

# Suspicious Mail

The following information has been prepared to help individuals and offices deal with suspicious mail.

## **What is suspicious mail?**

Everyone receives mail we are not expecting or from someone (often a business or credit card company) we do not know. So how do we know whether or not we should open it? The following list contains clues that may be used to help you decide:

- Excessive postage (usually stamps, and usually well above what is necessary)
- Misspelled name or address on the envelope
- No return address
- Hand-written addresses from a business
- Water stains (or similar) on the package/envelope
- Strange odors coming from the package/envelope
- A package that is from a business you did not place an order with
- An envelope that feels “lumpy” in places or is lopsided
- Foreign, special, or overnight mail that is not expected
- Restrictive markings like “Confidential” or “Private”

One or more of the above does not automatically make the mail/package dangerous. Instead, it should cause you to use extra caution when deciding whether to accept the item, and when opening it.

## **What can I do before receiving suspicious mail?**

Offices and departments can take a very basic, but important step before ever receiving suspicious mail by designating a central person/office to receive all mail and packages, and then instituting an “expected packages” list. This list will let the person responsible for receiving packages know if someone else within the office expects the package. If a package is not on the “expected” list, it can be declined instead of accepted. This can reduce the need to deal with suspicious packages, as they won’t be accepted. **NOTE:** This type of a process can be very useful. However, it relies on people within the office being diligent about keeping the “expected” list up-to-date. Failure to do so can result in the refusal of legitimate packages, which can cost the office both time and money.

## **What should I do if I receive suspicious mail?**

If you receive a letter or package you believe is suspicious, the following steps should be taken:

- Avoid excessive handling of the item (especially with bare hands)
- Open it with a sharp letter opener, envelope cutter, or scissors – avoid “ripping” it open
- Avoid blindly reaching into packing material (like “foam peanuts”)
- Avoid touching obvious powder or powder-covered objects
- Contact the NMSU Police Department at 646-3311 if suspicious contents are found
- Avoid touching your face, food, or other items after handling suspicious mail
- Wash your hands vigorously for at least 30 seconds with soap and water

If you have questions about handling suspicious mail, please feel free to contact the NMSU Police Department at (505) 646-3311 or by e-mail to [police@nmsu.edu](mailto:police@nmsu.edu).