MAIL HANDLING ADVICE NOTE

SUSPECT PACKAGE – TYPICAL TELL TALE INDICATORS

- **OVERPACKING**
  The bomb maker must protect his device until it reaches the target.

- **STICKERS**
  An excessive number of FRAGILE or URGENT stickers may be used.

- **EXCESSIVE POSTAGE**
  The bomb maker, not wishing to have the device weighed in a Post Office, will probably buy stamps, and to avoid possible delays or attention caused by insufficient postage will probably affix a higher postage than necessary on the package.

- **ADDRESS**
  The method of addressing the package may be odd, cut-out letters or words, poor spelling, partially incorrect address, the use of stencils or instant lettering are suspicious. Caution to be used when marked ‘personal’ ‘confidential’ or similar.

- **NO RETURN ADDRESS** – or a return address that can not be verified.

- **UNFAMILIAR POSTMARK**

- **METAL FOIL**
  Several types of bomb utilise metal foil as an electrical conductor

- **WIRES**
  Wires revealed by damage indicate electrical components

- **GREASE MARKS**
  Some types of explosives are greasy or oily; particularly some commercial explosives and home made or improvised explosives

- **CHEMICAL ODOUR**
  Most military high explosives have no smell detectable by humans. Some commercial and improvised explosives, may emit a plum or almond smell

- **GREASY FINGERPRINTS**
  A careless bomb maker may transfer oil or grease from the explosive to the wrapping

- **PINHOLES**
  A hole in the package may indicate the use of an external arming system

- **UNEVEN WEIGHT**
  A mass of explosive in the device may be indicated by uneven weight distribution, high explosives have high gram densities and are heavier than their volume may suggest.

- **JIFFY BAGS**
  Be cautious due to the padded make up of the envelope, probably the most common form of type used today to deliver devices.

- **COURIER OR HAND DELIVERED MAIL**
  Just because mail is delivered by a different source don’t let you guard down, the same security principles apply.
Indicators of Suspicious Mail – The 7 S’s

- Size
- Shape
- Sender
- Stamps
- Seal
- Staining
- Smell

Suspicious Mail
Suspicious mail, which includes parcels, packages and anything delivered by post or courier, has been a commonly used terrorist device. A common sense approach should be adopted which should give you a good idea of the likely threat to you and your family indicating precautions needed to be taken.
Suspicious mail may be explosive or incendiary (the two most likely kinds), or chemical, biological or radiological. Anyone receiving a suspicious delivery is unlikely to know which type it is, so procedures should cater for every eventuality.

A letter bomb will probably have received fairly rough handling in the post and so is unlikely to detonate through being moved, but any attempt at opening it, however slight, may set it off. Unless delivered by courier, it is unlikely to contain a timing device. Letter bombs come in a variety of shapes and sizes; a well-made one will look innocuous but there may be tell tale signs.

### Indicators to Suspicious Mail

- It is unexpected or of unusual origin or from an unfamiliar sender
- There is no return address or the address cannot be verified
- It is poorly or inaccurately addressed e.g. incorrect title, spelt wrongly, title but no name, or addressed to an individual no longer with the company
- The address has been printed unevenly or in an unusual way
- The writing is in an unfamiliar foreign style
- There are unusual postmarks or postage paid marks
- A Jiffy bag, or similar padded envelope, has been used
- It seems unusually heavy for its size. Most letters weigh up to about 28g or 1 ounce, whereas most effective letter bombs weigh 50-100g and are 5mm or more thick
- It has more than the appropriate value of stamps for its size and weight
- It is marked ‘personal’; ‘confidential’; ‘urgent’ or ‘very urgent’
- It is oddly shaped or lopsided
- The envelope flap is stuck down completely (a harmless letter usually has an un-gummed gap of 3-5mm at the corners)
- There is a pin-sized hole in the envelope or package wrapping
- There is a smell, particularly of almonds or marzipan
- There is an additional inner envelope, and it is tightly taped or tied (however, in some organisations sensitive or ‘restricted’ material is sent in double envelopes as standard procedure).
What You Can Do:

• Do not open package

• Do not drop it or throw it away

• Place it on a flat surface

• Isolate it from other mail

• Do not move it, even to X-ray it

• If it is in an X ray facility, leave it there

• Don’t put it in a bucket of water or sand

• Don’t cover the item with anything, leave it open view

• Don’t give it to someone else. You need to take action and take personal responsibility

• Contact the Police on 999

• Evacuate the immediate area and each adjacent room, including rooms above and below. Small devices will require a minimum cordon distance of 100 mts. Remember the potential danger from secondary fragmentation e.g. flying glass.

• Upon evacuating the building leave doors open and if safe to do so mark the route to the suspect package with tape, string or similar

• Leave windows open.

• Prevent others from approaching or accessing cleared areas

• Finder and witnesses to suspect package to remain (safely) at the scene and make themselves known to attending police officers

• Do not use mobile phones or security radios in the cleared area or 30 metres of the suspect package

• If you have neighbours within the immediate danger zone, warn them of the perceived danger and of your intended actions.
Chemical, Biological or Radiological (CBR) Materials in the Post

Terrorists may seek to use chemical, biological or radiological materials in letter bombs. It is difficult to provide a full list of possible CBR indicators because of the diverse nature of the materials. However, some of the more common and obvious are:

- Unexpected granular, crystalline or finely powdered material (of any colour and usually with the consistency of coffee, sugar or baking powder), loose or in a container
- Unexpected sticky substances, sprays or vapours
- Unexpected pieces of metal or plastic, such as discs, rods, small sheets or spheres
- Strange smells, e.g. garlic, fish, fruit, mothballs, pepper, rotten meat. If you detect a smell, do not go on sniffing it. However, be aware some CBR materials are odourless and tasteless
- Stains or dampness on the packaging
- Sudden onset of illness or irritation of skin, eyes or nose.

CBR devices containing finely ground powder or liquid may be hazardous without being opened.

What You Can Do:

- The precise nature of the incident (chemical, biological or radiological) may not be readily apparent. Keep your response plans general and wait for expert help from the emergency services
- If in a building:-
  - Leave the item/package alone. Do not cover, immerse or move it.
  - Close windows and doors in the immediate area.
  - Shutdown air conditioning units, fans and any other air recirculation systems that may contribute to the movement of airborne hazards (e.g. computer equipment containing fans). Note these procedures are likely to require advanced knowledge of your facilities equipment and you need to be rehearsed in this procedure for it to be effective.
  - Evacuate the affected area but do not leave the building.
• Move those directly affected by an incident to a safe location as close as possible to the scene of the incident, so as to minimise spread of contamination.

• Separate those directly affected by an incident from those not involved so as to minimise the risk of inadvertent cross-contamination.

• Ask people to remain in situ – though you cannot contain them against their will

• Avoid eating, drinking or smoking.

• For ‘contaminated’ persons, if possible locate clean water source and wash hands, wash other exposed areas (face and hair etc), wash hands again.

• Do not make your own way to hospital – your best medical care is coming to the scene.

• You do not need to make any special arrangements beyond normal first aid provision. The emergency services will take responsibility for treatment of casualties.

• Wait for CBRN emergency responders to arrive – follow their instructions.

• If the building is too small in which to remain – follow ‘outdoor advice’ below

• If in the open air:-

• Move away from source upwind and/or uphill.

• Do not make your own way to hospital – your best care is coming to the scene.

• Avoid eating, drinking or smoking.

• Remove outer clothing

• Move away again upwind

• If possible locate clean water source and wash hands, wash other exposed areas (face and hair etc) wash hands again.

• Move away again upwind and/or uphill

• Walk slowly towards police, fire or ambulance assistance and comply with their instructions.
Planning Your Mail Handling Procedures

Although any suspect item should be taken seriously, remember that most will be false alarms, and a few may be hoaxes. Try to ensure that your procedures, while effective, are not needlessly disruptive. Take the following into account in your planning:

• Seek advice from your local police Counter Terrorism Security Adviser (CTSA) on the threat and on defensive measures.

• Ensure all individuals within your property that who handle mail are briefed and made aware of safe procedures.

• Ensure that all sources of incoming mail (e.g. Royal Mail, couriers, and hand delivery) are included in your screening process.

• All occupants need to be aware of the usual pattern of deliveries and to be briefed of unusual deliveries.

• Ensure that you open post with letter openers (glass or plastic, do not use metallic letter openers or your fingers) and with minimum movement. You should keep your hands away from your nose and mouth and always wash your hands after handling mail.

• You should not blow into envelopes or shake them.

Further information on mail handling can be found at:-

www.cpni.gov.uk

www.nactso.gov.uk