

How quickly you recognise mail pieces that are contaminated with biohazard or toxic material could save lives, prevent harm to yourself and others, and prevent damage to University facilities. Exposure to such material may cause serious health effects. 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. Mail pieces contaminated with biohazard or toxic material

- Mail pieces that are contaminated with biohazard or toxic material usually contain powdery or granular substances, but they may also contain liquids or gels.
- The envelope may be uneven, and there may be traces of powder on it.
- There may be soft spots or bulges.
- There may be unusual discolourations or stains on the envelope.
- Powdery substances or liquids may be leaking from the mail piece.
- The mail piece may emit suspicious odours.

2. Addressee

Contaminated mail pieces 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 contaminated mail pieces bear restrictive markings such as 'Confidential', 'Private', 'To be opened by addressee only', etc.

3. 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 contaminated. 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.
- smell, taste, or touch contents or potentially contaminated items.
- remove any spilled powder, gel, or liquid.

2. What to do:

- **Remain calm!**

(Contaminated mail pieces are usually designed to withstand handling in the mail, there is no need to panic.)

- Slowly and carefully take the mail piece to a safe place (e. g. to a separate room) where it cannot be touched by others! Place the mail piece in a plastic bag and cover the bag with an empty waste bin.
- Close all windows and doors and switch off any fans and ventilation systems. Eliminate draughts!
- Stay away from potentially contaminated surfaces.
- Alert everyone who might be in danger! Keep others away from the affected area!
- Before you leave the affected area, remove any clothing that may have come into contact with the suspicious substance and place it in a plastic bag or other sealed container.
- Immediately wash your hands and any skin areas that may have come into contact with the substance thoroughly with soap and water, start out by washing your hands.
- 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

- ❖ Follow standard workplace hygiene procedures.
- ❖ Find out who your in-house contact for reporting safety incidents is.
- ❖ Find out who your Health and Safety Officer is.
- ❖ 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)*