

# This is an official **CDC HEALTH ADVISORY**

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## **Public Health Guidance for Anthrax Threat Letters or Packages**

Recently, a number of individuals and organizations have received envelopes or packages with letters indicating that □anthrax□ was either on the letter or in the envelope. Some of these envelopes may have suspicious contents. CDC previously has issued guidance to help address these events in the ***Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report: Bioterrorism Alleging Use of Anthrax and Interim Guidelines for Management -- United States, 1998.*** MMWR 1999:48 (no.4) (<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/wk/mm4804.pdf>).

Initial steps to assist in management of these incidents include:

1. Contact local law enforcement and the FBI field office and inform them of the incident. A risk assessment for those persons involved in the incident should be coordinated by the law enforcement personnel.
2. State and local health department officials and persons with expertise in these areas also should be involved in the decision-making process. Contact CDC through the 24-hour emergency notification system (770 488-7100). This telephone number is staffed 24 hours a day by CDC personnel; outside of regular working hours, staff from this office will be paged to return your call. CDC will assist in contacting appropriate federal and state health and law enforcement officials.
3. Decisions about the need for decontamination and initiation of antibiotic prophylaxis should be made by health officials responsible for the jurisdiction in which the incident occurs. In most circumstances, the decision to initiate prophylaxis can be delayed until the presence or absence of *Bacillus anthracis* is determined.

*The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) protects people's health and safety by preventing and controlling diseases and injuries; enhances health decisions by providing credible information on critical health issues; and promotes healthy living through strong partnerships with local, national and international organizations.*

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**