



ASCIP *RISK ALERT!*

Date: October 16, 2001

Attention: ASCIP Members

Subject: ANTHRAX ANXIETY

In view of the recent media attention given to the incidents of Anthrax exposure which are being reported at several locations within the United States, government officials have described concerns of similar contamination occurring within the general population as "Anthrax anxiety".

Anthrax anxiety may be described as a state of fear or uneasiness related to the possibility of Anthrax contamination and may be of greater concern than the disease itself with some keeping their children out of school, hoarding survival supplies, and purchasing firearms. Such fears are, for the general population, without merit and may escalate these types of concerns unnecessarily. The professionals in law enforcement and the various emergency services are trained and equipped to deal with such issues should they arise. Californians are already better prepared than many in America due to our years of earthquake preparations.

Generally, those who would use the U.S. Mail or similar commercial mailing services to send bombs or contamination have specific targets in mind which have international media value. Few would expend their valuable resources on a target that is not well known to the world community and has no recognizable media value. Thus, the typical person at home, schools, and colleges regardless of location are unlikely to become victims of these types of assaults. There have been several "copy-cat" incidents reported to ASCIP wherein schools were evacuated and law enforcement investigations initiated when envelopes of suspicious nature or containing a suspect powder were discovered.

Each educational organization should have a plan by which such incidents are handled in a manner which is consistent with the established emergency plan for that site. While the potential risk is very small, each occurrence should be treated as an opportunity to exercise the emergency plan and to verify that a suspect object is safe through law enforcement and emergency services investigation and testing. Internal school police or security assets may be of great value in implementing the plan, controlling site access, and facilitating the rapid response by the appropriate government agencies.

All mailrooms should follow reasonable guidelines when handling letters and packages in a manner similar to that initiated for letter bombs several years ago. The government has offered tips on developing procedures for mail handlers to detect suspect correspondence. An excellent awareness program is available on the internet at www.chp.ca.gov in the *points of interest* section of their webpage. Should you have any specific questions or concerns regarding this issue, please feel free to give ASCIP a call at any time.

Reviewed July, 2006