



## *EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND PREPAREDNESS*

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### **INFORMATION**

The City of Troy Police Department is distributing this Informational Bulletin to area business in response to the recent Washington D.C. ricin incidents. The City of Troy Police and Fire Departments have approved the guidelines set forth. As of yet, we have had no reports of ricin or threatening letters in Troy. We have placed several links to Homeland Security sites on our website (<http://www.ci.troy.mi.us/police/police.html>). Suspicious mailings or parcels should be reported to the Troy Police Department. The police and fire departments have established a Threat Assessment Team to investigate such incidents. Hopefully, the information provided here will assist you in correctly identifying suspicious packages, provide you instructions on how to handle suspicious packages, and will answer any questions you may have concerning ricin.

### **DETAILS**

On the afternoon of February 2, 2004, U.S. Senate staff observed gray granular powder on an automated mail opening system. Preliminary field tests indicated the possible presence of a biological toxin. Samples of the material were tested overnight at a government laboratory; the results indicated the presence of ricin. As a result, three Senate Office Buildings were closed and secured. The samples were forwarded to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia. Three out of the four samples tested positive. At this time no threat letter has been identified and no threat has been received.

### **BACKGROUND ON RICIN**

Ricin is a poison that can be made from the waste left over from processing castor beans. Ricin can be made in the form of an off-white *powder*, a mist, a pellet, or it can be dissolved in water or weak acid. It requires a deliberate act to make Ricin and use it to poison people. Ricin is one of several toxins that exert toxicity by inhibiting protein synthesis. Ricin can enter the body through inhalation, ingestion, abraded (non-intact) skin, mucosal membranes (e.g., eyes and nose), and injection. Ricin poisoning is not contagious, and person-to-person transmission does not occur.

### **TOXICITY**

Exposure to ricin may occur through:

- Inhalation, skin, or eye contact: as an aerosol, powder, or dust
- Ingestion: through contamination of food, water, or consumer products

- Injection: directly through the skin

Ricin toxicity and lethality can vary by dose and route of exposure. In animal studies, inhalation and intravenous injection have been shown as the most lethal routes.

## **SUGGESTED PROTECTIVE MEASURES**

### **Suggested Actions for Mail Room, Postal and Shipping Facility Operators**

Two categories of actions are necessary:

- 1) Identifying and assessing biological (including ricin) threats;
- 2) Managing biological threats that appear credible.

#### **1. Identifying and Assessing Biological Threats**

Several commercial handheld or test-strip ricin detection devices are available; however, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have stated that the performance of these assays is unknown. Measures that can be taken without installing special detection equipment are the same for most biological threats and are organized according to whether the mail is opened or unopened and whether it contains a written threat or an unidentified container:

- **Opened mail that is leaking a suspicious liquid or powder, or mail that has a suspicious odor:** If you open a letter or package and see an unknown material, or if an unknown material is leaking from the mail as a liquid, powder, or odor, ***do not try to clean it up or otherwise disturb it.*** Set the mail down on a stable surface and call the Troy Police Department.
- **Opened mail that contains a written threat:** If anyone in your organization opens a letter or package, ***with or without powder***, and discovers a written threat, such as a note saying "You have been contaminated with ricin," put the package or letter down on a stable surface and call the Troy Police Department.
- **Unopened mail:** If a mail center worker identifies an unopened package or letter as "suspicious", a mail center supervisor or specially trained employee should examine the mail piece to confirm that it meets the "suspicious" criteria (e.g., it is covered with powder or appears saturated from the inside). If confirmed, ***do not open it.*** A supervisor or designated mail center worker who is trained to confirm the identification should be available during all working hours. Next, determine if the mail piece is addressed to a person who actually works in the facility. If so, and if the addressee can be located in a reasonable period of time, contact the addressee and ask him or her to identify the package. If the addressee recognizes the package and is certain it is not threatening, deliver it. If the addressee does not recognize the package, or if you cannot locate the addressee, attempt to contact the individual listed on the return address to verify the contents of the package. If you successfully contact the sender of the package, ask them to provide a description of the contents, intended addressee, and the reason it was mailed to your location. Provide this information to the addressee for further verification. If the addressee does not recognize the package, or if you cannot locate the addressee, ***do not open it.*** The supervisor or designated mail center worker should call the Troy Police Department.

Please contact Troy Police Sergeant Donald Ostrowski at 248-619-7619 or email at [ostrowskd@ci.troy.mi.us](mailto:ostrowskd@ci.troy.mi.us) if you require additional information.