

COUNTER-TERRORISM AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS BUREAU

NOTICE 15.2

June 2, 2015

TO: All Commanding Officers

FROM: Commanding Officer, Counter-Terrorism and Special Operations Bureau

SUBJECT: SUSPICIOUS LETTER RESPONSE - OFFICER AWARENESS -
HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Anthrax laced letters began appearing in the US Mail in September, 2001. Since then, the Department has responded to hundreds of incidents involving suspicious letters. The volume of letters received has fluctuated due to varying factors (i.e., political turmoil, current events). In the spring/summer of 2013 following the Boston Marathon bombing, a series of Ricin laced letters were sent to several nationally known victims. These incidents were widely publicized in the media and resulted in an elevation in suspicious letter incidents. Although the Department has not yet responded to a confirmed Anthrax, Ricin or any other biological agent incident, a number of incidents have involved hazardous materials that have had the ability to cause serious injury to the victim(s) or first responders if proper protective measures were not followed.

Officers responding to an incident involving a suspicious letter shall follow established Department protocols as delineated in Special Order No. 38 dated July 23, 2009, and Department Manual Volume 4/Section 212.49 entitled "Investigations Involving Hazardous Materials." When a suspicious letter call is generated, Communications Division will assign one A-car and a supervisor to respond to isolate the location and meet with any victim(s). Upon arrival, officers may make contact with the victim and/or person reporting and separate them from the potential source of the material. Officers should conduct an interview to ascertain more information then contact the Hazardous Materials Unit, Emergency Services Division, via Real-Time Analysis and Critical Response Division for direction. If any of the victims are experiencing symptoms or complain of illness, officers shall immediately request a response from the Los Angeles Fire Department.


Officers **shall not** approach the suspicious letter to verify the presence of any hazardous materials or written threats. Suspicious letters may contain chemical, biological, radiological material or a combination of hazardous materials. First responders are not equipped to properly assess, identify, or mitigate the hazards associated with these materials.

Nearly all biological pathogens and toxins are very small and not perceivable to the human eye (five micrometers or less). Lethal levels may be present without any visible material/powder. For example, Bacillus Anthracis (Anthrax) spores measures between three to five micrometers (in comparison a human hair is 10-100 micrometers thick) and only require one spore to infect an individual and cause harm. Other biological/toxic materials, for example Ricin, may be several orders of magnitude smaller, or may present an even

higher hazard. Another common misconception is that suspicious powders are only "white" in color. Hazardous materials come in all shapes, colors and sizes. Within the biological hazard realm, the colors of a material may change (pink, white, yellow, brown, etc.) depending on the growth media used during preparation. It is imperative that officers only relay any descriptive information of a material to the responding Hazardous Materials Technician. Officers shall not make an attempt to verify the contents of the envelope or verbiage within a suspicious letter.

Additional information on response to hazardous materials or a terrorist incident can be found in the Supervisor's Field Operations Guide, Volume 2, of the Emergency Operations Guide. Any questions regarding this Notice may be directed to Sergeant George Chen, Officer in Charge, Hazardous Materials Unit, Emergency Services Division, at (323) 342-4200.

APPROVED:



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