

**HEMS**  
**SPECIAL OPERATIONS**  
**INCIDENTS INVOLVING USE OF “SUSPICIOUS POWDERS”**

Date: March 1, 2013  
Last Revised: 2/8/2024

Section 10-22

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***Incidents Involving “Suspicious Powders”***

**INITIAL CALL TO 9-1-1 CENTER**

The 9-1-1-center call taker will conduct an initial threat assessment. Based upon the information obtained from the assessment, the call taker may initiate one of the following:

- A. Have the individual contact the sender to confirm the shipment and contents of item.
- B. Provide reassurance to the individual.
- C. Dispatch an individual to assess the suspicious powder.
- D. Initiate a HAZMAT response, with contact to Emergency Management for appropriate notification of the FBI and Health Department.

**EMS RESPONSE GUIDELINES**

When responding to an incident involving suspicious powders EMS should:

- A. Not handle or come into close contact with the suspicious powder if it is clearly visible from a distance.
- B. If law enforcement is not on scene, notify the jurisdictional law enforcement agency. **DO NOT ENTER THE SCENE** until the suspicious powder is evaluated by law enforcement and declared a non-hazard.
- C. If the incident involves HAZMAT, follow HAZMAT Team guidance.
- D. IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO TRANSPORT THESE INDIVIDUALS TO THE HOSPITAL FOR THESE EXPOSURES UNLESS HE OR SHE APPEARS ILL OR INJURED.**
- E. ANY patient who has come in contact with the suspicious powder **MUST** have, at least, a gross decontamination performed, by appropriately trained and protected personnel, prior to treatment or transport to the hospital.
- F. When transporting the patient use plastic or emergency blankets to isolate the patient from EMS personnel and the ambulance by using the “cocooning” technique (completely wrap the patient as if in a cocoon, except around the face).
- G. EMS personnel must implement the use of appropriate PPEs when providing care to patients contaminated with a suspicious powder (even after gross decontamination). At a minimum, EMS personnel should wear double gloves and hepa mask.

**HOSPITAL NOTIFICATION**

When making radio report to the closest appropriate hospital with capability to treat biological/chemical contaminated patients EMS personnel must:

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- A. Include pertinent information on the suspicious powder and decontamination at the scene.
  - B. Ask the hospital if there is an alternate entrance that should be used.

**DECONTAMINATION OF EMS PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT**

EMS personnel and equipment should follow recommended guidelines for individual and equipment decontamination. This may include the following:

- A. As soon as possible the exposed individuals should shower with soap and water.
- B. Place all clothing items that had direct contact with a suspicious powder into plastic bags for appropriate disposal.
- C. Wash equipment with a 10% solution of bleach.
- D. If HAZMAT Team is on site, follow HAZMAT Team guidance for individual and equipment decontamination.

**RECORD KEEPING OF POTENTIAL EXPOSURES**

- A. Each EMS agency should keep a list of all potential exposures to their personnel.

**REFERENCES**

- A. HEMS protocol 12.19 “Hazardous Material Procedure”
- B. HEMS protocol 12.20 “Hazardous Material – Medical Treatment”
- C. MICHIGAN protocol 7.3 “Crime Scene Management”
- D. HEMS protocol 7.3S “Medical Response to a Crime Scene”
- E. Additional Applicable Protocols