



Minnesota Counties Intergovernmental Trust

A MINI TRAINING SESSION FOR INJURY PREVENTION

Quick Take on Safety

Safe Mail Handling

TRAINING OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

- Overview:** Covers suspicious mail identification and best practices to follow if suspicious mail arrives.
- Purpose:** Inform employees who handle mail about best practices to recognize and respond to suspicious letters or packages to reduce the risk of injury.
- Preparation:** Read and become familiar with this Quick Take. *Change as needed to reflect procedures and personnel in your department.*
- Handouts:** Quick Review of Safety—Safe Mail Handling
- Notes:** It is important to review the emergency action plan for your organization and adjust the Quick Take to reflect that. Place a copy of [USPS poster 84: Suspicious Mail or Packages: Protect yourself, your business, and your mailroom](#) in the mailroom or areas where mail is received and handled if it is not present already.

Mail Hazards

People may become upset with public entities and their employees through the course of receiving normal services and conducting operations. Sometimes people may react badly and send suspicious mail. Suspicious mail can include letters or packages that may contain harmful substances or explosive devices. Fortunately, this is extremely rare.

Nevertheless, you should know what to look for to identify a suspicious letter or package and the applicable best practices and procedures if you do encounter something suspicious in the mail. So pay attention, your health and safety are important to us; we don't want you to get hurt.

Recognizing Potential Problems in the Mail

The first step to addressing a suspicious package or letter is to recognize the hazards. Your best defense is to trust your instincts. If something feels wrong, don't ignore it.

For mailed letters and packages, some standard indicators include:

- Excessive postage
- Misspelled common words
- No return address or strange return address
- Sent by someone unfamiliar or unexpected
- Incorrect titles or mailed to a title rather than a specific person
- Restrictive markings such as “personal,” “confidential,” or “do not X-ray”

- Excessive tape or packing material
- Oily stains, discoloration or strange odors
- Lopsided or uneven packages or envelopes of unusual weight
- Protruding wires
- Unusual powders or substances

Best Practices

If you encounter a suspicious package or letter in the mail:

- Do your best to remain calm. The vast majority of these incidents tend to be nothing more than false alarms or hoaxes
- Do not open, smell or taste the contents
- Do not show the item to others
- Back away and do not handle the package or letter any further
- Isolate the area immediately
- Notify a supervisor and law enforcement
- Notify facilities or maintenance to stop heating, ventilation or air conditioning systems to prevent hazards from spreading throughout a location
- Wash your hands with soap and water

Discussion Questions

- What else can we do to prepare for suspicious letters or packages?
- How can we communicate warnings to others (tenants, public, co-workers, etc.)?

Safe Mail Handling Session Planning and Review

Trainer

Training
Date

Department(s)

TRAINING GOALS

- Employees can better recognize the warning signs of suspicious packages or letters.
- Employees know to report suspicious packages or letters and follow appropriate responses to reduce risks.

RESOURCES

- United States Postal Service, Poster 84: Suspicious Mail or Packages: Protect yourself, your business, and your mailroom: [USPS.com](https://www.usps.com).
- United States Department of Homeland Security, "Explosions." [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov)

REVIEW

Did the training meet the stated goals?

How can the training be improved?

TRAINER COMMENTS

