



STATE OF VERMONT

# Mail Handling Protocol

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Governor

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**DO NOT FILE**  
POST IN COMMON MAIL HANDLING AREAS

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guide is to heighten awareness and highlight recommended protocols related to suspicious and/or threatening mail/packages.

Please read this guide thoroughly **before** a suspicious or threatening letter or package is received and become acquainted with the protocol.

Refer to the USPS website at [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com) for additional tips concerning mail handling.

A copy of this document is available at: [http://bgs.vermont.gov/business\\_services/postal/forms](http://bgs.vermont.gov/business_services/postal/forms)

## REMINDERS

- Examine unopened envelopes for foreign bodies or powder, prior to opening.
- Where practical, do not open envelopes with your hands - use a letter opener.
- Seriously consider using latex or nitrile gloves if you have any cuts or abrasions on your hands.
- Used gloves should be immediately discarded in the trash. Ripped/torn gloves should be likewise thrown away.
- Do not touch eyes, nose or other mucous membranes with gloves on or before washing your ungloved hands.
- Open letters and packages with a minimum of movement to avoid spilling any contents.

**EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

Police - Fire - Paramedics (local).....	911
BGS Security .....	828-0777
BGS Postal Center .....	828-1016/828-2203
Department of Human Resources .....	828-3491
<b>Buildings Facilities Managers</b>	
Montpelier District -John Hebert .....	828-3312
Northeast District -Al Simard.....	334-4377
Waterbury District - Dave Jennison.....	241-3192
Southeast District - Don Randall.....	674-1141
Northwest District - Mike Daniels.....	338-4620
Southwest District - Bill Eroncig .....	324-5416

*If calling from a state office building dial 9 first*

## **MAIL SCREENING INFORMATION**

It is recommended that all mail and packages, whether delivered by BGS, USPS or other Common Carrier (i.e. FedEx) be delivered to a Central Screening Room located in each state office building. Locations will be determined by Buildings and General Services/Property Management.

Mail shall be placed into bins for each department or previously designated mail drop located in the building.

If it is not feasible to locate a Central Screening Room in a building, the Department should contact the BGS Postal Center to discuss next steps to identifying a specific location where the mail will be opened.

All mail handlers need to sign in and out every time they enter and leave the Central Screening Room. This will be critical to identifying persons potentially exposed in the event of an incident. Room should be equipped with recommended mail handling safety supplies as described on page 8.

Current Mail Screening Room Locations include the basement of 109 State Street down the hall from the elevators. The 109 State Street room is also a mail drop point for Agencies and Departments in the Pavilion Office Building. Mail rooms shall be accessed via combination lock access and/or card reader. PIN numbers, for keypad locks, should be obtained from a supervisor. It is recommended that mail rooms contain a telephone for notifying emergency personnel in the event of an incident.

## RECOGNITION POINTS

### *Some typical characteristics which may trigger suspicion*

- Suspicious or threatening messages written on them
- Addressed to someone no longer with your organization or outdated
- Lopsided, rigid, bulky or discolored
- Strange odors or oily stains
- Unexpected, particularly from a foreign country
- No postage or non-cancelled postage
- Excessive postage
- No return address
- Contain improper spelling of common names, places or titles
- Sealed with excessive amounts of tape

## SUSPICIOUS LETTER OR PACKAGE CHECKLIST

The BGS Postal Center staff will provide training for staff opening the mail at the Central Mail Screening Rooms.

**Mail that is Not Suspicious,**

should be opened and routed per normal procedures (refer to *Suspicious Letter or Package Checklist* on page 4 - for guidelines on recognizing suspicious mail)

**If a piece of mail or package is determined "Suspicious" DO NOT OPEN IT.**

This mail should be placed in a reclosable plastic bag and tagged to identify:

- Name of Screener
- Date and Time
- Processing Location
- Reasons for Marking as Suspicious

See *Chart A* (page 9) for step-by-step instructions related to handling Unopened Suspicious Mail.

See *Chart C* (page 11) for step-by-step instructions related to handling Unopened Threatening Mail.

Mail and packages identified as "suspicious" will be picked up from the BGS Postal Center service areas daily and brought to the Middlesex Postal Screening Area. Once this mail has been checked and cleared, it will be routed back to you for normal delivery.

Supervisors or Department Designee in outlying areas can contact their BGS District Facility Manager to make arrangements for transporting Suspicious Mail (that is properly bagged and tagged) to Middlesex for further processing (see Emergency Telephone Numbers on page 2).

**If, after opening a piece of mail or a package, you believe it to be suspicious,** contact your supervisor immediately, and follow the guidelines for *Opened/Suspect - Mail Handling* (page 7) .

See *Chart B* (page 10) for step-by-step instructions related to handling Opened - Substance Present.

See *Chart C* (page 11) for step-by-step instructions related to handling Opened Threatening Mail.

If an employee has questions on how to handle a specific situation, they should contact their supervisor. Supervisors can seek consultation from BGS Postal, BGS Security, and/or local law enforcement.

## MAIL OPENING

## **SUSPECTED LETTER OR PARCEL BOMB**

- DO NOT HANDLE and do not allow others to handle
- Secure the area (lock the door if possible)
- Notify supervisor or Department Designee, 911, and BGS Security

## **SUSPECT ENVELOPES OR PACKAGES**

Although most envelopes or packages should not be a cause for concern, prudence dictates that if an envelope or package is determined to be suspect, the following procedure should be followed

- Do not try to open the mail piece
- Handle with minimal movement - do not shake, bump or sniff the mail piece
- Place the letter or package in a plastic bag, tag it (per instructions on page 5) and return to the BGS - Postal Center in Middlesex for processing
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water
- Notify your Supervisor or Department Designee, 911, and BGS Security

**IF YOU HAVE OPENED A SUSPICIOUS LETTER OR PACKAGE  
REFER TO *OPENED/SUSPECT MAIL HANDLING* ON PAGE 7**

## **SUSPECTED LETTER OR PARCEL BOMB**

- DO NOT HANDLE and do not allow others to handle
- Secure the area (lock the door if possible)
- Notify supervisor or Department Designee, 911, and BGS Security

## **THREAT LETTER CONTAINING NO VISIBLE SUBSTANCE**

- Handle with minimal movement - do not shake, bump or sniff the mail piece
- Place the letter or package in a plastic bag, tag it (per instructions on page 5) and call BGS - Postal Center for processing and return at 828-2203
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water
- Notify your Supervisor or Department Designee and BGS Security

## **ENVELOPE WITH SUBSTANCE RELEASE**

- Handle with minimal movement - do not shake, bump or sniff the mail piece
- Cover any spillage
- Cover or place the envelope along with remaining contents in a plastic bag
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water
- All present should leave the room, close the door, place "do not enter" tape over the door, and *remain in the area*
- List all people present in the room at time of incident
- Notify your Supervisor or Department Designee, 911, and BGS Security

## **OPENED/SUSPECT - MAIL HANDLING**



## **RECOMMENDED MAIL HANDLING SAFETY SUPPLIES**

Biohazard-type bags

Gloves - latex

Gloves - Nitrile Lab (non-latex) - should be used by those with skin allergies.

Hand sanitizer

Labels - Avery shipping (optional) - 4" x 2" - self-stick labels you have available as long as they are large enough to record your name, department, date and time, processing location and reason for marking as suspicious

Marker, black fine or medium point permanent marker – fine point Sharpie does not smear

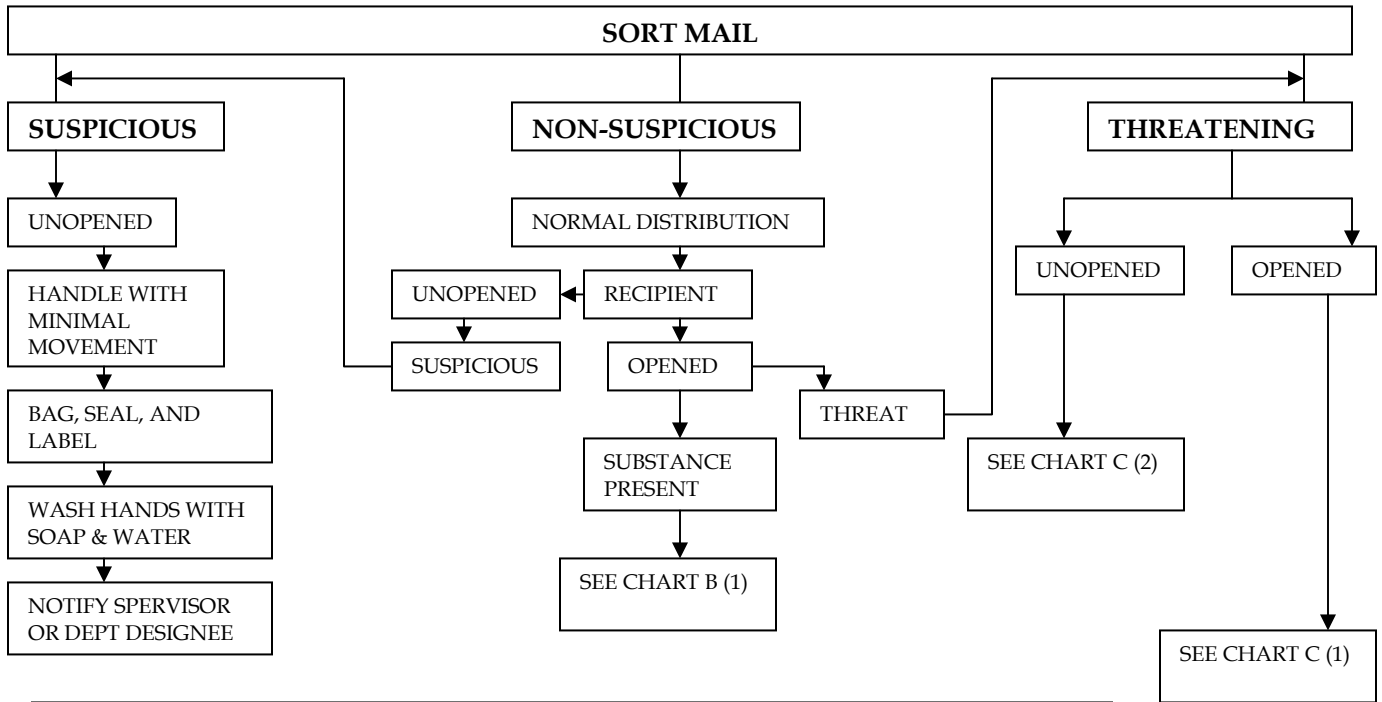
Plastic bags, polyzip – large enough to hold #10 and 6x9 envelopes

Respirator (3M) #R8511 - Dust and mist (N95) with exhalation valve - meets NIOSH 42CRF8410 requirements - 10/box

Safety tape, orange or bright colored labeled DO NOT CROSS or DO NOT ENTER

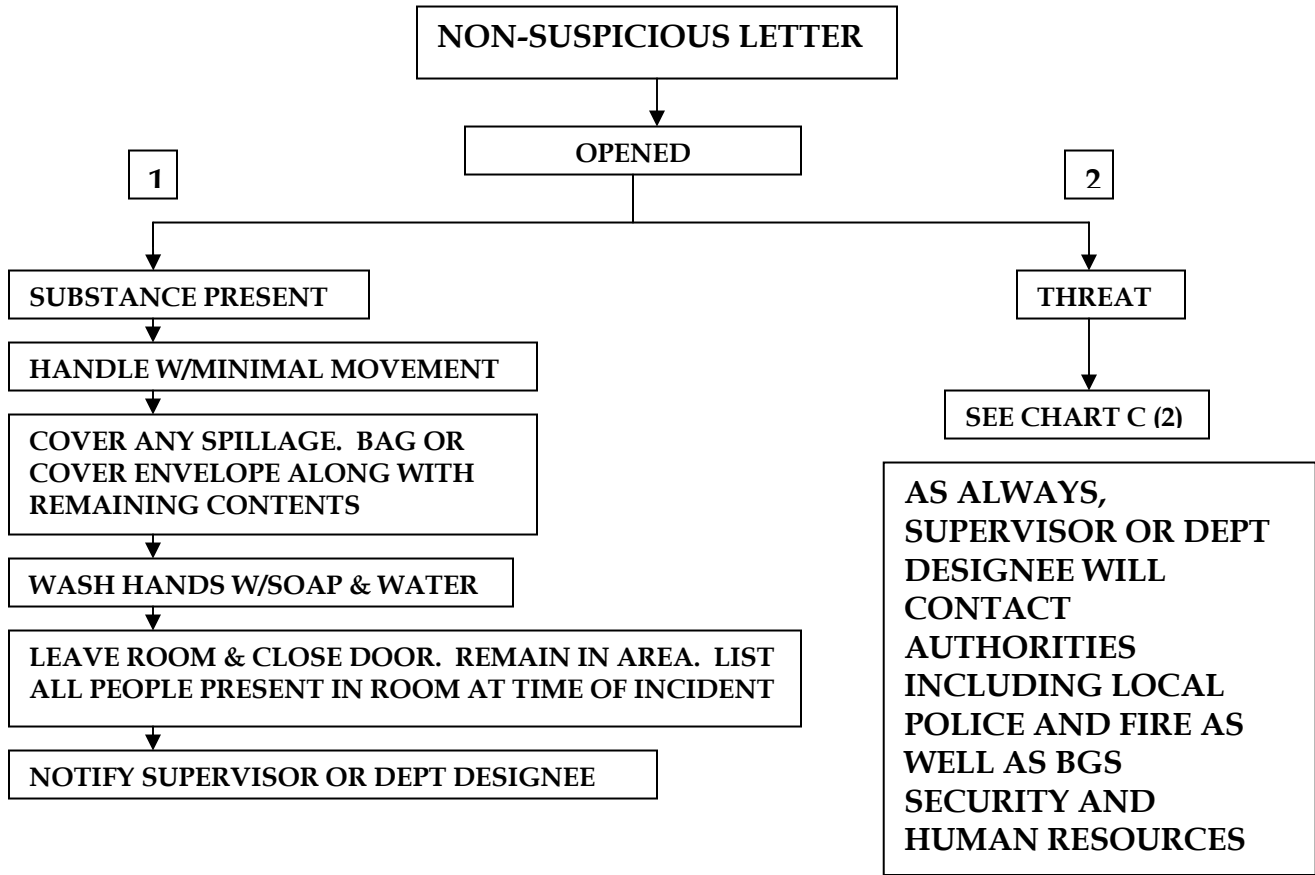
USPS documents for posting and mail protocols (available from the BGS Postal Center)

# CHART A



**AS ALWAYS, SUPERVISOR OR DEPT DESIGNEE WILL CONTACT AUTHORITIES INCLUDING LOCAL POLICE AND FIRE AS WELL AS BGS SECURITY AND HUMAN RESOURCES**

# CHART B



# CHART C

