workers. However, if a respirator is used improperly or not kept clean, the respirator itself can become a hazard to the worker. Sometimes, workers may wear respirators to avoid exposures to hazards, even if the amount of hazardous substance does not exceed the limits set by OSHA standards. If your employer provides respirators for your voluntary use, or if you provide your own respirator, you need to take certain precautions to be sure that the respirator itself does not present a hazard.

You should do the following:

1. Read and heed all instructions provided by the manufacturer on use, maintenance, cleaning and care, and warnings regarding the respirators limitations.
2. Choose respirators certified for use to protect against the contaminant of concern. NIOSH, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, certifies respirators. A label or statement of certification should appear on the respirator or respirator packaging. It will tell you what the respirator is designed for and how much it will protect you.
3. Do not wear your respirator into atmospheres containing contaminants for which your respirator is not designed to protect against. For example, a respirator designed to filter dust particles will not protect you against gases, vapors, or very small solid particles of fumes or smoke.
4. Keep track of your respirator so that you do not mistakenly use someone else's respirator.



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### III. Housekeeping Controls:

Equipment maintenance and housekeeping procedures should be conducted to control the amount of generated airborne dust. This is especially important when cleaning paper dust associated with incoming mail automated sorting and processing equipment.

Employees should be instructed on the following procedures aimed at minimizing airborne dust in mail processing facilities:

1. Avoid the use of compressed air when cleaning mail-processing equipment.
2. Use an industrial vacuum fitted with a HEPA-type filter to first remove paper dust associated with incoming mail processing. This equipment is used in some refurbishing centers and is available through your local industrial supply center.
3. Avoid dry sweeping and dusting. Instead, use wet cleaning and HEPA vacuum cleaners. This apparatus should be available through your local industrial supply center.

### Where to purchase HEPA-type filtered vacuum equipment

You can order the appropriate HEPA-filtered vacuum for your specific operations from one of the two following manufacturers:

- **Nilfisk:** 1-610 647 6420
- **Atrix:** 1-800-222-6154



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### Questions & Answers

**Q:** How do I dispose of the gloves and respirators after they have been used? Are they now a hazardous waste?

**A:** At this point in time, there is no reason to assume that the used PPE (personal protective equipment), as worn by our employees at PB or customer locations, is contaminated. The equipment provides an increased level of protection from a *potential* hazard that has not been confirmed to be present in the work environment. A reasonable and appropriate action to take is to place the gloves and used respirators in a plastic bag and tie, or otherwise, seal the opening, then dispose in the regular trash. If there is reason to suspect that the equipment has come into contact with a suspicious substance, then the sealed container should not be disposed of. It should be made available to the law enforcement and public health officials as evidence of contamination.

**Q:** How do I store my used gloves and respirators in between uses?

**A:** Consider using a plastic, zip lock bag as a storage device for each. You can place these with your other personal belongings.

**Q:** Is there a safe technique that I can use for the removal of my disposable gloves?

**A:** To remove the gloves during work, be careful to minimize the contamination of the wrist and hand. First grip the cuff of one glove and pull it toward the tips of the fingers being careful to turn the glove inside out as you go. While the loosened first glove is still on your hand, grasp the second glove by the cuff and turn it inside out as you pull it toward fingertips. Don't touch the insides of the gloves. Handle them by touching the outsides, only.

### References:

- **Occupational Safety & Health Administration**, "Recommendations for Handling Suspicious Packages in the Mailroom"
- **Centers for Disease Control**, "Interim Recommendations for Protecting Workers from Exposure to Bacillus anthracis in Work Sites Where Mail is Handled or Processed".
- **Corporate Integrity Affairs:** (203) 351- 6631
- **Corporate Medical Department:** (203) 351-6934
- **Corporate Safety & Environmental Affairs:** (203) 351-7224