



SECURITY SPOTLIGHT

An Informational Guide for Securitas USA Clients and Employees

Securitas Security Services, USA, Inc.

Suspicious Packages: Handle with Care

An arena in San Diego, California is evacuated. A major road is shut down in Florida. Flights at an airport terminal are delayed for hours, and all passengers are sent out of the building.

Such disturbances make headlines as authorities respond to reports of suspicious packages. Although in many cases there is no actual security threat, the mere possibility is enough to disrupt the lives of hundreds of people.

Of course, the inconveniences caused by these “false alarms” pale in comparison to the destruction that results when suspicious packages turn out to be bombs. The bags filled with explosives and left behind on the trains in Madrid in 2004 resulted in the worst terrorist attack that country had ever seen.

What Makes a Package Suspicious?

Suspicious packages can come in all shapes and sizes. Simply put, a suspicious package is any backpack, bag, box, package or other item left unattended or that otherwise seems out of place. For instance, a baby stroller parked at a playground may not raise any eyebrows, but a baby stroller left on the grounds of a chemical plant might be cause for concern.



The best defense against suspicious packages is awareness of your surroundings. It has been said that some security officers have a “sixth-sense” when it comes to spotting trouble before it happens. But, really, there is nothing supernatural about it. Through training and experience, security officers can develop a keen understanding of their environment that allows them to detect when something — or someone — doesn't seem to belong there.

The role of the security officer is to detect, deter and report security threats. Securitas security officers have access to specialized training courses including Patrolling, Access Control, Bomb Threats and Suspicious Packages.



You've Got (Suspicious) Mail

Unattended baggage, boxes or other containers are not the only cause for concern. Sometimes suspicious packages come through the mail. In the weeks following 9/11, letters containing anthrax infected 22 people, killing five. Their envelopes exhibited some of the typical characteristics of suspicious letters and packages identified by the United States Postal Service, OSHA, the Centers for Disease Control and the FBI, which include:

- Unexpected
- No return address
- Postmark does not match return address
- Restrictive markings such as "Personal" or "Confidential"
- Mailed from a foreign country
- Excessive postage
- Misspelled words
- Addressed to title only or incorrect title
- Badly-typed or poorly-written addresses
- Rigid, bulky, lopsided or uneven packages
- Soft spots, bulges or excessive weight
- Oily stains, discolorations or strange odor
- Crystals or powder-like residue
- Excessive tape or string
- Protruding wires
- Ticking sound

If You Discover a Suspicious Package

Alert security officers on patrol and at access control points may be the first to detect a suspicious package. But anyone who encounters a suspicious package or letter should proceed with caution and follow these FBI guidelines:



- Handle with care. Don't shake or bump it. In fact, it's best not to touch the suspected package or letter any more than is necessary.
- Isolate the item and look for suspicious indicators.
- Don't open, smell or taste it.
- Treat it as suspect. Call 911 or local law enforcement authorities.

When notifying authorities, it is better not to activate a fire alarm or use a cell phone. Either of these could detonate a package containing explosives. Instead, use a hard-wired telephone to dial 911.

Security officers may also assist in clearing the area around the package and keeping onlookers away. If the building is evacuated, personnel should follow the site's emergency plan.

Keep a current FBI Advisory in the mailroom, at reception areas and other access control points as a reminder of how to identify a suspicious letter or package and what to do if one is found.

This guide is for informational purposes only and does not contain Securitas USA's complete policy and procedures. For more information, contact your Securitas USA supervisor or account manager.

