

# Bulletin



## *Capitol Police/Office of Compliance Joint Special Edition*

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## Safe Mail Handling Procedures



In the interest of security and occupational safety in the workplace, the U.S. Capitol Police and the Office of Compliance are issuing this reminder on safe mail handling procedures for all Legislative Branch employees.

It is critical for all staff to remain alert for the tell-tale signs of potentially dangerous mail and packages. Staff must also remember the basic procedures for handling an item that has come under suspicion.

These are very basic guidelines. For more detailed information, we have provided additional resources for your reference. You may also contact the Capitol Police or your respective postmaster for more information and guidance on safe mail handling procedures.

### How to Recognize Suspicious Packages and Mail

- ✓ **One indicator of a suspicious package or piece of mail includes inappropriate or unusual labeling, such as:**
  - ▶ Excessive postage
  - ▶ Misspelled common words
  - ▶ No return address or strange return address
  - ▶ Unusual addressing, such as not being addressed to a specific person or the use of incorrect titles or titles with no name
  - ▶ Restrictive markings, such as “personal,” “confidential,” or “do not x-ray”
  - ▶ Postmarks that do not match return addresses
- ✓ **Other indicators include an unusual or inappropriate appearance, including:**
  - ▶ Powdery substances felt through or appearing on the item
  - ▶ Oily stains or discolorations on the exterior
  - ▶ Strange odors
  - ▶ Excessive packaging material, like tape or string
  - ▶ Lopsided or bulky shape of envelopes or boxes
  - ▶ Ticking sounds, protruding wires, or exposed aluminum foil

## Procedures for Responding to Suspicious Packages and Mail

- ✓ Stay calm.
- ✓ Do not open the letter or package (or open any further), do not shake it, do not show it to others, or empty its contents.
- ✓ Leave the letter or package where it is or gently place it on the nearest flat surface.
- ✓ If possible, gently cover the letter (use a trash can, article of clothing, etc.).
- ✓ Shut off any fans or equipment in the area that may circulate the material.
- ✓ Alert others nearby to relocate to an area away from the site of the suspicious item.
  - ▶ Take essential belongings, like cell phones, keys, purse, etc. with you in case return to your office is delayed.
- ✓ Contact the Capitol Police immediately at 911#, 4-0911 in the Senate, or 5-0911 in the House.
- ✓ Leave and close the door to the space containing the suspicious letter or package, cover the threshold area with a towel or a coat if possible, and section off the area (keep others away).
- ✓ To prevent spreading any powder or hazardous substance to your face, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.
- ✓ Relocate to your office's designated room/area, take essential items with you, and keep others away.
- ✓ Stay in the designated area until instructed otherwise by the Police. The Police will arrange appropriate medical attention and follow-up procedures as necessary.

## Resources for Additional Information

### US Capitol Police Command Center

224-0908

### Sergeant at Arms, U.S. Senate

224-2341

### Sergeant at Arms, U.S. House of Representatives

225-2456

### Chief Administrative Officer of the U.S. House of Representatives

225-6969

### Postmaster, Senate Post Office

224-3731

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[www.bt.cdc.gov](http://www.bt.cdc.gov)

### U.S. Postal Service

[www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com)

### Occupational Safety and Health Administration

[www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)

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