

A line manager's guide to dealing with suspect packages

1 / be aware

What to do if you discover a suspect package



be aware

A line manager's guide to dealing with suspect packages

Your role

A suspect package has been reported to you. This booklet will guide you through the steps that you need to take as a **line manager** in dealing with the situation.

How to use this guide

Use **Section A** to assess the risk the package poses to you and your people. You will be directed to the next appropriate section (note that you do not necessarily have to follow every step below).

A

assess the risk

A suspect package has been reported to you. You must start in this section to determine the risk it poses to you and your people.

B

respond immediately

In the previous section you have determined that the package could pose a risk. Use this section to determine what to do now.

C

support the police

Police will take control of the situation when they arrive on site. This section will guide you on how to support their investigation.

D

close the incident

If it has been determined that the package does not pose a risk. This section will guide you on how to close the incident.

Remember:



Only call **999** if you require **URGENT MEDICAL ATTENTION** or if agreed with **Central Postal Control (CPC)** first.

Otherwise follow the instructions in this booklet. If you are unclear on what to do at any stage always call **Central Postal Control** on **Postline 5785 2999** or **020 7016 2999**.

Central Postal Control (CPC)

Postline 5785 2999

020 7016 2999

Property & Facilities Management

0844 800 9191

Security Helpdesk

020 7239 6655

National Press Office – for any media queries

020 7250 2468

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These guidelines have been developed by Jeff Lewis,
Head of Business Protection; with input from the **Police**
National Chemical, Biological, Radioactive, Nuclear Centre (CBRN).

A

assess the risk (Start here)

A suspect package has been reported to you.

In **Section A** you will determine what type of package you have encountered and assess the risk it poses to your safety and that of those around you.

The subsequent instructions will guide you through this process and, based upon your answers, you will be directed to the next appropriate section of this booklet.

assess the risk

Measure the response of people in the immediate area

A

Assess

Respond

Support

Close

Three step risk assessment

Step 1: Have there been any immediate physical reactions?

Step 2: Are there any physical signs that the package may be suspicious?

Step 3: Does the package appear to have been sent maliciously?

Follow detailed guidance on subsequent pages

Remember:



Only call **999** if you require **URGENT MEDICAL ATTENTION** or if agreed with **Central Postal Control (CPC)** first.

If you are unclear on what to do at any stage always call **Central Postal Control** on **Postline 5785 2999** or **020 7016 2999**.

Step 1: Have there been any immediate physical reactions?

No

Go to Step 2 on the next page

Yes. Minor physical reactions, such as skin irritation



Take care when handling the package

- Ensure the item has been set down carefully on the nearest flat surface – the floor will do. Do not try to cover it or put it in a bag. Do not bend, squeeze, flex or pinch the item.
- Warn people in the immediate vicinity that a suspect package has been found and that you are in the process of determining if there is any danger.
- Continue with the assessment but take care when handling the package.

Go to Step 2 on the next page

Yes. People are in need of urgent medical attention



Take immediate safety measures

- Ensure the item has been set down carefully on the nearest flat surface – the floor will do. Do not try to cover it or put it in a bag. Do not bend, squeeze, flex or pinch the item.
- Establish a 20m exclusion zone and restrict movement on the floor to avoid cross-contamination.
- Isolate all those who were working within the 20m exclusion zone (you may have to make arrangements for them to wash their hands).



Call 999

Report Chemical, Biological, Radioactive, Nuclear (CBRN) package/location and request immediate medical assistance, as well as **Police** attendance with CBRN training.

Go to section **C**

assess the risk

Examine the package for signs that it might pose a risk

A

Assess

Respond

Support

Close

Step 2: Are there any physical signs that the package may be suspicious?

The following are typical characteristics of a suspect package. Check the suspicious package against these checklists and note the category (if any) that the package falls under. Also make a note of any distinguishing marks or features.

Characteristics of a postal bomb

- ☐ **Dimensions:** A letter bomb is unlikely to be less than 3mm (1/8") thick or to weigh less than 43g (1oz).
- ☐ **Balance/weight:** Is the packet evenly balanced? Lopsided packages should be treated with suspicion. Packages disproportionately heavy for their size could contain an improvised explosive device.
- ☐ **Holes or stains:** Packages with grease stains or pinholes in the wrapping should be treated as suspect.
- ☐ **Smell:** Some explosive materials smell of marzipan or almonds.
- ☐ **The flap:** Is the wrapping completely stuck down? A small gap at the end of the flap may mean a postal bomb.
- ☐ **Type of envelope:** Experience shows letter bombs are usually found in 'jiffy' bags or similar. Tubes have been used – sealed heavily at one end.
- ☐ **Contents:** If, in addition to the signs above, the appearance suggests the package could contain a book or video cassette it should be treated as suspicious.

Characteristics of a powder package

Royal Mail legitimately carries a wide variety and volume of powder substances, which due to poor packaging may leak but do not cause a risk. There is no uniform size or shape of package that can be used, hence no generic guidance can be provided. But a package may be thought to be suspicious because you wouldn't expect to see that type of powder leaking from that type of package.

Characteristics of an officially marked package

- ☐ **Marked package:** A package which has official-looking symbols denoting chemical, bio-hazardous or dangerous goods contents.

Characteristics of a loose powder

- ☐ **No package:** A powder without a package having been seen. Refer to section B7 for further advice.

Step 3: Does the package appear to have been sent maliciously?

Note the details of the addressee and the sender.

Check the suspicious package against the checklist below to determine if the package may have been sent maliciously.

Postage and markings

- ☐ **Packaging/postage:** Has lots of wrapping or sealing been used or has excessive postage been paid?
- ☐ **Markings:** Restrictive endorsements, such as 'personal' or 'confidential' or no return address may indicate a suspicious item.

Is the package addressed to a likely target?

- ☐ National or local government figures or officials, politicians, members of the judiciary.
- ☐ Famous people or those in the public eye, such as leaders of business or trades unions, scientists and medical researchers.
- ☐ Organisations such as the Ministry of Defence, science laboratories, or high-profile companies.
- ☐ Buildings connected to national or local government, scientific and medical research, places of worship or the courts.



assess the risk

Based upon your observations
choose the most appropriate action

A

Assess

Respond

Support

Close

In summary:

Step 1: Have there been any immediate physical reactions?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Step 2: Are there any physical signs that the package may be suspicious?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Step 3: Does the package appear to have been sent maliciously?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Record details about the package:

As far as possible, and without placing yourself at risk, record the following details about the package

- Delivery address _____

- Return to sender address _____

- Postmark on package _____
- Postage details _____

If you are unclear on what to do at any stage always call **Central Postal Control (CPC)** on **Postline 5785 2999** or **020 7016 2999**.

If you answered 'no' to all of the steps opposite:

Go to section **D**

If you answered 'yes' to any of the three steps opposite ring CPC and agree the most appropriate scenario from the options below:

Suspect postal bomb

If the package was discovered on Royal Mail premises go to section **B1**

If the package was discovered at an Air Hub, go to section **B2**

Suspect powder package

If the package was discovered on Royal Mail premises go to section **B3**

If the package was discovered at a mail centre with testing equipment, go to section **B4**

If the package was discovered while on delivery go to section **B5**

If the package was discovered while on collections go to section **B6**

Other

Loose powder out of package **B7**

Officially marked package **B7**

B

respond to the situation

A suspect package has been reported to you.
You have arrived at this section because:

In **Section A** you assessed that it poses a risk.

Now in **Section B** you will need to take immediate steps to ensure your safety and that of those around you.

The subsequent instructions will guide you through this process. If in doubt at any stage call **Central Postal Control (CPC)**.

postal bomb

Discovered on Royal Mail premises

B1

Assess

Respond

Support

Close

WARNING! Read the note below first



Mobile phones and hand-held radios should not be used in the vicinity of the suspect item.

Suspect package



Record details

If you haven't done so already, note details, such as postmark, addressee and sender. The sender or addressee may be able to verify the contents of the package.

Is the item damaged?

YES

Move away from the item

Leave the packet where it is and evacuate the room/floor, clearing all areas in direct line of sight of the item (ie. not protected by walls).

NO

Secure the item

(ie. move to designated place of safety or bomb tube)

- Ask someone to ensure the route to the designated place of safety, or bomb tube is cleared of people and kept clear.
- Ask another person to ensure the bomb tube or place of safety is clear of rubbish, etc.
- If it is considered safe to do so, transfer the item to the safe area or bomb tube (leave the lid off).
- Establish a 20m exclusion zone around the suspect item.



Call CPC for confirmation

Brief **Central Postal Control (CPC)** on the situation and get its advice on how to proceed.

If CPC agrees that the package is **suspicious**:



Call 999

Report package/location and request **Police** attendance.



Inform your health & safety representative

Go to section **C**

If CPC agrees that the package is **not suspicious**:

Go to section **D**

postal bomb

Discovered in an Air Hub

B2

Assess

Respond

Support

Close

WARNING! Read the note below first



Mobile phones and hand-held radios should not be used in the vicinity of the suspect item.

Further details:

If Air Hub has a NABCO containment device

If you are at an Air Hub, and a NABCO bomb containment device is available, then a trained operator should do the following:

- Move the NABCO to the suspect item
- Load the suspect item into the NABCO
- Ensure the designated route and safe area are clear
- Move the NABCO through the designated route to the safe area
- Leave the suspect item in NABCO and create an exclusion area around the NABCO of at least 4m radius.

Suspect package



Record details

If you haven't done so already, note details such as postmark and addressee, sender. The sender or addressee may be able to verify the contents.

Is the item damaged?

YES

Move away from the item

Leave the packet where it is and evacuate the room/floor, clearing all areas in direct line of sight of the item (ie. not protected by walls).

NO

Secure the item

(If the airport has a NABCO containment device see instructions on the opposite page)

- Ask someone to ensure the route to the designated place of safety, or bomb tube is cleared of people and kept clear.
- Ask another person to ensure the bomb tube or place of safety is clear of rubbish, etc.
- If it is considered safe to do so, transfer the item to the safe area or bomb tube (leave the lid off).
- Establish a 20m exclusion zone around the suspect item.



Call CPC for confirmation

Brief **Central Postal Control (CPC)** on the situation and get its advice on how to proceed.

If CPC agrees that the package is suspicious:



Call 999

Report Chemical, Biological, Radioactive, Nuclear (CBRN) package/location and request **Police** attendance with CBRN training.



Inform your health & safety representative

Go to section **C**

If CPC agrees that the package is not suspicious:

Go to section **D**

powder package

Discovered on Royal Mail premises

B3

Assess

Respond

Support

Close

WARNING! Read the notes below first



If you touch the package take special care **not to touch other body parts, such as your eyes or nose.**



Wash your hands as soon as possible, but **do not wash your face** unless it has been in contact with the powder.



If clothing is heavily contaminated, **do not attempt to brush off any powder** - it is better to remove the clothing carefully.

Have regard for modesty and provide coats/overalls if necessary.

Suspect package



Take immediate safety measures

- Ensure the item has been set down carefully on the nearest flat surface – the floor will do. Do not try to cover it or put it in a bag. Do not bend, squeeze, flex or pinch the item.
- Establish a 20m exclusion zone and restrict movement on the floor to avoid cross-contamination.
- Emphasise to those that were in the 20m exclusion zone, the importance of not mixing with others.



Call CPC for confirmation

Brief **Central Postal Control (CPC)** on the situation and get its advice on how to proceed.

If CPC agrees that the package **is suspicious**:



Call 999

Report Chemical, Biological, Radioactive, Nuclear (CBRN) package/location and request **Police** attendance with CBRN training.



Shut down nearby machinery

- Shut down machinery, such as air fans, computers, within the 20m radius.
- Turn off the building air circulation systems or conditioning systems and close windows and doors.
- Maintain operation in unaffected areas as best as possible.



Inform your health & safety representative

Go to section **C**

If CPC agrees that the package is **not suspicious**:

Go to section **D**

powder/liquid package

Discovered in a mail centre with testing and analysis equipment

B4

Assess

Respond

Support

Close

WARNING! Read the notes below first



If you touch the package take special care **not to touch other body parts, such as your eyes or nose.**



Wash your hands as soon as possible, but **do not wash your face** unless it has been in contact with the powder.



If clothing is heavily contaminated, **do not attempt to brush off any powder** – it is better to remove the clothing carefully.

Have regard for modesty and provide coats/overalls if necessary.

Further details:

Analysis of powder/liquid material

A qualified engineer, with the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), will use the CBR equipment to detect the suspect material with the aim of ruling out the most common dangerous powder/liquid substances.

Test 1:

This test will determine if the package poses a radiation or chemical vapour risk. If the alarm is activated during the first test the **Person in Control (PiC)** and engineer will withdraw and contact **Central Postal Control (CPC)** on the results of the detection.

Test 2:

This test will give an indication of the likely composition of the powder/liquid in question.

Suspect package



Take immediate safety measures

- Ensure the item has been set down carefully on the nearest flat surface – the floor will do. Do not try to cover it or put it in a bag. Do not bend, squeeze, flex or pinch the item.
- Establish a 20m exclusion zone and restrict movement on the floor to avoid cross-contamination.
- Emphasise to those that were in the 20m exclusion zone, the importance of not mixing with others.



Call Person in Control and engineer to conduct test

The engineer will have their own suspect powder identification flow map and will advise you on the results of the test. For more information on what the tests entail see opposite page.



Call CPC for confirmation

Brief **Central Postal Control (CPC)** on the situation and get its advice on how to proceed.

If CPC agrees that the package is suspicious:



Call 999

Report Chemical, Biological, Radioactive, Nuclear (CBRN) package/location and request **Police** attendance with CBRN training.



Shut down nearby machinery

- Shut down machinery, such as air fans, computers, within the 20m radius.
- Turn off the building air circulation systems or conditioning systems and close windows and doors.
- Maintain operation in unaffected areas as best as possible.



Inform your health & safety representative

Go to section **C**

If CPC agrees that the package is not suspicious:

Go to section **D**

powder package

Discovered while out on delivery

B5

Assess

Respond

Support

Close

WARNING! Read the note below first



If the postman or woman has returned to Royal Mail premises, isolate them and record the names of any people that he/she has been in contact with.

Suspect package

If the item **has** been delivered:

Do not accept the package back

Advise the postman or woman that they should not accept the package back under any circumstances. If the customer is worried they should call the **Police**. The postman or woman should stay at the scene if the **Police** request.

No further action required

If the item **has not** been delivered:



Find out more about the package

- Note details, such as the postmark, addressee and sender details. The sender or addressee may be able to verify the contents of the package.
- Has the powder leaked from a single package?
- Is there a large quantity of powder? **Police** do not generally consider a large amount of powder as suspicious. This is usually the result of the **Fire Brigade** using powder extinguishers to put out pillar box fires.



Call CPC for confirmation

Brief **Central Postal Control (CPC)** on the situation and get its advice on how to proceed.

If CPC agrees that the package is **suspicious**:



Call 999

Report Chemical, Biological, Radioactive, Nuclear (CBRN) package/location and request **Police** attendance with CBRN training.

Note: if the postman or woman is out of the office, ask for instructions for them to follow.



Inform your health & safety representative

Go to section **C**

If CPC agrees that the package is **not suspicious**:

Go to section **D**

powder package

Discovered while out on collection

B6

Assess

Respond

Support

Close

WARNING! Read the note below first



If the postman or woman has returned to Royal Mail premises, isolate them and record the names of any people that he/she has been in contact with.

Suspect package



Return the item to the box

Advise the postman or woman to return the package to the box and close. If this is not possible, the package should be placed on a flat surface in the back of the collection vehicle. Advise the postman or woman to keep members of the public away from the package and/or box.



Find out more about the package

- Note details, such as the postmark, addressee, and sender. The sender or addressee may be able to verify the contents of the package.
- Has the powder leaked from a single package?
- Is there a large quantity of powder? **Police** do not generally consider a large amount of powder as suspicious. This is usually the result of the **Fire Brigade** using powder extinguishers to put out pillar box fires.



Find out more about the pillar box

- Has there been a pillar box fire recently? Most powder in boxes is due to the **Fire Brigade** extinguishing fires. **Police** therefore do not generally consider a large amount of powder as suspicious.
- Has the pillar box been vandalised recently?
- Has the powder leaked from a single package?



Call CPC for confirmation

Brief **Central Postal Control (CPC)** on the situation and get its advice on how to proceed.

If CPC agrees that the package is **suspicious**:



Call 999

Report Chemical, Biological, Radioactive, Nuclear (CBRN) package/location and request **Police** attendance with CBRN training.



Inform your health & safety representative

Go to section **C**

If CPC agrees that the package is **not suspicious**:

Go to section **D**

other

Loose powder without a package and/or officially marked packages

B7

Assess

Respond

Support

Close

Remember:

If you are unclear on what to do at any stage always call **Central Postal Control** on **Postline 5785 2999** or **020 7016 2999**.

Further details:

Powder found without a package

Royal Mail legitimately carries a wide variety and volume of powder substances, which due to poor packaging could leak but do not pose a risk.

Package with official markings

Royal Mail does carry some low-risk pathological (eg. blood/urine/faeces) and low-risk hazardous (eg. water-based paints, varnishes, enamels) substances.

Pathological substances will be packaged in three layers of protection. The inner plastic flask can withstand an elephant's weight and has never been known to break open. The outer packaging may be dry ice (which can smoke), or vermiculite powder (which can leak if the package is damaged) but are harmless.

Low-risk substances should be surrounded with sufficient absorbent material to soak up any leakage and should be packed in strong fibreboard and polystyrene.

A response to this type of situation would only be required under exceptional circumstances, such as people in the vicinity experiencing a physical reaction.

Suspect package

Consider the notes on the opposite page

- Do you still think the powder/package poses a risk?
- If you are still concerned look for any evidence of risk.

If you no longer think the package is suspicious:

Go to section **D**

If you still think the package is suspicious:



Call CPC for confirmation

Brief **Central Postal Control (CPC)** on the situation and get its advice on how to proceed.

If CPC agrees that the package/powder is suspicious:



Take immediate safety measures

- Ensure the item has been set down carefully on the nearest flat surface – the floor will do. Do not try to cover it or put it in a bag. Do not bend, squeeze, flex or pinch the item.
- Establish a 20m exclusion zone and restrict movement on the floor to avoid cross-contamination.
- Emphasise to those that were in the 20m exclusion zone, the importance of not mixing with others.



Call 999

Report Chemical, Biological, Radioactive, Nuclear (CBRN) package/location and request **Police** attendance with CBRN training.



Inform your health & safety representative

Go to section **C**

If CPC agrees the package/powder is **not** suspicious:

Go to section **D**

C

support the police

A suspect package has been reported to you.
You have arrived at this section because:

In **Section A** you assessed that it poses a risk.

In **Section B** you consulted **Central Postal Control** who agreed that the item might pose a risk and advised you to call the **Police**.

Now in **Section C** you need to support the **Police** investigation and ensure the wellbeing of your people.

The subsequent instructions will guide you through the process of liaising with the **Police** and briefing your people.

support the police

Liaise with the Police and ensure the wellbeing of your people

C

Assess

Respond

Support

Close

WARNING! Read the notes below first



Once **Police** are on site they assume command. Assist **Police** as required, but if you are not happy with the **Police** response, report it to **Central Postal Control (CPC)**.



Remember to let **Central Postal Control (CPC)** know the outcome of the **Police** assessment and keep in contact if there are any further developments.

Further details:

Typical Police responses

The **Police** will make an assessment of the situation, and the following includes some of their typical responses:

Scenario 1:

Police advise that no further action is required.

Scenario 2:

Police want to examine the package or powder in more detail. This may require experts to attend on site.

Scenario 3:

Police implement a cordon which may result in a partial or full evacuation of the building, site or surrounding area.

Scenario 4:

Police do not believe there is any inherent danger with the item but would like to gather evidence to assist in progressing a criminal investigation, eg. serial hoaxer, and may send it to a **Police** laboratory for further testing.

Scenario 5:

Very rarely the **Police** will have intelligence to suggest that the item may pose a potential risk and will send it to a national government laboratory for urgent analysis.

Police have been called



Brief your people

While you are waiting for **Police** to attend, let your people know what is happening, as follows:

- ☐ A suspect package has been found and we are taking practical steps to protect your safety and welfare.
- ☐ Trained **Police** have been called and they will advise us on the next steps.



Record details

Use the **incident log** in the **Stay Calm handbook** to record **Police** decisions and help manage the situation.

Police arrive



Help police to assess the situation

Meet the **Police** and brief them on the situation. The **Police** will make an assessment of the situation, and the notes opposite include some of their typical responses.

If Police advise that no further action is required:

Go to section **D**

If Police advise evacuation:



Brief your people

If the **Police** decide to evacuate, advise your people as follows:

- ☐ The **Police** have decided to evacuate the building/site/area
- ☐ All people with specific roles or duties, ie. **fire wardens** and **first aiders** should report to _____. (Specify who and where)
- ☐ Please do not leave the evacuation point or re-enter the building until you are told to do so.

If Police send the item away for analysis:



Brief your people

If the item has been sent away for analysis ask the **Police** why and brief your people accordingly.

D

close the incident

A suspect package has been reported to you. You have arrived at this section because in any of the previous sections you have determined that it does not pose a risk.

The subsequent instructions will guide you through the process of returning the item to the mail stream and closing the incident.

close the incident

Return the item to the mail stream and close the incident

D

Assess

Respond

Support

Close

The item poses no risk



Return the item to the mail stream

If the item is torn or leaking use a 'damaged envelope' bag and enclose a letter to the recipient to explain why it has been bagged. This is especially important for items covered in powder as this will stop the item triggering further alerts along the pipeline.



Clean any spillage

If necessary clean any spillage following existing cleaning procedures. Ring Property & Facilities Management for further guidance if required.



Brief your people

Let your people know the outcome of the situation, and why it has been determined that the package does not pose a risk.



Complete your local records

It is important to always keep written details of any incident.



Inform your health & safety representative

Report the end of the incident.



Inform Central Postal Control

Report the closure of the incident.



PiC

Once the incident is over the **Person in Control (PiC)** must conduct a formal review, seek to identify improvement opportunities, and forward a report to their **line manager** and to **jeff.m.lewis@royalmail.com** who will ensure that best practice is shared.

Size and position guide only -
printer to drop in logo with correct
reference number

Business protection guidance for Royal Mail:



1 / be aware

A line manager's guide
to dealing with suspect packages



2 / stay calm

A site manager's guide
to managing an incident



3 / be prepared

A regional operations director's guide
to managing an incident



4 / take control

A Central Postal Control guide
to assessing and supporting
an incident



5 / take action

A Business Protection team guide
to managing an incident

