



MYRTLE BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Subject: *First Responder's Protocol to Incidents Involving
a Suspicious Powder Substance, or other
Bio-Hazardous Material* **Number:** 243

Effective Date: May 19, 2004

Revised Date:

Rescinds:

Dated:

Approved By:

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide some guidance and a minimum amount of required procedures to those employees who will be first responders to potential acts of terrorism involving suspicious powder substances and other bio-hazardous threats.

DISCUSSION

Each employee must be aware that all possible scenarios cannot be anticipated; therefore, this procedure will not apply to every conceivable incident. This is an extremely serious threat and you are encouraged to use common sense, your experience and training in conjunction with these guidelines to enable you to successfully deal with any such threat that you might encounter. To ensure that you do not unnecessarily put your life at risk, you must be cognizant of the potentially hazardous environment that you are approaching. If the incident that you encounter makes it clear that an attack has been perpetrated, or an exposure has occurred, and common sense tells you that your limited Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) will not adequately protect you enough to allow you to work in that environment, consider your options. Rather than entering the incident site, it may be appropriate to instead establish a perimeter isolating the scene and controlling entry and exit while you take steps to request additional help and specialized resources.

PROCEDURAL COMMENTS

- A. Changes to these procedures that are recommended by State and Federal officials with expertise on this subject matter will result in an immediate amendment to this policy once those recommendations are determined to be appropriate.
- B. If upon arrival at the scene, the officer observes victim symptoms and/or environmental conditions that indicate that a suspicious powder, chemical, or other bio-hazardous material has caused obvious medical distress in others, or created what is recognized by the officer as an unstable environment, the Fire Department HAZMAT Team is to assume duties to mitigate all hazards to the public, and their protocol will take precedence over this policy.

DEFINITIONS

- 1. Joint Terrorist Task Force (JTTF) – A State agency designated to develop a coordinated and comprehensive response capability to terrorism.
- 2. Threat Assessment – Determining if there is, or is not, a reasonable explanation for the existence of the substance reported to you as being suspicious.
- 3. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – Equipment used to offer the minimal amount of protection to the wearer who is working in an environment that poses a risk to a blood borne pathogen exposure, chemical exposure, or bio-hazard exposure. This equipment will at the very least consist of rubber or latex gloves, a filter mask, and safety glasses.
- 4. Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD) – A device, object, or substance that a person intends to use to cause multiple human casualties.
- 5. DHEC – Department of Health and Environmental Control
- 6. Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) – Simply put, this is an apparatus that consists of a face mask, respirator, and air tank that is used to provide the wearer with a safe breathing environment in situations where there is an atmosphere that is immediately dangerous to life or health.
- 7. 10% bleach solution – A sanitizing solution consisting of one part bleach and nine parts water.

PROCEDURE

- A. Upon receipt of a citizen's call for police or other emergency personnel response to a suspicious letter, package and/or substance, the call-taker will attempt to gain as much information from the caller as is possible. This information will include, but not be limited to: Name; address; call-back number; nature of the call; description of the package, letter, or substance; circumstances surrounding the events that caused the discovery of the package/substance; current location of the item; whether anyone has opened the item and/or touched the substance; is anyone experiencing any health related effects, etc.
- B. The call-taker will caution the caller to avoid touching, handling or moving the item and to isolate the item from others. The police dispatcher will assign the appropriate police response to the call based on the information provided. The police supervisor will be immediately notified of all calls relating to materials outlined in this policy. No other emergency services (such as EMS, Fire or HAZMAT teams) will be dispatched until the responding officer(s) has conducted a threat assessment and relayed a need for such response. If, based on the information that is provided at the time the call is taken, there appears to be an existing medical emergency, or apparent chemical/bio-hazardous exposure or imminent danger of exposure, it would be appropriate to dispatch these specialized teams. If the police supervisor requests the immediate dispatch of such team(s) absent any such exigent circumstances, they will be requested to respond.
- C. **PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT IS REQUIRED.** All officers responding to a scene involving a suspicious substance and/or package must first don his/her PPE. The minimal equipment to be used will be rubber or latex gloves, filter mask and safety glasses.
- D. The officer assigned the call will conduct his initial threat assessment. **No threat assessment will be conducted by the officer if it is apparent that the assessment will likely result in unprotected exposure, injury or death.** If the assessment may be safely conducted and a threat is detected, go to step 5. If no threat is detected the officer will inform the police dispatcher to terminate any additional response to the threat. The officer will explain to the complainant why there is no threat and ensure to the best of his/her ability that public concern generated as a result of the incident has been neutralized. A Uniform Crime Report (UCR) will be completed on the call. A copy of the UCR will be forwarded to the Joint Terrorist Task Force (JTTF) by faxing it to 803-551-4280.
- E. In this portion of the procedure we will discuss five different scenarios that an officer may encounter with regard to this type of threat, and outline

some procedures if a threat assessment indicates that a threat does in fact exist.

In all cases, whether the threat is real, imagined or unknown, a uniform crime report will be completed and the Investigative Division will be required to open an investigative case file on the matter.

If at all possible, in all cases where evidence will be collected, or samples will be taken to be submitted for testing, the Police Department Crime Scene Unit will be called to the scene to perform this task. If circumstances prevent them from performing this duty the shift supervisor will contact the Fire Department HAZMAT team and request that they respond to collect the evidence and/or suspicious material. If the situation is such that the Fire Department HAZMAT team is required to respond for any reason, then that team will assume the lead role in collecting samples or instructing Police Officers on how best to assist them in this effort, again following the minimum safety requirements below. First responders may only collect evidence/suspicious materials in situations outlined in item "D" below. In the unlikely event our Crime Scene Unit and the Fire Department HAZMAT Team is not available and materials need to be collected, the shift supervisor will call JTTF at 803-551-4200 to request that they identify a HAZMAT Team to respond for this purpose.

- F. In the case of a suspected biological exposure to a departmental employee, the employee will ensure that they have completed adequate decontamination procedures before leaving the incident scene or otherwise returning to duty. A Loss Report will be completed as required by city policy, and the Risk Manager will be notified immediately.

POSSIBLE SITUATIONS ENCOUNTERED:

- 1). Letter Not Opened. No Powder Present.
- 2) a. Letter Opened, Powder Present. No Threat in Letter.
b. Letter Sealed. Powder Appears to be Present Inside Envelope.
c. Letter Sealed, with Powder on Exterior of Envelope.
- 3) a. Letter Opened. Powder Present. Threat in Letter.
b. Letter Opened. No Powder Present. Threat in Letter.
c. Envelope Sealed. Threat on Envelope.
- 4) Letter Opened. No Powder Present. No Threat in Letter.
- 5) Report of Contaminated Water.

On the following pages we will take each situation individually and establish guidelines on how first responders are to manage the incident. Crime Scene personnel will proceed to the "Evidence Material Collection" section of this policy on page number 10.

If you encounter an incident outlined in item 1:

1) Letter Not Opened. No Powder Present.

- **In all cases don PPE before approaching the scene for threat assessment**

1. Secure the area and establish a perimeter. Notify a supervisor and request that they contact Crime Scene to respond. If Crime Scene personnel are not available the supervisor will contact the Fire Department HAZMAT Team and request that they respond. (In any case where the HAZMAT Team does respond, they will follow their procedures for evidence collection and on-site decontamination, not necessarily the guidelines in this policy.)

2. Contact the Joint Terrorist Task Force (JTTF) for South Carolina at 803-551-4200. They will issue you a Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD) Tracking Number. This number will be used to mark material packaging, and the number will be referred to in the UCR.

3. First responders will complete a UCR on the incident and include biographical information of those who had contact with the letter and all public safety responders on the scene. You must include home address, telephone numbers (home and work), name, date of birth, and SSN. Fax a copy of all reports to the JTTF Command Post at 803-551-4280.

4. Remind individuals involved in the incident to contact their personal physician and DHEC if their health status changes.

5. First responders will *properly remove* and dispose of gloves and mask following standard blood borne pathogen procedures.

6. First responders will clean up by washing face, hands and any other areas that may have been unprotected on the perimeter of the incident by thoroughly washing with warm soapy water. Safety glasses will be cleaned with warm soapy water as well. Clothing worn by first responders who were working the perimeter of the location during the incident should be laundered in a separate wash cycle using the warmest water that the

fabric will tolerate. **Any first responder personnel and their personal equipment that came into contact with the suspicious item and/or substance will be fully decontaminated prior to leaving the incident location by following the guidelines established by the HAZMAT team leader or member.**

If you encounter an incident outlined in item 2:

- a. Letter Opened. Powder Present. No Threat in Letter.**
- b. Letter Sealed. Powder Appears to be Present Inside Envelope.**
- c. Letter Sealed. with Powder on Exterior of Envelope.**

- **In all cases don PPE before approaching the scene for threat assessment ***

1. Secure the area and establish a perimeter. Contact your supervisor to inform him/her of the situation. The supervisor will contact Crime Scene personnel and the Fire Department HAZMAT Team. The HAZMAT Team leader will notify JTTF if specialized assistance is required. The HAZMAT Team leader will direct the evidence or material collection process.

2. Contact the Joint Terrorist Task Force (JTTF) for South Carolina at 803-551-4200. They will issue you a Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD) Tracking Number. This number will be used to mark material packaging, and the number will be referred to in the UCR.

3. Complete a UCR on the incident and include biographical information of those who had contact with the letter and all public safety responders on the scene. You must include home address, telephone numbers (home and work) where they may be contacted **for the next 72 hours**, name, date of birth and SSN. Fax a copy of all reports to the JTTF Command Post at 803-551-4280.

4. Inform the local Public Health Office or contact DHEC at their after-hours emergency number by calling 888-847-0902 and ask for the District Public Health Office Epidemiology-Number (Epi-Number for short) that pertains to this jurisdiction. This number will be referred to in the UCR and other pertinent reports. The operator will page the person responsible for this jurisdiction and that person will call you back. Inform him/her of the incident that you have encountered.

5. First responders will *properly remove* and dispose of gloves and mask following standard blood borne pathogen procedures.

6. First responders will clean up by washing face, hands and any other areas that may have been unprotected on the perimeter of the incident by thoroughly washing with warm soapy water. Safety glasses will be cleaned with warm soapy water as well. Clothing worn by first responders who were working the perimeter of the location during the incident should be laundered in a separate wash cycle using the warmest water that the fabric will tolerate. **Any first responder personnel and their personal equipment that came into contact with the suspicious item and/or substance will be fully decontaminated prior to leaving the incident location following the guidelines established by the HAZMAT team leader or member.**

If you encounter an incident outlined in item 3:

- a. Letter Opened. Powder Present. Threat in Letter.**
- b. Letter Opened. No Powder Present. Threat in Letter.**
- c. Envelope Sealed. Threat on Envelope.**

- **In all cases don PPE before approaching the scene for threat assessment ***

1. Secure the area and establish a perimeter. Notify a supervisor and inform him/her that the HAZMAT team will be required because one of the three scenarios listed above exists. **ONLY the HAZMAT team will collect samples in these circumstances.** The supervisor will contact the Fire Department HAZMAT Team and request that they respond. If for any reason our HAZMAT Team is not available, the supervisor will contact JTTF at 83-551-4200 and request that they identify a HAZMAT Team to respond.

2. Contact the Joint Terrorist Task Force (JTTF) and request a Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD) Tracking Number.

3. Complete a UCR on the incident and include biographical information of those who had contact with the letter and all public safety responders on the scene. You must include home address, telephone numbers (home and work) where they may be contacted **for the next 72 hours**, name, date of birth and SSN. Fax a copy of all reports to the JTTF Command Post at 803-551-4280.

4. Inform the local Public Health Office or contact DHEC at their after-hours emergency number by calling 888-847-0902 and ask for the District Public Health Office Epidemiology-Number (Epi-Number for short) that pertains to this jurisdiction. This number will be referred to in the UCR and other pertinent reports. The operator will page the person responsible for

this jurisdiction and that person will call you back. Inform him/her of the incident that you have encountered.

5. First responders will *properly remove* and dispose of gloves and mask following standard blood borne pathogen procedures.

6. First responders will clean up by washing face, hands and any other areas that may have been unprotected on the perimeter of the incident by thoroughly washing with warm soapy water. Safety glasses will be cleaned with warm soapy water as well. Clothing worn by first responders who were working the perimeter of the location during the incident should be laundered in a separate wash cycle using the warmest water that the fabric will tolerate. **Any first responder personnel and their personal equipment that came into contact with the suspicious item and/or substance will be fully decontaminated prior to leaving the incident location by following the guidelines established by the HAZMAT team leader or member.**

If you encounter and incident outlined in item 4:

4) Letter Opened. No Powder Present. No Threat in Letter.

- **In all cases don PPE before approaching the scene for threat assessment ***

1. Secure the area and establish a perimeter.

1. After conducting a threat assessment if this situation is encountered you can terminate the response of any additional emergency services. The item may be collected and saved for evidence if it has any value in assisting the department in identifying a citizen who is making repeated response requests without any threat being present. Unless a need can be articulated, this item would not be sent to JTTF for testing.

2. Whether any material is collected or not, the officer will complete a standard URC and fax a copy of it to the JTTF Command Post at 803-551-4280. The information will be added to their intelligence database.

If you encounter a situation outlined in item 5:

5) Report of Contaminated Water

- **In all cases don PPE before approaching the scene for threat assessment ***

1. Ask the complainant(s) if he/she/they are ill. If ill, inform him/her/them to contact their personal physician or the hospital. If they request an ambulance, or it is apparent to you that one is necessary arrange for one to be dispatched.

2. Determine the water source – private well, or public supply.

3. Gather facts by conducting your threat assessment of the situation. Should information be provided, or evidence be discovered, that leads the responding officer to believe that tampering with the water supply has occurred, he/she should contact the JTTF and the water supplier and ensure that they are aware of the incident. The JTTF will notify DHEC.

4. We will not collect water samples.

5. If there is no indication that the water has been tampered with or otherwise contaminated, the responding officer will inform the complainant that they need to contact the local water company directly about their concerns.

6. A UCR will be completed on the call and forwarded to the JTTF via fax at 803-551-4280. The information will be entered into the intelligence database.

Suspicious Material and/or Evidence Collection Process for Crime Scene Personnel

Upon arrival the Crime Scene personnel will immediately don the following safety equipment:

1. SCBA
2. Biohazard Protective Suit (such as Tyvek)
3. Two (2) pair of rubber/latex exam gloves

(The first pair of gloves that are worn will be referred to as “inner” gloves and the second pair that is applied over the first pair will be referred to as “outer” gloves)

A. Evidence collection steps after above equipment is in place:

1. Using a pair of disposable forceps, pick up the contaminated item (package, envelope, letter, etc.) and place it into a plastic Ziplock bag and seal the bag.
2. Holding the Ziplock bag away from your body and downwind, spray the entire outside of the bag using the 10% bleach solution. Ensure that the entire bag is saturated.
3. Place the sealed and saturated Ziplock bag into an opened fire evidence can. Allow the bag to air-dry for fifteen minutes.
4. Procure a biohazard bag. Insert into the bag the forceps that were used in this portion of the collection process. Remove the outer pair of rubber/latex gloves using the appropriate process and place the gloves into the same biohazard bag. **Do not remove the inner pair of gloves.**
5. Don a new pair of outer gloves, retrieve a new pair of disposable forceps, and a new fire evidence can.
6. Once the bag has air-dried for at least fifteen minutes, use the new forceps to remove the bag from the fire evidence can and blot the outside of the bag with a paper towel. Place the paper towel and used fire evidence can into the biohazard bag.
7. Retrieve a second larger Ziplock bag. Place the first Ziplock bag into the second one. Seal the second bag.
8. Decontaminate the second bag by saturating it with the 10% bleach solution.
9. Place the second bag into the new fire evidence can and allow it to air-dry for at least fifteen minutes.
10. Remove the outer pair of gloves and place them and the forceps used in this portion of the collection process into the biohazard bag. Don a new pair of outer gloves and retrieve another set of forceps and a fire evidence can with a lid.
11. Once the second bag has air-dried for at least fifteen minutes, use the new forceps to retrieve the bag from the evidence can. Blot the outside of the bag with a paper towel. Place the paper towel into the biohazard bag.
12. Place the second Ziplock bag into the fire evidence can.

13. Place the forceps used in this portion of the collection process into the biohazard bag. Properly remove both **inner and outer** sets of rubber/latex gloves and place them into the biohazard bag.

14. Don two more sets of gloves (inner and outer). Seal the fire evidence can with its lid. If the collection process had been done carefully, in most instances this container will not require decontamination. However, if you have touched the outside of the can with contaminated gloves, or if the Ziplock bag has touched the outside of the can, it will require decontamination. If it is necessary, spray the outer portion of the sealed can with the 10% bleach solution and allow it to air-dry for at least fifteen minutes.

15. Secure the sealed fire evidence can in an empty cooler and seal the cooler lid. Place the cooler into the crime scene vehicle in such a manner that it will be stable.

16. All decontamination of equipment and personnel will be accomplished before that equipment and personnel leave the incident scene. The biohazard protective suit will be properly removed and bagged in a biohazard bag. The SCBA will be decontaminated using the 10% bleach solution and allowed to air-dry for at least fifteen minutes. The face, neck and hands should be cleaned using warm soapy water. **In the event that the Fire Department's HAZMAT Team has responded to this call, they will be responsible for all decontamination procedures and no personnel or equipment utilized in the incident will be removed from the scene without their prior approval.**

17. Transport the material to be tested. This may be accomplished in one of two ways:

- a) Transport it back to the Myrtle Beach Police Department Annex for temporary storage in the evidence room's flammable material cabinet. (Note: if the collection is accomplished by the Fire Department's HAZMAT Team, they will transport and store the material in a manner previously determined by them).
- b) Transport it directly to the JTTF at the FBI building in Columbia, SC.

All items pertinent to the investigation will be maintained by this agency (MBPD). All items to be tested should be double bagged and decontaminated prior to turning the items over to the JTTF. **The sample submitted to be tested should consist of the letter, envelope and/or the powder substance consisting of no more than one tablespoon of material.** No bulk items such as mailboxes should be submitted for analysis. If you have any

questions about what should and should not be submitted for analysis, call the JTTF Command Post for assistance (803-551-4200).