

UPDATED 12/17/01

INTERIM RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MAIL SORTERS – OREGON, 2001

Since September 11, 2001, no anthrax exposures have been documented in Oregon. In the absence of a credible threat, your risk of encountering anthrax is probably no greater than it was before September 11th. However, mail sorters do appear to be at greater risk of exposure to anthrax because of their daily exposure to thousands of envelopes (one of which could be a credible threat) and the types of equipment used for rapid sorting. The full guidelines for mail sorters can be found at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/DocumentsApp/Anthrax/10312001/han51.pdf>. A CDC update, found at www.bt.cdc.gov/DocumentsApp/Anthrax/10312001/han51.asp describes the Updated Recommendations for Handling Suspicious Packages or Envelopes.

Based on the full guidelines, the following equipment can voluntarily be used to reduce the risk of exposure.

Optional Self-protection Equipment for Mail Sorters

- Respiratory Protection: A disposable face mask rated N-95 or N-100, with an exhalation valve. Replace mask per manufacturer's recommendations or at least after each workday.
NOTE: An N-95 disposable mask will provide protection of up to 95% efficiency for 0.3 micron particulates in dry and non-oil aerosols when all manufacturers' guidelines are followed. A N-100 disposable mask will provide protection of up to 99.97% efficiency for 0.3 micron particulates in dry and non-oil aerosol exposures. Anthrax spores are 1-5 microns. These masks are ineffective on persons with facial hair. Persons working where oil mist from machinery is present (e.g. electronic mail sorters) should wear P-95 or P-100 masks.
- Gloves: Powder free, lightweight, single-use nitrile and/or vinyl gloves (nitrile gloves may be more durable). Replace gloves at every break. Cotton gloves worn as under gloves will help prevent hand sweating.
- Clothing: "Street clothes" with long sleeves, fitted at cuff, long pants.
- Other: Wash hands with soap and water after removing gloves. If workers choose not to wear gloves, wash hands every two hours with soap and water.

Cleaning and Waste Disposal Recommendations for Mail Sorting Facilities

The following points refer specifically to routine activities in the absence of a credible threat.

1. *General Cleanup*: For mail sorting facilities, see CDC health advisory for mail handlers (<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/DocumentsApp/Anthrax/10312001/han51.asp>). In other situations, clean as normal.
2. *Personal Protective Equipment*: Recommendations for routine activities at mail sorting facilities include voluntary use of N-95 or N-100 disposable face masks with exhalation valve and powder free gloves. Persons working where oil mist from machinery is present (e.g. electronic mail sorters) should wear P-95 or P-100 disposable face masks. When these items are being used in routine work, they can be discarded in garbage bags, sealed (twist tie or knotted), and disposed of as general waste (municipal solid waste). Additional manufacturer information for

employers and workers concerning respirator use can be found at www.mmm.com/occsafety/html/anthrax_notice.html

3. *Hand Washing*: Wash hands with soap and warm water after removing gloves.
4. *Personal Clothing or Uniforms*: Wash with commercially available laundry detergent and water or dry clean.

If a Suspicious Item or Substance is Found

Steps to be taken immediately after identifying a suspicious substance (before reporting to law enforcement or health officials) are documented at <http://www.oshd.org/acd/bioterr/home.htm> or at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/DocumentsApp/Anthrax/10312001/han51.asp>. Oregon Guidelines and Procedures for Handling Suspicious Letters or Parcels for State Agencies are found at www.das.state.or.us/images/GUIDELINES&PROCEDURES.pdf. Descriptions of potentially suspicious items can be found at www.usps.gov/news/2001/press/pr01_1010tips.htm

If the suspicious substance or item is determined to be a credible threat by law enforcement officials, the Department of Environmental Quality considers any masks and gloves worn by mail sort workers handling these suspect items to be infectious waste. Infectious waste must be appropriately contained and labeled, then transported to an appropriate treatment (incineration or steam sterilization) facility for disposal in a landfill site operating under a permit issued by a state or federal agency. Refer to www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/solwaste/infect.html and to www.ohd.hr.state.or.us/acd/docs/infectw.htm for information on handling infectious waste.

For information on steps the US Postal Service is taking to protect the public and postal employees can be found at www.usps.com/news/2001/press/pr01_1029steps.htm.

For cleanup and decontamination procedures in the presence of a credible threat, See **INTERIM GUIDELINES FOR DECONTAMINATION PROCEDURES TO USE IN BIOTERRORIST THREATS INVOLVING SUSPECTED ANTHRAX POWDERED SUBSTANCES – OREGON, 2001** for more information.

Remember, even with a credible threat, in almost all of these threats nation-wide there has been no anthrax detected. Also, anthrax is not contagious from person-to-person. In actual anthrax exposure situations, preventative treatment is available.

For additional information, please check the websites or contact,

Oregon Health Services
Office of Disease Prevention and Epidemiology
800 NE Oregon Street
Portland, OR 97232
(503) 731-4024 (M-F, 8-5)
(503) 731-4030 (after hours)
www.ohd.hr.state.or.us
or
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.bt.cdc.gov