



Suspicious Packages

*How to recognize a suspicious package and
what to do*

Fall 2019

Incident Review: June 2019

Research laboratory received a package

- At first glance, the package appeared to be a normal FedEx package
- There was nothing obviously wrong with the package
- The lab routinely receives shipments of research equipment, materials, and samples from collaborators and was expecting an incoming package at the time

Lab members initiate opening of the package

- The contents were not immediately recognizable and seemed unusual in comparison to what the lab normally receives
- The sender's address was unknown to the lab
- Package placed within a laboratory fume hood
- Personal protective equipment was donned in order to further inspect the package

Lab members decided to seek assistance and not proceed further

- Material remained unrecognizable
- HUPD called

Quick Thinking!



Lab members and PI did not recognize sender or the material found in the package



Once material deemed suspicious, it was placed in a fume hood



Called HUPD for help

Incident Review (continued)

HUPD reached out to Cambridge Fire Hazmat team for help assessing the material

Cambridge Fire Hazmat entered the lab and ran field tests for various materials (radioactivity, chemical compounds, etc.)

The field test was positive for a controlled substance

The material was secured by the hazmat team and turned over to police for investigation

Because the package was not fully opened and secured in a fume hood, the lab prevented contamination of the laboratory and exposure of people in the area.

SUSPICIOUS MAIL OR PACKAGES

Protect yourself, your business, and your mailroom.

If you receive a suspicious letter or package:

• Stop. Don't handle.

• Isolate it immediately.

• Don't open, smell, or taste.

• Activate your emergency plan. Notify a supervisor.



What to look out for

- Unexpected packages
- No return address, a nonsensical return address, or an unverifiable one
- Addressee's name or title may be inaccurate
- Incorrect or non-existent departments or position titles
- Excessive postage or no postage at all
- Powders, oily stains, discolorations or strange odors
- Mail that is inconsistent with the types of mail normally received
- Any letters or packages arriving before or after a phone call from an unknown person asking if the item was received

What to do if you come across a suspicious package



Do not open or disturb, taste or smell



If you are already handling the package, place in a safe location (e.g. fume hood) if nearby



Leave the area and post a do-not-enter sign



Wash your hands



Call HUPD



Remain in the area

Suspicious Packages Resources

- HUPD: Suspicious Mail & Packages
 - <https://www.hupd.harvard.edu/suspicious-mail-and-package>
- Lab Emergency Response Guide
 - https://www.ehs.harvard.edu/sites/ehs.harvard.edu/files/lab_emergency_response_guide.pdf
- USPS Suspicious Mail or Packages Poster
 - <https://about.usps.com/posters/pos84.pdf>