Recognizing & Handling Suspicious Mail and Packages

Due to recent events in Boston and Washington, D.C., the UCSF Police Department would like to take this opportunity to inform staff, students and faculty how to recognize a suspicious package. While the probability of you receiving suspicious mail is remote, you should be suspicious of any package with any of the following:

- The postmark or name of the sender is unusual, unknown, or no further address is given.
- There is no return address, or it has one that can’t be verified as legitimate. It may show a city or state in the postmark that doesn’t match the return address.
- Item is unexpected or from someone unfamiliar to you.
- Addressee is someone no longer with your organization or is otherwise outdated. An addressee’s name/title may be inaccurate.
- Excessive or inadequate postage.
- Item is of unusual weight, is lopsided or oddly shaped.
- Stiffness or springiness of contents. (When checking, do not bend excessively.)
- Package gives off strange smells, particularly almond or other suspicious odors.
- Handwriting is not familiar or indicates a foreign style not normally received by the recipient.
- Address contains names or common words which are misspelled.
- Address is written in block lettering.
- Restrictive markings such as “Confidential” or “Personal.”
- Small holes in the envelope or package wrapping that could be a provision for an arming/safety wire.
- Rattling inside the envelope or package, possibly loose components of a device.
- Visual distractions on the outside of the item (i.e., attached currency, pornography).

If you identify a letter or package as suspicious, do not allow anyone near it. Notify UCSF PD or your local police immediately. Leave the letter or package in an open area, such as a courtyard, porch, etc., where it is easily accessible to bomb squad personnel. Take the following steps:

1. Place a telephone call to verify the sender and/or contents.
2. Do not open the article (or squeeze, drop, prod, or push it). Never submerge it in water.
3. Isolate the mailing but DO NOT place it in a confined space such as a desk drawer.
4. Notify the Police immediately by calling 415/476-1414 or 9-1-1.

This information has been supplied by the U.S. Postal Service. Additional information on the transmission of harmful biological or chemical weapons through the mail can be found on the USPS site at: http://about.usps.com/securing-the-mail/mail-security-center.htm

Help fight crime by reporting suspicious activity to UCSF PD immediately. For emergency or in-progress events, dial 9-911 when using on-campus land lines and 415/476-6911 when using cell phones. For non-emergency calls, please dial 415/476-1414.

Together for a Safe and Crime Free Campus

Pamela E. Roskowski
Chief of Police

This alert is a public service to the University community and in compliance with the Jeanne Clery Act of 1998
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