

## Biological Hazard Situations

### What do I do if I suspect a biological agent has been released?

What do I do if I open a letter and find it contains a powdery or other “suspicious” substance, or has a written statement that the item contains a harmful substance?

- Stop immediately.
- Do not shake, bump or empty the package.
- Put it down, and do not touch it.
- Gently cover it with any material that is handy. For example: paper towel, file folder, etc.
- Do not smell it, taste it, or try to analyze it.
- Isolate the immediate area where the item is located, and make sure that no one disturbs the item. First responders will handle any evacuations.
- Turn off air conditioners, heaters, and fans to prevent any potentially harmful substance from circulating. Close doors and windows in the room where the letter or package is located.
- Wash your hands with soap and cool water for 30-60 seconds, and then wash your face. Ensure that other persons who may have touched the letter or package do the same.
- Notify security.

- Do NOT allow anyone to leave who might have touched the item. If possible, make a list of persons who have touched it.
- Do NOT re-enter the area where the suspicious letter, envelope, or package is located. It is a potential crime scene, and it is critical that you do not disturb any evidence. Above all, remain calm, and wait for the arrival of emergency personnel.
- Give Security the list of persons who may have touched the item so that proper instructions can be given for medical follow-up.

What do I do if I receive an envelope with powder, and powder spills on me or onto my work area?

- 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.
- Leave the room and close the door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering.
- Wash your hands with soap and cool water to prevent spreading any powder to your face.
- Notify Security, and they will notify emergency personnel.
- When emergency personnel respond, they will provide guidance on decontamination. Some things that may direct you to do are:

- Remove heavily contaminated clothing as soon as possible and place in a plastic bag, or some other container that can be sealed.
- Shower with soap and cool water. Do not use bleach or other disinfectant on your skin.
- 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 Security so that proper instructions can be given for medical follow-up.
- Shower with soap and cool water as soon as possible. Do not use bleach or other disinfectant on your skin.
- If possible, list all people who were in the room or area. Give this list to Security so that proper instructions can be given for medical follow-up.

### **What if the room is contaminated by aerosolization?**

For example, a small device is activated that sprays a substance into the air; there is a warning that the air handling system is contaminated, or a warning that a biological agent was released in a public space:

- Turn off local fans or ventilation units in the area.
- Leave the immediate area and wait for assistance.
- Close the door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering.
- Notify Security. They will contact emergency personnel.
- 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.

# Chemical Hazards

## How to recognize a chemical attack

A chemical attack is the deliberate release of a toxic gas, liquid or solid that can poison people and the environment. Watch for these signs:

- People with watery eyes, twitching, choking, and difficulty breathing.
- Numerous individuals experiencing unexplained water-like blisters, wheal (like bee stings), and/or rashes.
- Numerous surfaces in the area exhibit oily droplets/film or the presence of unexplained water surfaces (puddles) with oily film are present when there is no reason (rain).
- Unexplained odors in the area that resemble bitter almonds, peach kernels, or newly mown hay or green grass.
- Many sick or dead birds, insects, fish, or small animals.

## Course of action

- Try to determine the source of the affected area if possible.
- Evacuate the affected area.
- If the area is inside, try to evacuate the building without passing through the contaminated area.
- If you cannot get out of the building without passing through the contaminated area, move away from the area and “shelter-in-place.”

- If you are outside when you see signs of a chemical attack, either quickly get out of the area, or determine whether it would be better to go inside and “shelter-in-place.”

## Treating chemical exposure

If your eyes are watering, your skin is stinging, you have trouble breathing, or you simply think you may have been exposed to a chemical:

- Immediately strip and wash; look for a fountain, hose, or any other source of water. You can use any one of the decontamination stations (see following page).
- Use soap and water if possible, but **DO NOT SCRUB INTO YOUR SKIN.**
- Request emergency medical attention at your location. Do not go to the Health Unit

# USDA HEADQUARTERS COMPLEX SHOWER FACILITIES

## **Whitten Building**

Room 221E

Ladies Room

Room 221W

Men's Room

## **South Building**

Room SM-12

ESRA Fitness Center Shower Facilities

Room

Hazardous waste accumulative area

Room S0556

Print Plant

Room S228

WASC Engineering Shop

## **Yates Building**

Room 0-10

Men's Room-- Basement

Room 0-11

Ladies Room—Basement

Room 0-12

Chiller Room

## **Radiological Hazard Situation**

### **Possible radiological threat situations:**

- Dirty bomb
- Made by wrapping radioactive material around a core of ordinary high explosives and detonating it so that radioactive contamination spreads over the widest possible area.
- There are two hazards in a dirty bomb:
  - The bomb blast which presents the greatest danger
  - The radioactive particulate matter or debris that will be scattered by the bomb blast. Radioactive particulates from a dirty bomb may travel several blocks or even several miles. The extent and duration will be determined by the wind speed and direction.
- Nuclear power plant accident or release
- Release of radioactive material

### **What would happen if a dirty bomb were detonated near our offices?**

People in the blast area would be injured by the debris and would be exposed to radiation through contact with and inhalation of the dust and debris. If the building is intact, we may have the option to shelter in place for a limited amount of time or to evacuate.

The concept of sheltering-in-place is to provide some measure of safety from the time an emergency occurs until there is sufficient reliable information about the emergency such

as: is it a bomb, dirty bomb, or etc.? Where did it occur? What is the wind direction? What type of radiological material was involved? Once sufficient information is received, a decision will be made on the actions to take. The type of emergency will determine the length of time we shelter in place.

### **How will I be notified of a radiological emergency?**

- Notification can occur in a number of ways – PA system, CENS broadcast message, local emergency management personnel, local radio and/or television Emergency Alert System, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio, and on - the - scene police officers.
- The notification will be accompanied by instructions on what steps you should take, for example, whether to shelter in place or to evacuate.
- It is likely that there will be a period of uncertainty immediately after the event occurs. There may be a delay of several hours before officials can determine the exact nature of the emergency and whether radiological materials were involved.