

How quickly you recognise letter bombs and mail pieces containing incendiary devices could save lives, prevent harm to yourself and others, and prevent damage to University facilities. These guidelines will help you react appropriately when confronted with suspicious mail and recognise potentially dangerous situations.

***Remain calm and focused. Your safety and the assistance you can provide to the investigators depend on it!***

## **Recognition clues**

### **1. Letter bombs**

Letter bombs usually contain thin-sheet explosives, but they may also contain plastic or powdery explosives packed in plastic bags. They may be triggered by a pull-string mechanism or a pressure release activated when the letter is opened or the contents are removed. Letter bombs may also be light activated, i. e. contain cells that detonate the bomb when exposed to light upon opening of the letter. Letter bombs will invariably be thicker than normal letters. The letter bombs sent out to date were 4-20mm thick and weighed 40-80g.

### **2. Mail pieces containing incendiary devices**

These mail pieces contain incendiary material that will ignite when exposed to oxygen upon opening and may cause severe burns.

### **3. Mail pieces contaminated with biohazard or toxic material (see information sheet *What To Do - Suspicious Mail: Contaminated Mail Piece*)**

### **4. Addressee**

Letter bombs and mail pieces containing incendiary devices usually target specific individuals. This is why they are usually addressed to a specific individual, not to the University or to an Institute or Chair. Many letter bombs and mail pieces containing incendiary devices bear restrictive markings such as 'Confidential', 'Private', 'To be opened by addressee only', etc.

### **5. Other identification points**

Please note: The presence of one or even two of the characteristics listed below does not automatically mean that the mail piece is a bomb or contains an incendiary device. Always consider the circumstances of the situation in their entirety to determine if a credible threat exists.

#### **The postmark or postage**

- Foreign mail, air mail, mail delivered by private parcel services, hand-delivered mail, no postage, no franking mark on postage
- Excessive postage

#### **The sender or addressee**

- Sender unknown or no or illegible return address
- Handwritten or poorly typed addresses
- Address placed in an unusual position
- Addressed to title only or incorrect titles
- Misspellings, in particular misspellings of specialised terminology
- Restrictive markings such as 'Confidential', 'Private', 'To be opened by addressee only', etc.

#### **The physical appearance of the mail piece**

- Oily stains or discolouration, protruding wires or tin foil
- Excessive weight for the size of the mail piece
- Rigid or unusually stiff envelope, unusually robust packaging
- Lopsided or uneven envelope or objects felt in envelope
- Excessive securing material such as tape, string, etc.

## **Safety considerations**

### **1. If you receive a suspicious mail piece, do NOT under any circumstances**

- open, tear, cut, bend, or fold it (do NOT cut any strings, cords, or wires).
- shake or apply pressure to it or expose it to bright light.
- smell it.

### **2. What to do:**

- Remain calm!  
(Letter bombs and mail pieces containing incendiary devices are usually designed to withstand handling in the mail, there is no need to panic.)
- Make sure that the mail piece cannot be touched by others. Slowly and carefully take it to a safe place (e. g. to a separate room) or put it behind a solid barrier such as a stone wall to reduce possible blast damage. Cover the mail piece with a blanket!
- Do NOT use wireless communication devices (walkie talkies, mobile phones, etc.) or electronic devices (e. g. camera flash devices) in close proximity!
- Alert everyone who might be in danger!
- Find out if the addressee is expecting mail from the sender!
- Find out if the mail piece originated from the purported sender! Verify the contents of the mail piece with the sender!

### **3. If, after you have checked with the sender and the addressee, you still have any reason to believe that the mail piece poses a threat, immediately notify**

- **your in-house contact for reporting safety incidents.**
- **Technical Maintenance (-84444).**
- **the police (110) or call emergency services (112).**  
Be available for interviews with arriving responders. If you find pieces of the suspicious letter or parcel, do NOT throw them away.

## **General safety instructions**

- ❖ Find out who your in-house contact for reporting safety incidents is.
- ❖ Find out who your Health and Safety Officer is.
- ❖ Familiarise yourself with the locations of fire extinguishers near your work area.
- ❖ Know the quickest escape routes.
- ❖ Regularly attend in-house health and safety briefings.

**Do NOT investigate the matter!**

**Do NOT put yourself in danger!**

*Source: Richtlinie zum vorbeugenden Behördenselbstschutz (Guidelines on Self-Protection for Public Authorities, RBehS), Bulletin of the Bavarian State Government dated 16 September 2004 (B III 2-04155-1-8)*