

**Travis County Emergency Services District No. 9**  
**Westlake Fire Department**  
**Standard Operating Guideline**

**Subject:** ANTHRAX or Other Infectious / Biological Threat / WMD

**Effective Date:** October 12, 2001

**Authorized By:** Chief Paul Barker **Revised Date:** December 6, 2001

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## I. Purpose

To establish uniform protocols that may be utilized when a report of a potential WMD, (Weapon of Mass Destruction) is received to provide first responder protocols for those who may encounter an envelope or package and to outline operational responses to ANTHRAX and other infectious disease emergencies.

## II. Policy

It is the policy of the Department to respond to all WMD calls with knowledge of the potential for harm to the responders and bystanders

## III. Procedure

### *Receipt of Report*

- ◆ Dispatchers taking calls should follow existing standard protocols for handling of the emergency whether it falls into the category of a hazardous material, (biological or chemical), or an explosive device.
- ◆ When a call is received regarding an envelope/package that is suspected of being contaminated with Anthrax, it is important to determine if the item was opened or if it is still sealed as it was when received. This will classify the actual level of threat and the type of required response.
- ◆ **WMD CONCERN:** The call will be classified as a "*WMD Concern*" provided that:
  - The envelope/package is still sealed as it was received, and
  - There is no evidence of a powdery or oily residue, or other suspicious sign(s), and
  - There has been no threat of harm associated with the package.
- ◆ The caller should be instructed to not open the envelope/package but enclose it in a Ziploc bag and dispose of it with their normal household trash. The caller should be told to wash with warm soapy water following disposal of the item.

- ◆ If the caller insists that the envelope/package be handled by emergency services, the caller must be informed that the fire department will respond but that the envelope/package will most likely be discarded unless there is reason to classify the call as a threat.
- ◆ **WMD THREAT:** The call will be classified as a "*WMD Threat*" provided that
  - A threat was made in association with the envelope/package, or
  - There is evidence of a **large** powdery or oily substance on the envelope/package, or
  - There are other suspicious signs present, or
  - Contact has been made with a substance in or on the envelope/package.
- ◆ The caller should be instructed to not touch or come in further contact with the envelope/package, and immediately wash with warm soapy water. Persons should remain where they are until the fire department arrives.

### **Response per Call Type**

- ◆ Response to a "*WMD Concern*" is a lower priority call provided the envelope/package is in a safe place and will not be disturbed. It should be a **Code-1 Response**. The appropriate law enforcement agency may or may not respond.
- ◆ Response to a "*WMD Threat*" without contact of a foreign substance is a higher priority call with respect to the type and timing of the threat. This situation requires isolation of the envelope/package and removal of people to a safe area away from the envelope/package. **Code-3 Response is indicated** to facilitate isolation and safety of persons involved. The Westlake Fire Department, local Law Enforcement and Austin/Travis County EMS can be expected to respond.
- ◆ Response to a "*WMD Threat*" associated with contact or release of an unknown foreign substance from the envelope/package is the highest priority of these three call types. **This is a Code 3 response.** Isolation of the package and containment of person(s) who came in contact with contents of the package are necessary. In addition to Westlake Fire Department response, Austin Fire Department (designated as the Regional Response Agency for Chemical or Biological WMD) **may be called at the discretion of the Incident Commander.** Handling and disposition of the package will be the responsibility of the **Incident Commander.** Handling of the person(s) exposed will be the responsibility of the Austin/Travis County EMS. **Law enforcement will be involved to develop and process any evidence which may be necessary in the event of a criminal act.** **A unified command structure is dictated due to the multiple agencies involved in an incident of this magnitude.**

## On Scene Procedures

- ◆ Immediately upon arrival at the scene, an assessment of the situation is completed to determine if there appears to be a threat or if contact with a foreign substance has been made.
- ◆ If the call appears to be one that is simply a “WMD Concern”, and the envelope/package does not pose an immediate hazard:
  - Personnel will utilize appropriate PPE for self-protection simply as a precaution. Appropriate PPE consists of the N-95 Hepa Mask, Eye Protection, and Latex gloves.
  - The envelope/package will be carefully handled and sealed in a Ziploc-type, sealable plastic bag. A second bag is utilized to double bag/seal the item.
  - The owner of the envelope/package must sign the release form giving permission to remove the property and dispose of according to current policy and guidelines. **(Appendix A)**
  - The contained envelope/package will be transported and discarded **as biological waste. (Contact the Rural Health Clinic to dispose of these items along with clinic’s biological waste)**
- ◆ Local law enforcement will be involved if a threat has been made.
- ◆ If there has been a release of a foreign substance from an envelope or package, a determination must be made if WFD will be able to safely handle the material. If entry is required into a location where a foreign substance has been released, the following these procedures should be followed at a minimum.
  - Entry into an area where a substance has been released requires PPE consisting of a hooded tyvek suit with booties and gloves, and respiratory protection. Full-face respirators with HEPA filters may be used if it is determined that the situation simply involves a release from a letter or package and that an aerosol-generating device was not used. Self-contained breathing apparatus may also be used but must be decontaminated and cleaned following the operation in accordance with manufacturer recommendations. Modification of PPE is at the discretion of the Incident Commander after assessment of the situation.
  - If the substance can be easily contained and/or cleaned following obtaining a sample, it should be accomplished with as gentle an action as possible to avoid releasing any pathogens.
- ◆ Decontamination of equipment can be accomplished using a 0.5% hypochlorite solution, (one part household bleach to 10 parts of water). **A 5% solution of bleach and water should be used for gross decon (including wiping down areas of concern) and .5% for cloth.**



## RELEASE OF UNITED STATES MAIL INTO WESTLAKE FIRE DEPARTMENT TEMPORARY CUSTODY

I am the addressed recipient of the U.S. Mail for which the Westlake Fire Department has been summoned. I understand and fully concur that the Westlake Fire Department is taking temporary custody of this item of U.S. Mail. I further agree that the Westlake Fire Department is now the temporary owner of this piece of U.S. Mail, and that the Westlake Fire Department will transfer this mail to the proper authority that will dispose of this piece of U.S. Mail per the US Postal Service.

<b>Addressed Recipient (print and sign name):</b>	<b>Date:</b>
X	
X	
<b>Address of Mail Taken:</b>	
<b>WFD Officer (print and sign name):</b>	<b>Date:</b>
X	
<b>WFD Incident #:</b>	
<b>Witness (print and sign name):</b>	<b>Date:</b>
X	
X	
<b>Transfer Agency:</b>	
<b>Officer Receiving Mail (print and sign name):</b>	<b>Date:</b>
X	
<b>Law Enforcement Agency:</b>	
<b>Case Number:</b>	

# APPENDIX B

## Austin-Travis County Joint Terrorism Taskforce



Event ID: \_\_\_\_\_

### Possible Biologic Exposure Incident

#### Contact and Background Health Information for Potentially Exposed Persons

Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services System (EMS) and the Austin/Travis County Health Department needs to obtain important information from you so that we will be able to contact you over the next several days to keep you informed about the laboratory testing results and other updates on this incident. Although this may be a frightening situation, please remember that the vast majority of all of the recent events similar to this one have been hoaxes or unfounded. Within 24 to 48 hours we will have preliminary information for you regarding the results of the laboratory tests on the material involved in this incident.

Even in the unlikely event that this is not a hoax, your risk of becoming ill is very low. If needed, there are medications that you will be able to take that can prevent you from becoming ill. If it is determined that you have been exposed to an infectious agent, the health department will make a recommendation to your doctor on which medication you should take and any follow up procedures that are necessary.

Please answer all the questions. All the information requested below will be kept confidential.

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age (In Years): \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: \_\_\_\_\_

SSN: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Male \_\_\_\_\_

Female \_\_\_\_\_

#### Contact Numbers (Please Include Area Code)

Home \_\_\_\_\_

(Please Circle Preferred Contact Number)

Office \_\_\_\_\_

May We Leave a Message on Your Answering Machine?

Mobile \_\_\_\_\_

Yes: \_\_\_\_\_

No: \_\_\_\_\_

Pager \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Home Address

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**Work Address**

Name of Company \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide an alternate contact or message telephone

Name of contact \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to You \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Were you in the same room as the suspect material at any time? Yes No Unknown

**If you answered Yes to the question above, did you:**

a. Touch the suspect material? Yes No Unknown

If Yes, What part of your body touched the material? \_\_\_\_\_

b. Inhale (breathe in) the suspect material? Yes No Unknown

c. Ingest (swallow) the suspect material? Yes No Unknown

Please describe any contact you may have had with the suspect material.

Do you have a regular doctor? Yes No Unknown

If Yes: Doctor's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

# APPENDIX C

# **This is an official CDC Health Advisory**

Distributed via Health Alert Network  
October 12, 2001, 21:00 EDT (9:00 PM EDT)

## **HOW TO HANDLE ANTHRAX AND OTHER BIOLOGICAL AGENT THREATS**

Many facilities in communities around the country have received anthrax threat letters. Most were empty envelopes; some have contained powdery substances. The purpose of these guidelines is to recommend procedures for handling such incidents.

### **DO NOT PANIC**

1. Anthrax organisms can cause infection in the skin, gastrointestinal system, or the lungs. To do, so the organism must be rubbed into abraded skin, swallowed, or inhaled as a fine, aerosolized mist. Disease can be prevented after exposure to the anthrax spores by early treatment with the appropriate antibiotics. Anthrax is not spread from one person to another person.
2. For anthrax to be effective as a covert agent, it must be aerosolized into very small particles. This is difficult to do, and requires a great deal of technical skill and special equipment. If these small particles are inhaled, life-threatening lung infection can occur, but prompt recognition and treatment are effective.

### **SUSPICIOUS UNOPENED LETTER OR PACKAGE MARKED WITH THREATENING MESSAGE SUCH AS “ANTHRAX”:**

1. Do not shake or empty the contents of any suspicious envelope or package.
2. PLACE the envelope or package in a plastic bag or some other type of container to prevent leakage of contents.
3. If you do not have any container, then COVER the envelope or package with anything (e.g., clothing, paper, trash can, etc.) and do not remove this cover.
4. Then LEAVE the room and CLOSE the door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering (i.e., keep others away).
5. WASH your hands with **soap and water** to prevent spreading any powder to your face.
6. What to do next...
  - If you are at **HOME**, then report the incident to local police.
  - If you are at **WORK**, then report the incident to local police, **and** notify your building security official or an available supervisor.
7. LIST all people who were in the room or area when this suspicious letter or package was recognized. Give this list to both the local public health authorities and law enforcement officials for follow-up investigations and advice.

### **ENVELOPE WITH POWDER AND POWDER SPILLS OUT ONTO SURFACE:**

1. DO NOT try to CLEAN UP the powder. COVER the spilled contents immediately with anything (e.g., clothing, paper, trash can, etc.) and do not remove this cover!
2. Then LEAVE the room and CLOSE the door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering (i.e., keep others away).
3. WASH your hands with **soap and water** to prevent spreading any powder to your face.
4. What to do next...
  - If you are at **HOME**, then report the incident to local police.
  - If you are at **WORK**, then report the incident to local police, **and** notify your building security official or an available supervisor.

5. REMOVE heavily contaminated clothing as soon as possible and place in a plastic bag, or some other container that can be sealed. This clothing bag should be given to the emergency responders for proper handling.
6. SHOWER with **soap and water** as soon as possible. *Do Not Use Bleach Or Other Disinfectant On Your Skin.*
7. If possible, list all people who were in the room or area, especially those who had actual contact with the powder. Give this list to both the local public health authorities so that proper instructions can be given for medical follow-up, and to law enforcement officials for further investigation.

#### **QUESTION OF ROOM CONTAMINATION BY AEROSOLIZATION:**

**For example: small device triggered, warning that air-handling system is contaminated, or warning that a biological agent released in a public space.**

1. Turn off local fans or ventilation units in the area.
2. LEAVE area immediately.
3. CLOSE the door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering (i.e., keep others away).
4. What to do next...
  - If you are at **HOME**, then *dial "911"* to report the incident to local police and the local FBI field office.
  - If you are at **WORK**, then *dial "911"* to report the incident to local police and the local FBI field office, **and** notify your building security official or an available supervisor.
5. SHUT down air handling system in the building, if possible.
6. If possible, list all people who were in the room or area. Give this list to both the local public health authorities so that proper instructions can be given for medical follow-up, and to law enforcement officials for further investigation.

#### **HOW TO IDENTIFY SUSPICIOUS PACKAGES AND LETTERS**

Some characteristics of suspicious packages and letters include the following...

- Excessive postage
- Handwritten or poorly typed addresses
- Incorrect titles
- Title, but no name
- Misspellings of common words
- Oily stains, discolorations 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

## **APPENDIX D**

# Austin-Travis County Joint Terrorism Taskforce



## INFORMATION BULLETIN

**TO:** All Public Safety Personnel  
**FROM:** Austin-Travis County Joint Terrorism Taskforce  
**DATE:** October 19, 2001  
**SUBJECT:** Bio-Sample Transport and Testing Process Guidelines

The current situation in the country has generated a vastly increased volume of samples that are currently being transported and tested by the Texas Department of Health Laboratory. This testing is being done to ascertain the presence of biological pathogens. This testing process does not specifically identify the product or substance if it is not a biological pathogen. The Austin-Travis County Joint Terrorism Taskforce has developed the following sample testing and transport procedures to insure that the correct samples are tested with the correct priority to insure public safety.

### **BIO-SAMPLE PRIORITY:**

Samples are assigned one of 2 (two) priority levels. These levels are:

**Priority 1:** Samples from a suspicious substance event during which the potential for exposure exists among one or more individuals (this will be determined on-scene by the incident command group). A specific threat may or may not be present.

**Priority 2:** Samples from an item that contains a specific threat (either internally or externally) or other hallmark of a suspicious parcel. The definition of a suspicious parcel is:

### ***Suspicious markings***

Unexpected Mail or Package that displays the following without any obvious outward threat:

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

### **SUSPICIOUS PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS**

Unexpected Mail or Package with any of the following characteristics:

- 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

ITEMS OR PARCELS NOT MEETING THE ABOVE DEFINITIONS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED FOR SAMPLING OR TESTING AND WILL BE DISPOSED OF AS DIRECTED IN THE AUSTIN-TRAVIS COUNTY TERRORISM TASKFORCE INFORMATION BULLETIN: US MAIL GUIDELINES, DATED OCTOBER 19, 2001.

SIMPLE POWDERS, IF NOT ASSOCIATED WITH ANY OF THE ABOVE CONDITIONS, MAY BE CLEANED UP AT THE SCENE, THE MATERIALS BAGGED AND DISPOSED OF.

SAMPLES ARE TESTED BY TDH IN PRIORITY ORDER, WITH PRIORITY 1 SAMPLES BEING TESTED IMMEDIATELY, PRIORITY 2 AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

### **SAMPLE TRACKING PAPERWORK PROCESS:**

ALL SAMPLES TO BE SUBMITTED TO TDH FOR TESTING WILL HAVE AN AUSTIN/TRAVIS COUNTY SUBSTANCE ANALYSIS WORKSHEET COMPLETED AND ATTACHED. GENERALLY, THE A/TCEMS PERSONNEL PROVIDING THE TRANSPORT SERVICES CAN COMPLETE THIS FORM. AUSTIN FIRE DEPARTMENT HAZARDOUS MATERIALS UNITS WILL ALSO CARRY THIS FORM AND A SUPPLY WILL BE LEFT AT THE TDH LAB FOR UNUSUAL SITUATIONS. FORM COMPLETION GUIDELINES ARE AVAILABLE AND ARE ATTACHED TO THIS DOCUMENT IN ADDITION TO THE SAMPLE FORM.

### **SAMPLE TRANSPORTATION PROCESS:**

#### **Priority 1 and 2 Samples:**

Austin-Travis County EMS will transport all Priority 1 and 2 bio-samples to the TDH laboratory.

- EMS Special Operations or an EMS Terrorism Officer will take possession of the bio-samples on the scene from Fire Hazmat personnel after they have been “made safe” for transport
- EMS will be responsible for contacting ATCHHSD Surveillance Unit (Priority 1 Samples Only)
- EMS will coordinate the bio-sample transportation process with the Texas Department of Health
- An EMS Terrorism Officer, District Commander, or Special Operations Rescue Paramedic ambulance will perform the transport.

The EMS Terrorism Officer will be consulted prior to transport on all bio-sample transports performed by other units .

### **ON-SCENE INFORMATION TO VICTIMS OR WITNESSES:**

Do not promise victims or witnesses a specific time line on sample testing results. Simply state that results will be available as quickly as possible.

Provide the victims follow-up contact information detailing how they can access testing results through the Austin/Travis County Public Health Authority. This should include the incident date and the event ID#. (e.g. A53001)

For Priority 1 Samples, the Terrorism Officer is available either on the scene or via phone to answer specific questions that the victim may have regarding the testing process.