



April 29, 2003

VICE PRESIDENTS, AREA OPERATIONS
MANAGER, CAPITAL METRO OPERATIONS
DISTRICT MANAGERS

SUBJECT: "Suspicious" Powder Tabletop Exercises

It is imperative that we continue to provide a consistent and reasoned response to suspicious powders contained in mailpieces. The proper response protects employees and reduces unnecessary disruption to operations. We have been issuing decision trees and other guidance since the anthrax emergency of 2001. The latest decision trees, dated March 2003, are posted on the Safety Toolkit Resource Web page and have been distributed.

To ensure that responses remain consistent and protective, we are requiring that operations managers, supervisors, support staff, and postmasters become familiar with the procedures by conducting tabletop exercises. The lessons learned will be used to make sure all employees in the facility follow proper response procedures.

Facilities with over 100 employees must use the large office or plant guide. Facilities with 50 to 100 employees must use the small office guide. In smaller offices (less than 50 employees) the facility manager should review the Suspicious Powder Checklist and take appropriate actions to ensure all employees are familiar with the procedures. (See attachments.)

The facility manager is responsible for appointing tabletop exercise facilitators, supporting the exercise, ensuring that suggested participants attend, and sending the certification that the exercise has been accomplished to the district manager (please see attached certification forms). Facility managers are encouraged to invite union and management association leadership to participate.

Both guides take the tabletop exercise facilitator(s) through each step necessary to conduct a successful exercise. The exercises are not technical and can be led by persons familiar with emergency action plans and basic emergency management. Potential facilitators include Crisis Management Team Leaders, Security Coordinators, Emergency Evacuation Team Coordinators, and Facility Safety Coordinators in smaller facilities. Additionally, persons who have attended the Postal Service's Facilitative Instructor Workshop are a resource on group facilitation techniques.

Questions concerning postal policy regarding response to suspicious powders should be directed to the district or area safety offices. Questions and suggestions concerning technical content of the scenarios and the associated exercise Q&As should be sent via email to toolkithelp@lmi.org or phone 1-800-688-0321. Electronic files containing the guides, checklist and certification forms can be downloaded from the Safety Toolkit Resource page under Emergency Management. There will also be FAQs posted, as they are developed, and other information to assist with the exercises. Instructions on documenting training in the National Training Database, including course numbers, are in the guides. The exercise meets the annual requirement for a crisis management simulation.