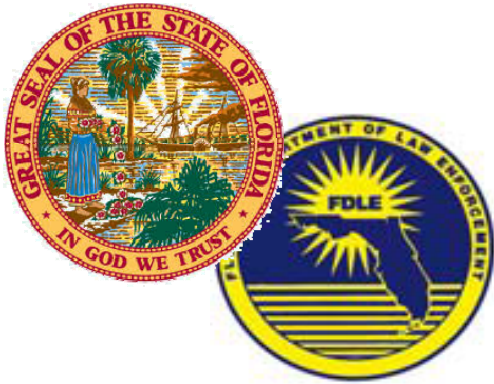


4/16/09 -- Version 2.5



FLORIDA Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan

PROTOCOL

Response to Suspicious Letter or Container with a Potential Biological Threat

Prepared by: Florida State Working Group Operations Committee

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Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Purpose	6
Statutes.....	6
Threat	6
Intelligence	7
Jurisdiction	8
On Scene Response	8
Incident Notification	8
Scene Assessment	8
Responder Notification	9
Incident Command	9
Security	9
Sample Collection and Analysis.....	10
Decontamination	11
Management of Potentially Exposed Persons.....	11
Facility Closure	12
Media Communications	12
Laboratory Results	12
Recovery	13
Training and Exercises	13

References

A. US Code Title 18

1. **Biological Weapons Anti-Terrorism Statute of 1989, (BWAT) Title 18, USC §175**
2. **Use of Weapons of Mass Destruction Statute Title 18, USC §2332a**
3. **False Information and Hoaxes Title 18, USC §1038**
4. **Chemical Weapons Convention Implementation Act of 1998, Title 18, USC §229**
5. **Prohibited Transactions Involving Nuclear Materials, Title 18, USC §831**

B. Title XLVI 790.166 s. 790.166 F.S.

C. **FBI-DHS-HHS/CDC *Guidance on Initial Response to a Suspicious Letter/Container with a Potential Biological Threat***

- D. International Association of Fire Chiefs *Model Procedures for Responding to a Package with Suspicion of a Biological Threat***
- E. Protocol for Biological Agent Collection, Package, and Transport**
- F. Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program**
- G. Florida Incident Field Operations Guide – January 2006**

Job Action Sheets

**911 Call Center
Law Enforcement
Public Health
Fire Rescue
HazMat**

Notifications and Response Actions Flow Chart

Contact Information (TBP)

**FBI WMD Coordinators
Florida Fusion Center
US Postal Inspectors
Laboratory Response Network Public Health Reference Laboratories**

Introduction

This *Protocol for Response to Suspicious Letter or Container with a Potential Biological Threat* is written to be used within the context of the Florida Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan and as a supplement to corresponding County Emergency Management Plans.

Biological agents and toxins may be used as weapons of terror to produce casualties and spread fear among those not directly affected. Terrorists may disseminate disease agents or toxins covertly or overtly. In a covert dissemination, the spread of disease may be difficult to distinguish from a natural outbreak. Terrorist could also choose to raise the level of fear by overtly announcing their intent to use biological agents. .

In October 2001, selected organizations and individuals in government and media began receiving letters containing anthrax spores. One letter was received at the American Media Inc building in Boca Raton, Florida. The letters contained a threat and identified anthrax as the biological agent.

Although no dissemination was made other than in the US mail, ordinary citizens began to fear not only their mail but common powder substances found in their own home and work environment. As the anxiety of Florida's citizens spread, law enforcement, fire, and health components were called to respond to numerous panic calls.

Each county and jurisdiction developed its own protocols for suspicious substance response. The lack of a common response protocol for suspicious substance response has sometimes led to responder coordination confusion, adverse media coverage, and reduced confidence in those who believe that they may have been exposed to a deadly disease.

This State of Florida Protocol is based on guidance endorsed by the Federal Bureau of investigation, US Department of Homeland Security, the US Department of Health and Human Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the International Association of Fire Chiefs. (See References C. and D.)

Acknowledgments

This Protocol was written in coordination with Regional Domestic Security Task Force (RDSTF) 2 panel consisting of local law enforcement, fire rescue, emergency medical services (EMS) and county health department responders, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) , the Florida Department of Health (DOH), the Bureau of Laboratories, US Postal Inspection Service, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. It is based on responder experiences on actual suspicious substance calls as well as recognized, written protocols and guidance documents listed as references.

The protocol draft was provided for further distribution and comment to Florida Sheriffs' Association, the Florida Police Chiefs' Association, the Florida EMS List serve, the RDSTF Health CoChairs and Regional Emergency Response Advisors, the Division of Emergency Management, the Florida Fusion Center, and internally within FDLE and DOH.

More than 30 comments were received and addressed within this final Protocol version. We sincerely appreciate all who took the time and interest in providing comments to make this protocol easier to understand and apply to suspicious letter and package incidents with a potential biological threat.

Purpose

The purpose of this protocol is to establish procedural standards for a coordinated response to suspicious substances that are found and reported in letters, packages, or small quantities in a home or work environment.

Statutes

There are statutes at both the federal and state level concluding that use or threatened use of a biological agent is a criminal act. The area around the suspicious substance may be designated and secured as a crime scene. See References A. and B. to this protocol.

US Code Title 18, Part I, Chapter 10 states in part:

“Whoever knowingly develops, produces, stockpiles, transfers, acquires, retains, or possesses any biological agent, toxin, or delivery system for use as a weapon, or knowingly assists a foreign state or any organization to do so, or attempts, threatens, or conspires to do the same, shall be fined under this title or imprisoned for life or any term of years, or both. There is extraterritorial Federal jurisdiction over an offense under this section committed by or against a national of the United States.” Also see References A-1 through A-5.

Title XLVI 790.166 F.S. states in part:

“Manufacture, possession, sale, delivery, display, use, or attempted or threatened use of a weapon of mass destruction or hoax weapon of mass destruction [is] prohibited.”

Threat

Preparing a biological agent for dissemination in a form that would cause an infection is very difficult without sophisticated training and laboratory equipment. Biological agents used in the 1984 Salmonella attack by the Rajneeshee Cult in Oregon and the 2001 anthrax letters were obtained from laboratories. There have been incidents where small quantities of ricin, a biological toxin, have been manufactured outside of a laboratory, but the process remains very difficult. Anthrax spores and ricin can be reduced to powdered forms that are stable under normal environmental conditions. Pending intelligence to the contrary, they remain the most likely agents of choice for dissemination through the mail.

The target for the use or threatened use of a biological agent in the past has been elected officials, controversial organizations, and the media. Perpetrators generally target well-known persons and organizations because

of their high visibility in the media. The potential for ordinary citizens to be the target of an infectious agent or toxin through the mail or at his or her home or workplace is very low; however, they may be the target of a hoax from a disgruntled employee, neighbor, or estranged spouse. See Table 1.

High Threat - People and Places	High Threat - Envelope Content
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressee is a State or Federal Official -- by name • Nationally recognized person, corporate entity, or organization -- by name • Local Government Official -- by name • Water systems • Communications Systems • News Media • National, State, or Local Critical Infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A letter threatening the addressee or the addressee's interests. • A very fine powder • A powder that is straw yellow to light brown • A mechanism (e.g., spring loaded) to launch powder content on opening
Low Threat - People and Places	Low Threat - Envelope Content
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual households • Local businesses • Other low-news profile facilities and organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No powder content • Letter does not threaten addressee

Table 1. Guide for Suspicious Substance Threat Assessment

Intelligence

The guide for suspicious substance threat assessment is useful in situations where there is no active intelligence on a terrorist threat or a hoax threat series. But law enforcement responders should be aware of active intelligence as a more accurate determination of the threat from a suspicious substance. The law enforcement responder should report active intelligence as appropriate with level and need to know to other responders who arrive on scene.

The Florida Fusion Center will bring the relevant partners together when a high threat is identified to maximize the ability to prevent and respond to terrorism and criminal acts. The principle role of the Florida Fusion Center will be to compile, analyze and disseminate criminal / terrorist information and intelligence and other information to support efforts to anticipate, identify, prevent and/or monitor criminal/terrorist activity.

High threat level and credible intelligence known prior to receipt of a suspicious substance or package will heighten the immediacy of decisions on response, personal protective equipment selection, sampling, and protection, decontamination, and treatment of person who have been exposed.

Jurisdiction

Because the use of a biological agent or threatened use or hoax referencing a biological agent is a criminal act, a law enforcement officer must respond to each report of a suspicious substance and assess the scene in the context of law enforcement agency response policy.

The use, threat, or hoax, of a biological agent automatically escalates the jurisdiction to a federal crime and the law enforcement officer at the scene must promptly notify the FBI Weapons of Mass Destruction Coordinator (WMDC) when these circumstances are present. The WMDC may work the investigation jointly with local partners to achieve the goal of arresting and prosecuting the individual responsible.

The Florida Fusion Center must also be notified under these same circumstances immediately following FBI notification.

On Scene Response

Initial Notification

Typically, a suspicious substance incident begins with a call to 911. The 911 Call Center operator should ascertain a description of the suspicious substance and the context of the incident and notify the County Warning Point. See example 911 Call Center operator Job Action Sheet. A law enforcement officer should be the first responder to be dispatched to the scene. The County Warning point should notify the State Watch Office. See Notifications and Response Actions Flow Chart.

Scene Assessment

The first arriving law enforcement officer assesses the scene in accordance with known intelligence, the threat table, and guidance from his or her supervisor and determines if there is a high risk situation present. (See law enforcement officer Job Action Sheet.)

If the law enforcement officer does not have minimum personal protective equipment i.e., a properly fitted N-95 mask and gloves, or has not been trained, or does not feel confident with the use of this equipment, it is important that he or she does not enter an area where there is potential exposure to contamination. In most cases, an assessment of the scene can

be made by phone with persons who remain inside the area or with facility supervisors or managers who know the situation.

Fire-Rescue responders who have personal protective equipment may enter the scene, observe conditions and assist law enforcement with the interior assessment. They must not disturb evidence and await the arrival of HazMat for sample collection. Fire-Rescue responders can assess exposed persons and the need to initiate decontamination procedures.

If all at the scene agree that there is an obvious, non-hazardous source of a spilled substance (e.g. spilled sweetener at a coffee bar), and the law enforcement officer can conclude that no threat is present, he or she will review the situation with the caller and not take further action. The substance may be disposed of at the discretion of the caller.

Responder Notification

Based on the scene assessment, if the law enforcement officer determines:

- there is intelligence or criteria indicating a high threat situation,
- persons at the scene have been contaminated with a substance, even in low threat situations
- the threat situation is uncertain
- circumstances at the scene require additional investigation or support

He or she must notify a supervisor and request the dispatch of additional response agency resources:

- FBI WMDC
- Florida Fusion Center
- County or Municipal Fire-Rescue
- HazMat
- Law Enforcement Forensic Team
- County Health Department designated responder
- US Postal Inspection Service if the suspicious substance was contained in a letter or package processed through the US mail

In some jurisdictions, these contacts may be more expeditiously done by the agency communications center supervisor or in a prearranged call list by the 911 Call Center. If the jurisdiction does not have a HazMat or Forensic Team, these should be requested through mutual aid.

The law enforcement officer must ensure the isolation of the scene and persons who are contaminated while avoiding direct contact with them and await the arrival of the other responders.

Incident Command

The first arriving law enforcement officer remains as incident commander until replaced by a more senior officer. As other response agencies arrive consideration should be given to establish a unified command.

When intelligence indicates there is a high degree of certainty that the substance is a biological agent or toxin, establishment of the positions of safety officer, public information officer, operations chief and plans chief must be actively considered. Additional unified command positions and sections can be added as the situation continues to grow in complexity. See Reference G. When Unified Command is established, early consideration should also be given to the establishment of a Joint Information Center (JIC).

Security

In high threat circumstances, the IC establishes an initial crime scene and notifies the FBI WMDC who may assume jurisdiction upon arrival. This includes securing the immediate area and persons who may have been exposed to the suspicious substance or have knowledge about the incident or the perpetrator.

Persons at the crime scene must be directed to not describe the scene, evidence, or circumstance to others who are not involved via cell phone or texting devices. This directive must include responders except for official communication with their supervisors or dispatch centers.

Unless there is evidence or intelligence that perpetrators have deliberately attempted to contaminate air handling intakes or contamination has been carelessly spread to multiple areas, it is normally not necessary to evacuate and entire building as the crime scene is being established in the immediate area where the substance was found. See references C. and D.

Sample Collection and Analysis

The HazMat Safety Officer determines the level of personal protective equipment (PPE) to be worn by the sample collection team commensurate with the threat assessment and intelligence.

HazMat is responsible for sample collection. However, HazMat and law enforcement forensic responders must closely coordinate sample collection to limit contamination while safeguarding evidence and preserving the crime scene. (See the Fire-Rescue Job Action Sheet.) If present on-site, the FBI WMDC may direct the sample collection procedure.

When a sample is collected for laboratory analysis, it must be prescreened for explosives, flammability, corrosive chemicals, and radiation.

The sample must be packaged for transport to the nearest Laboratory Response Network (LRN) public health reference laboratory in accordance with Reference E.

Because confirmation of the presence of biological activity can be only done by a LRN public health reference laboratory and the need to expedite that sample to a LRN facility in a high threat situation, biological prescreening will not be done. (See references C and D.) Laboratory Response Network (LRN) public health reference laboratory that will be receiving a suspicious substance sample for analysis must be notified that a sample will be transported there for analysis.

The law enforcement must assure chain of evidence/chain of custody procedures are strictly adhered to.

The samples should be transported by a law enforcement officer or other responder designated by the unified command or the FBI WMDC. In high threat incident response, it is recommended that a tail vehicle be used to ensure the security of the sample en route in the event of an accident with the lead vehicle.

Decontamination

Persons who are contaminated and others who were in their immediate vicinity when a suspicious substance was found or spilled from an opened letter or package must be considered for decontamination. The Fire-Rescue responders will determine the level and means of decontamination in accordance with the level of threat, references C. and D. and the Fire Rescue Responder Job Action Sheet.

Management of Potentially Exposed Persons

Supervisors at the facility where a suspicious substance was found must ensure that all employees who work in that area are accounted for.

County Health Departments can have a significant role in assisting in the management of potentially exposed persons. In some counties, the County Health Department Director/Administrator may request the Region Emergency Health Advisor (RERA) for Health to initially represent the Department at the scene, but the RERA must remain available for region-wide and state missions.

The County Health Department also advises response agencies and exposed persons of laboratory analysis results and arranges for treatment medications if needed.

Persons who have been contaminated or exposed to a suspicious substance may be anxious and need reassurance and counseling. Responders should seek behavior health expertise for those who are highly agitated and distraught. This expertise may be available through the County Health Department or American Red Cross. Contact information should be included on local call-down lists.

Unless someone was physically injured, is symptomatic for a substance that is chemically active or has a condition that was exacerbated by the suspicious substance incident, (e.g., a heart condition), there is no need to transport exposed persons to a hospital for medical care. If persons are transported and have been contaminated with the substance, they must be decontaminated first unless it is an extreme emergency. Depending on the local hospital protocol, persons who are transported to a hospital may be decontaminated a second time.

If laboratory PCR (polymerase chain reaction) analysis is positive for a biological agent or toxin, treatment or prophylaxis will be administered immediately without waiting for culture confirmation. The County Health Department must be notified for prophylaxis or treatment options. The County Health Department must immediately notify Florida Department of Health of positive PCR analysis through the Epidemiology Hot Line and the Florida Department of Health Emergency Notification System.

If the PCR results are positive, the County Health Department must also immediately notify all agencies that had responders at the scene and all persons who were exposed at the scene. The County Health Department will arrange for expeditious treatment of all concerned.

The County Health Department will also notify all agencies that had responders at the scene and all exposed persons when negative PCR and culture results are received.

When Law Enforcement agencies have credible high risk intelligence information, particularly resulting from a series of actual biological agent incidents, the first course of treatment or prophylaxis may be administered prior to receipt of PCR results. Credible intelligence information regarding the high potential for receipt of biologically-active agents should be shared with Health representatives at the Florida Fusion Center. Florida Department of Health can then prepare for treatment of prophylaxis support at or near the scene.

Facility Closure

Evacuation and closure of entire building is seldom needed (See Security.) However, the Unified Command can decide to do so in high threat scenarios or when credible intelligence is known. The crime scene area must be

secured until the forensic investigation has been completed and at least until the results of the laboratory PCR analyses results are reported as negative.

At the discretion of the Unified Command, negative PCR results may be used to re-opened portions of the building where the incident took place for workers only. Re-opening the portion of the facility that had been secured should remain closed to the general public until the results of the 48-hr laboratory culture tests are shown to be negative. Closing and reopening facilities should be done in coordination with the County Health Department Director or Administrator.

Media Communications

Response agency public information officers and the Florida Fusion Center must be informed whenever a threat incident requires sampling and laboratory analysis to prepare for the potential of a media inquiry.

Media who may arrive at the scene, must be kept away from the area that has been secured. The IC should select a trained spokesperson in coordination with the PIO to address media questions.

Receipt of a positive laboratory analysis will require activation of a Joint Information Center (JIC).

Laboratory Results

The LRN public health reference laboratory will analyze the suspicious substance sample using both PCR and culture tests for biological activity. The PCR is an extremely accurate test based on molecular biology. The results are typically completed with 4-6 hours after the arrival of the sample. PCR results are sufficiently accurate to base near-term decisions.

A negative PCR result can be used to re-open portions of closed facilities to workers provided no additional forensic investigation is needed at the scene.

Culture testing results are released at 24-hours and 48-hours after the sample arrives at the laboratory. These tests are used to confirm PCR results. Negative PCR and culture test results, when taken together, are sufficient to make long term decisions for, example reopening closed portions of a closed facility for public access. The culture is also the only way that the DNA fingerprint, biochemical data and antibiotic sensitivity/resistant data can be determined. All three can be used to characterize the agent and do outbreak analysis. The antibiotic sensitivity data can be essential for therapeutic treatment.

A positive PCR result should be used to start immediate treatment or prophylaxis based on the agent or toxin detected and a joint

epidemiology/forensic investigation. A positive PCR or later culture results may be the basis for increased activation level at the State Emergency Operations Center. In this case, ESF-8 (Health and Medical) with the Florida Department of Health in the lead for the epidemiology investigation and prophylaxis measures in coordination with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. ESF-16 (Law Enforcement) will continue the criminal investigation in coordination with the FBI who will assume jurisdiction.

Recovery

The County Health Department will be responsible for monitoring the health and treatment of persons who have confirmed to be exposed to a release of a biological agent or toxin. Health monitoring and treatment may also include response personnel and the general public if there is concern about their exposure

The County Health Department will also contact local hospitals to be alert for patients with biological agent symptoms and report these immediately.

Even if it is determined that there is no exposure pathway to the public, experience has shown that this event may generate large numbers of “worried well.” Effective communications will be needed to establish credibility and alleviate concerns. Early consideration will be given to establishing a public information hotline.

Receipt of a positive laboratory report from a LRN public health reference laboratory certified laboratory will require the County Health Department Director or Administrator to issue a building quarantine until the premises are decontaminated to the point that all threat to public access has been removed.

Training and Exercises

Agencies cited in this protocol are responsible for training their respective response teams in the content and procedures stated here-in. These procedures should be exercised on quarterly basis as determined by each jurisdiction in accordance with the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP).

Exercises may consist of workshops to review procedures. Suspicious substance response scenarios can also be incorporated into full scale exercises with broader objectives.

Actual response to suspicious substance incidents will substitute for exercises. After action reports and improvement plans from actual incidents and exercises must be documented and distributed in accordance with HSEEP requirements.



Florida Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan

PROTOCOL Response to Suspicious Letter or Container with a Potential Biological Threat

911 Operator -- Job Action Sheet

Last Update: April 16, 2009

Situation: A 911 caller is reporting the receipt of a letter or package that he or she regards as suspicious, threatening, and/or contains an unknown powder or liquid substance.

Questions and Response:

1. Has the letter or package been opened?

No. Instruct caller to not open letter or package, wait for arrival of law enforcement officer, and remain on the scene. Dispatch law enforcement. Notify County Warning Point

Yes. Continue with next question

2. Is anyone injured? – Watery or irritated eyes, breathing difficulty, rash, or dizziness.

No. Continue with next question.

Yes. Instruct caller and others in the vicinity to immediately leave the building and wait for the arrival of responders outside the facility. Dispatch law enforcement, HazMat, fire-rescue, and EMS. Notify County Warning Point

3. Does anyone have powder or liquid from the letter or package on their skin or clothing?

No. Instruct the caller to leave letter or package in place and wash hands. Dispatch law enforcement and fire-rescue. Notify County Warning Point

Yes. Instruct the caller to leave letter or package in place and wait for arrival of law enforcement and fire-rescue and

remain on scene. Dispatch law enforcement, HazMat and fire-rescue. Notify County Warning Point.

NOTE: In some jurisdictions, the 911 operator may be requested to notify other agencies in a suspicious substance event. These may include:

- FBI WMDC
- Florida Fusion Center
- County or Municipal Fire-Rescue
- HazMat
- Law Enforcement Forensic Team
- County Warning Point
- County Health Department designated responder
- US Postal Inspection Service if the suspicious substance was contained in a letter or package processed through the US mail



Florida Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan

PROTOCOL Response to Suspicious Letter or Container with a Potential Biological Threat

Law Enforcement Responder -- Job Action Sheet

Last Update: April 10, 2009

Situation: A 911 caller has reported the receipt of a letter or package or has found a substance in the workplace or home that the caller regards as suspicious or threatening.

1. On arrival at the scene, determine:

- How the letter, package, or substance was located
- The condition of the letter, package or substance when it was originally located
- Who found the letter, package, or substance
- If unusual circumstances are present
- How the letter or package was delivered
- If the letter or package was moved from its original location and if so, determine the original location
- Names of persons who has contact with the letter, package, or substance was located

NOTE: If the law enforcement officer does not have minimum personal protective equipment i.e., a properly fitted N-95 mask and gloves, or has not been trained, or does not feel confident with the use of this equipment, it is important that he or she does not enter an area where there is potential exposure to contamination.

In most cases, an assessment of the scene can be made by phone with persons who remain inside the area or with facility supervisors or managers who know the situation.

If this cannot be done, request firefighters in PPE to do an initial assessment of the situation and condition of the person who have been potentially exposed. If decontamination is needed, question witnesses after they are decontaminated.

2. Determine information concerning the letter, package, or substance and persons who had contact with it:

Has the letter or package been opened?

No. Determine if the letter or package should be considered suspicious and a threat:

- Is there intelligence describing similar letters or packages in current serial threats, live agents, or hoaxes
- The letter package is unexpected and/or from an unknown person
- Addressed to someone no longer with the organization or otherwise outdated
- No return address or an address that cannot be verified as legitimate
- Unusual weight, oddly shaped, or other characteristic
- The package is marked with restrictive endorsements such as "personal" or "confidential"
- Excessive security material such as string and tape around the parcel
- The city or state in the postmark does not match the return address
- The package has protruding wires, odors, or stains – **Evacuate the area immediately.** Notify bomb response unit, HazMat, Fire-Rescue and standard response agencies in Table 2
- Ticking or other sound from inside the parcel – **Evacuate the area immediately.** Notify bomb response unit and HazMat, Fire-Rescue and standard response agencies in Table 2

Yes. Continue with question 2.

- Is anyone injured?** – Watery or irritated eyes, breathing difficulty, rash, or dizziness. (Immediate symptoms are likely due to a chemical agent)

No. Continue with question 3.

Yes. Evacuate the area immediately Instruct everyone to wait for the arrival of other responders outside the facility. Request the dispatch of HazMat/Fire-Rescue and EMS. Notify standard response agencies in Table 2:

- Is the opened or package letter suspicious and a high threat (See Table 1 and current intelligence)?**

No. Resolve complainant concerns. Dispose of letter or package at the recipient's discretion.

Yes. Instruct everyone to remain in the area and wait for the arrival of FBI and HazMat responders. Secure the area where the letter or package it is located. Avoid contact with the substance and persons who have been contaminated. Establish an initial crime scene and incident command. Re Notify standard response agencies in Table 2

High Threat - People and Places	High Threat - Envelope Content
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressee is a State or Federal Official -- by name • Nationally recognized person, corporate entity, or organization -- by name • Local Government Official -- by name • Water systems • Communications Systems • News Media • National, State, or Local Critical Infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A letter threatening the addressee or the addressee's interests. • A very fine powder • A powder that is straw yellow to light brown • A mechanism (e.g., spring loaded) to launch powder content on opening
Low Threat - People and Places	Low Threat - Envelope Content
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual households • Local businesses • Other low-news profile facilities and organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter with no fine powder content • Letter does not threaten addressee

Table 1. Guide for Suspicious Substance Threat Assessment

Does anyone have powder or liquid from the letter or package on their skin or clothing?

No. Instruct the affected person(s) to leave the letter or package in place and wash their hands. Order shut down of circulating air systems in portion of the facility where the suspicious letter or package is located.

Yes. Evacuate persons person who are not contaminated from the immediate are where letter or package is located.

Request dispatch of Fire-Rescue. Notify standard response agencies in Table 2. Instruct persons who are contaminated to remain in the immediate area and wait for the arrival of fire-rescue/Hazmat. Secure and isolate the letter or package and area where it is located

- 1. Ensure preservation of evidence and chain of evidence/chain of custody in collection and transport of samples.**

Agency	Contact Person	Phone Number
FBI WMDC		
Florida Fusion Center		
Fire-Rescue		
HAZMAT		
County Warning Point		
County Health Department designated responder		
US Postal Inspection Service.		
Bomb Response Unit		
Law Enforcement Forensic Team		

Table 2. Standard Response Agency Notification. Complete the table for your county.



Florida Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan

PROTOCOL

Response to Suspicious Letter or Container with a Potential Biological Threat

Public Health -- Job Action Sheet

Last Update: April 16, 2009

Situation: A County Health Department representative has been requested through incident or unified command to report to the scene of a suspicious substance incident to provide technical information or assist in counseling person who may have been exposed to a biological agent or toxin.

Questions and Response:

- Is the reporting request for technical assistance?**

No. Continue with the next question.

Yes. Ascertain technical question request – disease or toxin specifics for example, contagious/not contagious, signs and symptoms, treatment, etc. Review and print information contained at www.cdc.gov or other authoritative sources. Provide information to requesting command.

- Evaluate persons on scene -- is anyone injured or ill on scene?**

No. Continue with next question.

Yes. If not already done, notify EMS.

- Have responders and persons on scene been potentially exposed to a biological agent or toxin?**

No. Reassure and counsel persons on timing of laboratory result notifications, time of disease or toxin onset, potential signs and symptoms, available treatments. Provide personal contact information for follow-up questions or concerns.

Yes. Determine if there unanswered questions remain. Provide personal contact information for follow-up questions or

concerns. Record contact information for all responders and potentially exposed persons at the scene for notification when PCR and culture results are reported by the nearest LRN Laboratory. Notify County Health Department Director/Administrator and Epi Hot Line.

Is assistance needed in sample packaging procedures?

No. Offer assistance in notifying the laboratory contact.

Yes. Assure sample is packaged in accordance with LRN public health reference laboratory protocols and chain of custody/evidence forms are completed. Notify laboratory about pending arrival of the sample.



Florida Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan

PROTOCOL

Response to Suspicious Letter or Container with a Potential Biological Threat

Fire Rescue Responder -- Job Action Sheet

Last Update: April 16, 2009

NOTE: Fire-Rescue can determine the degree of PPE needed for initial entry and assessment of injured persons who may be present. Fire-Rescue can also conduct decontamination of potentially exposed persons.

Collection of sample for laboratory analysis and prescreening of the sample for presence of explosives, flammability, flammability, corrosive chemicals, and radiation must be done by a HazMat Team in coordination with a Forensic Team. If the jurisdiction does not have these assets, they should be requested through Mutual Aid Agreements

Situation: A 911 caller has reported the receipt of a letter or package or has found a substance in the workplace or home that the caller regards as suspicious or threatening. Law enforcement has secured the immediate scene.

1. On arrival at the scene, coordinate with law enforcement incident command. Determine:

- Location of the letter, package, or substance.
- The description and condition of the letter, package or substance.
- Intelligence and threat associated with the letter, package, or substance.
- Names, location and condition of persons who had contact with the letter, package, or substance.

1. Based on initial information received at the scene, determine the level of personal protective equipment (PPE) needed to continue the response.

2. On initial entry into the scene determine:

- Is anyone injured or in distress because of a pre-existing condition (e.g., asthma or heart condition)?

No. Determine if persons are contaminated.

Yes. Treat immediate symptoms. Decontaminate as needed.
Request EMS dispatch for transport.

Are persons at the scene visibly contaminated?

No. Instruct all who came in contact with envelope or package to immediately wash hands and shower at home when they are released from the scene by law enforcement.

Yes. Establish a decontamination site in accordance with the threat, equipment, and standard procedures. Use existing shower facilities if present at the location and practical. Ensure privacy and protection from hypothermia to the extent possible.



Florida Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan

PROTOCOL

Response to Suspicious Letter or Container with a Potential Biological Threat

HazMat Responder -- Job Action Sheet

Last Update: April 16, 2009

Situation: A 911 caller has reported the receipt of a letter or package or has found a substance in the workplace or home that the caller regards as suspicious or threatening. Law enforcement has secured the immediate scene. If local Fire-Rescue is not on the scene:

- 1. On arrival at the scene, coordinate with law enforcement incident command. Determine:**
 - Location of the letter, package, or substance.
 - The description and condition of the letter, package or substance.
 - Intelligence and threat associated with the letter, package, or substance.
 - Names, location and condition of persons who had contact with the letter, package, or substance.

- 2. Based on initial information received at the scene, if entry is needed because of injured responders or civilians determine the level of personal protective equipment (PPE) needed to continue the response.**

- 3. On initial entry into the scene determine:**
 - Is anyone injured or in distress because of a pre-existing condition (e.g., asthma or heart condition)?**
 - No.** Determine if persons are contaminated.
 - Yes.** Treat immediate symptoms. Decontaminate as needed. Request EMS dispatch for transport.
 - Are persons at the scene contaminated?**

No. Instruct all who came in contact with envelope or package to immediately wash hands and shower at home when they are released from the scene by law enforcement.

Yes. Establish a decontamination site in accordance with the threat, equipment, and standard procedures. Use existing shower facilities if present at the location and practical. Ensure privacy and protection from hypothermia to the extent possible.

4. Conduct sample collection.

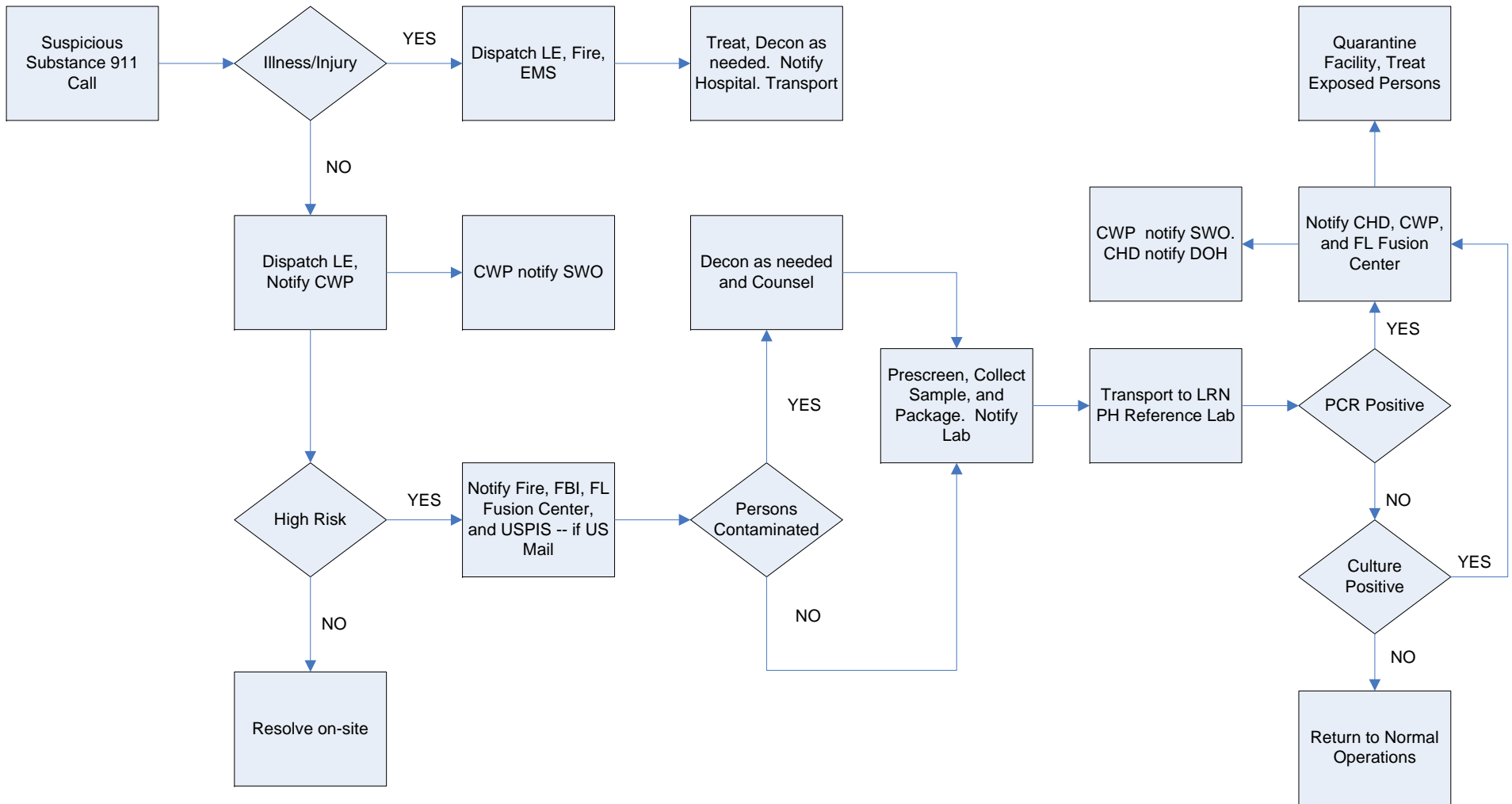
- Coordinate with law enforcement to ensure preservation of forensic evidence.
- Prescreen the envelope package, and substance for presence of explosives, flammability, flammability, corrosive chemicals, and radiation.
 - If explosive or flammable components are present, immediately evacuate the area and contact the nearest bomb response unit
 - If hazardous chemicals are present contact the Department of Environmental Protection
 - If radioactivity is present contact the Department of Health Bureau of Radiation Environmental Protection
- If prescreening tests are negative, collect sample for the nearest LRN public health reference laboratory in accordance with their established collection procedures.

5. Prepare sample for transport.

- Coordinate with law enforcement to ensure chain of evidence/custody is maintained.
- Contact LRN public health reference laboratory to inform them that sample will be arriving at their location.

Agency	Contact Person	Phone Number
LRN public health reference laboratory		
Bomb Response Unit		
Department of Environmental Protection		
Bureau of Radiation		

Response Agency Notification. Complete the table for your county.



Suspicious Substance Notifications and Response Actions

Abbreviations:

- CHD – County Health Department
- DOH -- Department of Health
- CWP – County Warning Point
- EMS – Emergency Medical System
- FBI – Federal Bureau of Investigation
- LE – Law Enforcement
- LRN – Laboratory Response Network
- PCR -- Polymerase Chain Reaction
- PH – Public Health
- SWO – State Watch Office
- USPIS – US Postal Inspection System