



POLICY AND PROCEDURE

<i>Subject:</i> Guidelines for Handling Mail	<i>Index:</i> <i>Number:</i> 01-2
<i>Effective Date:</i> 10/16/01	<i>Prepared By:</i> City Manager
<i>Supersedes:</i>	<i>Approved By:</i>

1.0 **PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this Policy and Procedure is to help provide City staff with specific guidelines in handling official mail. Many people have questions about how mailrooms and offices should handle mail that may contain a written threat of chemical or biological material inside, or mail that may contain some form of powder. Following are common sense steps to take in the workplace. Health professionals, the FBI, and the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services have developed them jointly.

The risk of contracting any disease from an envelope is extremely low. General awareness of one's surroundings and suspicious mail is appropriate.

2.0 **ORGANIZATIONS AFFECTED:**

All City staff handling mail.

3.0 **REFERENCES:**

State of California, Governor's Office of Emergency Services, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Monterey County Office of Emergency Services.

4.0 POLICY:

4.1 What Constitutes a “suspicious parcel?” Some typical characteristics that ought to trigger suspicion include parcels that:

- Are unexpected or from someone unfamiliar to you
- Are addressed to someone no longer with your organization or are otherwise outdated
- Have no return address. Or one that can't be verified as legitimate
- Are unusual weight, given their size, or are lopsided or oddly shaped
- Are marked with restrictive endorsements, such as “Personal” or “Confidential”
- Have protruding wires, strange odors or stains, or show a city or state in the postmark that doesn't match the return address

4.1.1 General Precautions for those who handle large volumes of mail:

- Wash your hands with warm soap and water before and after handling the mail
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke around mail
- For those handling and sorting mail, wear disposable latex gloves
- Surgical masks, eye protection or gowns are not necessary or recommended

4.1.2 If a letter is received that contains powder or contains a written threat:

- **DO NOT SHAKE OR EMPTY THE ENVELOPE**
- Isolate the specific area of the workplace so that no one disturbs the item
- Evacuation of the entire workplace is **NOT** necessary at this point
- Have someone call 911 and tell them what you have received, and what you have done with it. Law Enforcement personnel shall also place a call to the local office of the FBI and tell them the same information. Indicate whether the envelope contains any visible powder or if powder was released
- If wearing latex gloves, remove the gloves and store in a plastic bag
- Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least one minute
- Do not allow anyone to leave the office that might have touched the envelope
- When emergency responders arrive, they will provide further instruction on what to do

5.0 **IMPORTANT:**

- Do Not Panic
- Do Not walk around with the letter or shake it
- Do Not merely discard the letter
- **ALL PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR HANDLING AND SORTING CITY MAIL WILL BE REQUIRED TO ATTEND THE MAIL HANDLING COURSE PROVIDED BY THE CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL, NO EXCEPTIONS.**