

Guidelines for the General Public on Handling Anthrax Scares

Facilities in Genesee County have received anthrax threat letters. To date, none of these have involved anthrax spores. The following guidelines can be of assistance to those handling the mail. Should a suspicious letter or package be received:

- Remain calm
- Do not open the letter or package.
- If the letter or package is opened and powder spills out, do not clean it up. Keep others away from the area.
- Immediately wash your hands with soap and water.
- If you are at work, tell your supervisor.
- Call 911 or your local police department.
- Evacuate the area.
- Local law enforcement officials, working with the FBI, will do a risk assessment and contact the state health department, if necessary.
- Place all clothing items that came in contact with powder from the letter or package into plastic bags. Keep these bags open, so that the clothes are available for law enforcement officials to examine.
- Make sure that everyone who handled the letter or package washes their hands.
- Make a list of names, addresses and telephone numbers of anyone who handled the letter or package. Share that list with law enforcement officials.
- As soon as possible shower with soap and water.
- Do not go to a clinic or emergency room unless you are sick enough that you would go under normal circumstances. If you do not have symptoms, there is not a test that can screen for anthrax.
- If you do have contact with health care providers, do not request testing for anthrax or treatment for anthrax (e.g., antibiotics) unless you are directed to do so by local and/or state public health officials.

Suspicious packages or letters may have the following characteristics:

- Excessive postage
- Handwritten or poorly typed addresses
- Incorrect titles
- Title, but no name
- Misspellings of common words
- Oily stains, discoloration or odor
- No return address
- Excessive weight
- Lopsided or uneven envelope

- Protruding wires or aluminum foil
- Excessive security material such as masking tape, string, etc.
- Visual distractions
- Ticking sound
- Marked with restrictive endorsements such as “personal” or “confidential”
- Shows a city or state in the postmark that does not match the return address

If laboratory tests confirm that a material that you have been exposed to does contain anthrax spores, contracting the disease can be prevented by early treatment with antibiotics. Anthrax is not spread from one person to another. Prompt notification of law enforcement officials is essential to rapid response.