State of Louisiana

DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATION
OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES

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DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATION

POLICY NO. 16

EFFECTIVE DATE: **November 1, 2001 Revised**

SUBJECT: **Mail and Package Handling Procedures**

AUTHORIZATION: **Whitman J. Kling, Jr., Deputy Undersecretary**

I. POLICY:

It is the policy of the Division of Administration that all employees are provided a work environment that is as safe and accident free as possible. Employee safety is a legal and moral obligation and is therefore one of the top priorities of this agency.

II. PURPOSE:

This policy establishes procedures relating to the receipt and handling of all mail and/or packages received from sources external to the Division of Administration. The guidelines, though applicable to a wide variety of circumstances, are particularly oriented in response to current and future suspected letters and packages, which could possibly be contaminated with Anthrax.

Anthrax may be contracted by inhalation, ingestion, or breaks in the skin. Detected at exposure, Anthrax is an easily treatable disease. Though many suspect packages have been tested in Louisiana none have revealed Anthrax or any other harmful substance. **It is imperative to keep in mind that as of the time of this publication no packages or letters have been identified as contaminated.**

The number of actual locations where Anthrax has been positively identified is small. Those locations are Boca Raton, Florida; Trenton, New Jersey; Washington, D.C.; New York, New York; Kansas City, Missouri; and a postal equipment repair facility in Indiana, Indiana. Additional information regarding this subject is located at the end of this policy.

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III. APPLICABILITY:

This policy and procedure is applicable to all facilities, sections, and personnel that receive and disseminate mail for personnel assigned to the Division of Administration facilities, including the Office of State Mail. Particular attention should be exercised when opening mail.

IV. ALL DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATION PERSONNEL SHOULD BE ALERT AND WATCHFUL FOR PACKAGES AND LETTERS:

- That are unusual in appearance or appear different from mail normally received by an individual recipient, unit or section.
- Showing addressee is no longer employed at address, inaccurate or incorrect information on letter or package.
- With sizes not customarily received by a particular office.
- Posted with stamps.
- Leaking, stained or emitting a strange or unusual odor.
- Having a powdery residue.
- Having handwritten address, missing or illegible return address, especially if postmarked out of state.
- Having a city and/or state postmark that is different from the return address,
- Received where the return address is not known shown or identified.
- **Having a postmark from a city where anthrax contamination has been confirmed.**

V. ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY EMPLOYEES IF A SUSPICIOUS PACKAGE OR LETTER ARRIVES BY MAIL:

- Do not open.
- Notify immediate supervisor. If located in the Capitol Complex the supervisor shall contact the Louisiana State Police (LSP) Emergency Operations Center at 925-7881. If outside the Capitol Complex please contact your local law enforcement agency and the DOA Safety Coordinator at 219-4480.
- Contain the letter options include, placing the envelope in a plastic zip lock type bag (triple bag); steel can; poly containment vessels, or simply cover with available material, etc.
- Evacuate and seal off the immediate area. ***Do not evacuate the facility, unless there is corroborating evidence or reason to believe the threat is credible.***
- Wash hands with soap and water.
- Notify local authorities or the LSP Emergency Operations Center at (800) 469-4828.

- Notify the DOA Safety Coordinator at 219-4480.

VI. WHEN A LETTER OR PACKAGE IS MARKED WITH A THREATENING MESSAGE:

- Immediately notify supervisor.
- Do not touch, open or disturb.
- Evaluate and take appropriate precautions such as isolating the letter or package, etc.
- Notify LSP Emergency Operations Center at (800) 469-4828.
- Restrict access or handling of the suspicious package until emergency or investigative personnel arrive.

VII. INDIVIDUAL PROTECTIVE GUIDELINES FOR MAIL HANDLERS:

- *Mail Handlers shall be defined as those individuals who as a routine and significant part of their job function regularly sort, handle, open, or distribute mail within a department, section or unit.*
- *Section Heads should review current mail handling procedures and develop procedures that minimize the number of persons handling mail and limit the number of areas mail handling activities occur.*
- *Section Heads shall provide mail handlers latex, nitrile, or vinyl gloves and protective face/eye wear (which comply with NIOSH N95 standards) that protects the exposed areas of the body from foreign material. All Mail handlers must wear latex gloves when handling mail. All mail handlers are to be encouraged to utilize long sleeved garments when handling mail. Utilization of protective face/eye wear shall be at the option of the mail handler (exception: employees of the Office of State Mail shall wear particulate masks when opening mail).*
- *Used latex gloves, face wear, etc. may be discarded in the regular trash once removed unless a suspicious piece of mail has been recognized and handled. If this occurs the used material is be placed in a zip lock/sealed container and held for pick up, testing and disposition. These materials are not to be disposed of in regular trash disposal.*
- *Upon request by the Section Head to the Commissioner's Office supplies (to include gloves, eye protection, containment materials, particulate masks, etc.) will be provided to the Section. Such requests should be submitted in writing to the DOA Safety Coordinator.*
- *Mail handlers should be notified to avoid touching their skin, eyes, etc. while handling mail.*
- *Once gloves are removed mail handlers should thoroughly wash their hands.*

VIII. PROCEDURES FOR POSSIBLE EXPOSURE OR CONTAMINATION BY ANTHRAX:

A. Employees' Responsibilities:

- Remain calm.
- Contact immediate supervisor.
- Thoroughly wash hands with soap and water.
- Do not clean or brush clothes.
- If possible, carefully remove contaminated clothing, jewelry, etc...unless doing so would add to contamination and place into appropriate sealable plastic bags.
- Do not attempt to clean or collect powder.
- Upon release by appropriate authorities, shower with soap and water at home as soon as practical.
- Change into fresh clothing and seek medical attention from their family doctor or nearest available health care provider.

B. Supervisory Responsibilities:

- Evacuate immediate work area ***but do not evacuate from the facility unless there is corroborating evidence or reason to believe the threat is credible.***
- If located in the Capitol Complex, immediately notify LSP Emergency Operations Center at 925-7881, or (800) 469-4828. If outside the Capitol Complex contact your local law enforcement agency and the DOA Safety Coordinator at 219-4480.
- Isolate contaminated individuals from other employees. **Do not have the contaminated individual leave the premises until they have been released by appropriate emergency response personnel.**
- Isolate suspicious package and restrict access to affected area.
- Make a list of all persons either directly affected or in immediate area of exposure.

RESPONSE GUIDELINES FOR ANTHRAX THREATS TO FACILITIES (SEE ATTACHMENT A)

Additional Information: Anthrax organisms can cause skin infection, gastrointestinal infection, or pulmonary infection. To do so the organism must be rubbed into abraded skin, swallowed, or inhaled as a fine, aerosolized mist. All forms of the disease are generally treatable with antibiotics.

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

Anthrax cannot be aerosolized out of an envelope or package containing powder. The same facts and conditions apply for most other bacteria likely to be used as biological weapons.

All personnel are encouraged to go to the FBI web page at www.fbi.gov and examine the guidelines posted there for handling mail and packages. There is a poster that can be printed for personnel to utilize.

Additional Web Site Resources

- www.loep.org
- www.lsp.org
- www.dhh.state.la.us/news/bioterrorismpage.htm
- www.fbi.gov
- www.cdc.gov
- www.usps.gov

ATTACHMENT A

RESPONSE GUIDELINES FOR ANTHRAX THREATS TO FACILITIES

Louisiana State Police has responded to hundreds of threats, suspect packages and letters, and related calls for service in the recent weeks. This burden has been great; thus it is important to keep matters in proper perspective as there has not been a positive test result for anthrax any where in Louisiana. With the high state of alert and public concerns over exposure to Anthrax, the below guidelines are intended to serve as recommended procedures for handling threats to facilities. Thus far, there is no case where a telephoned threat has been associated with an exposure to anthrax.

TELEPHONE THREATS:

If a telephone threat is received attempt to ascertain the following information from the caller.

1. *Where is the anthrax? Ask for precise location & how it was introduced to the facility.*
2. *Where was the anthrax placed in the facility?*
3. *What type of exposure was contemplated (inhalation, cutaneous)?*
4. *How did caller gain access to facility?*

Note: If possible keep the caller on the line and ask for additional information such as whether he represents a particular group, why he target that facility, etc. Attempt to ascertain the caller's gender, age, race, etc. Care should be taken to note any background noise or additional persons on callers' telephone. Record whether caller was identified by caller id or other means.

IMMEDIATE THREATS (call or note, etc):

1. *Turn off fans, ventilation units, and air handling systems in the threat area.*
2. *Close off threat area to keep others out.*
3. *Notify supervisor.*
4. *Notify local authorities.*
5. *Make a list of all persons in the threat area and give to local authorities.*
6. *Search threat area for any signs of corroboration of threat.*
7. *IF there is no reason to believe threat was credible, threat area should be returned to normal operation.*
8. *If signs are found which corroborate the threat, the area should be evacuated immediately (after listing of persons in threat area is determined), and local health officials consulted for advice.*

CRITERIA TO UTILIZE TO CORROBORATE THREAT:

1. *Evident signs of corroboration (obvious tampering with air handling systems).*
2. *Significance of facility as target to terrorists.*
3. *Demeanor and credibility of caller.*

EVACUATION OF THREAT AREA:

Louisiana State Police does not recommend evacuation in response to an anonymous threat where there is no corroborating evidence or reason to believe the treat is credible. Requests for services should be first made to local authorities. At the same time, all threats should be considered serious and should be immediately reported to the local authorities. Information is available on the Louisiana State Police web sit at http://www.lsp.org.