OHIO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
PROTOCOL FOR HAND-SORTING “SUSPICIOUS” LETTERS OR PACKAGES
(CONCERN FOR ANTHRAX THREAT)

**Policy:** It is important to educate and train the workforce to handle mail to prevent exposure to anthrax. Because procedures are different in mailrooms that have automated sorters for incoming mail, this policy relates only to mailrooms where hand-sorting is done.

**Procedure:**

1. **Gloves are not required to handle mail that is hand-sorted.**

2. **Every employee must wash his/her hands after handling mail. This requirement will be strictly enforced.** Staff will wash his/her hands with plenty of soap and water after handling mail; mail, like money, is “dirty”. While handling mail, staff should not touch their hands to their mouth, nose, or eyes, apply cosmetics or insert contact lenses, nor should they scratch or irritate exposed skin.

3. **When identifying a suspicious package or letter for biological agents; look for:**
   a. A threatening note listing such biologicals as anthrax.
   b. A suspicious powdery substance
   c. Excessive postage
   d. Handwritten or poorly typed addresses
   e. Incorrect titles or title, but no name
   f. Misspellings of common words
   g. Oily stains, discolorations, or odors
   h. No return address
   i. Excessive weight
   j. Lopsided or uneven envelope
   k. Protruding wires or aluminum foil
   l. Excessive security material such as masking tape, string, etc.
   m. Visual distractions or ticking sound
   n. Marked with restrictive endorsements such as “Personal” or “Confidential”

4. **When sorting mail, if a suspicious letter is identified, take the following steps:**
   a. Put other mail down.
   b. Move to an isolated area, with a flat surface, and place the suspicious envelope/package on this surface.
   c. Notify your supervisor of the suspicious envelope/package and where it is located. The area around this envelope/package needs to be isolated. Cover the suspicious envelope/package so that it is not blown by the air circulating in the room.
   d. Do not show the letter to others, open it, sniff it, or wave it around in the air.
   e. Wash your hands and exposed forearms with plenty of soap and water.
   f. If you exposed your clothes or other parts of your body, change your clothes and shower with plenty of soap and water.
   g. Contact your local authorities to further assess the situation.
h. Ask the supervisor to collect a list of the names of persons in the immediate area who may have been exposed to the letter.

i. Contact the local health department for questions and to follow-up on the public health aspects of the situation.

j. Local authorities will place the suspicious letter/package in two (2) zip lock bags or another container. (Gloves may be used for this to prevent more fingerprints on the envelope/package for a criminal investigation.)

k. Local authorities will investigate the situation and determine further actions.