

MAIL SECURITY ALERT:

BY WILL PLUMMER
Chief Security Officer, RaySecur

THE RAYSECUR® MONTHLY MAIL THREAT reports catalog global open-source incidents reported to the media. Due to the lack of reporting to authorities, security leaders face sizable challenges in gaining a clear view of the types and volume of mail threats occurring worldwide. These reports serve to close that gap and provide timely information.

Threats from the mail, including letters and parcels, take many forms and are categorized by ten main substances.



August, 2023

Mail-based Threat Activity Toward Government Entities Continues

In August, there was an increase in the number of political and government entities that received mail threats. The upcoming election cycles have resulted in a rise in mail threats directed towards political offices and their representatives. Most of these threats are in the form of suspicious white-powder threats, which are initially perceived as Ricin or Anthrax until investigated further. As we have discussed before, hoax threats are an effective tactic as they create the desired fear and disruption that a real threat would.

Courts were the next most targeted facilities, which also received white powder threats. This indicates that even though courts, particularly U.S. Federal Courthouses, are considered to be highly secure, they are still prone to mail-based threats. Therefore, court security officers should pay extra attention to judicial mail, especially during trial settings, to ensure the safety of everyone in the courthouse.

RaySecur recommends examining your mail room standard operating procedures, particularly in the fields of political candidates, elections offices, and court buildings.

United States Mail Threat Reviews

Suspicious materials mailed to King, Okanogan election officials, including traces of fentanyl

King and Okanogan, Wash. - Aug. 3, 2023

Reports of suspicious materials being mailed to election officials in King and Okanogan counties are being monitored by the Office of the Secretary State, according to a media release.

Local, state, and federal authorities are investigating the incidents, which happened while election officials were processing ballots from the Aug. 1 Primary election.

In King County, a suspicious letter was received Monday, which analysis revealed contained trace amounts of fentanyl.

In Okanogan County, the courthouse was evacuated Wednesday after a report of an envelope with an unidentified substance. That substance is being tested.

“Elections offices in every county in Washington have had to develop emergency plans and protective strategies for events like these, which should serve as a sobering reminder of the dangers that surround our elections process and elections workers,” Secretary of State Steve Hobbs said.



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United States Mail Threat Reviews

Police investigate prank pipe bomb package in Lancaster County

East Petersburg, PA. - Aug. 8, 2023

Northern Lancaster County Regional Police say charges are pending after a fake pipe bomb prank.

On August 3 around 8:30 p.m., officers responded to a suspicious package received by a resident that contained a stuffed animal that appeared to be manipulated to resemble a pipe bomb.

Police say actions were taken to evacuate area residents and contact the State Police bomb squad.

Police say the package's sender, a man from Virginia, reported the package was a "prank" and that he and the recipient had been communicating online.

Officials confirmed the package was not a threat to public safety and was secured by law enforcement.

Police say the incident remains an active investigation and criminal charges are pending.



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United States Mail Threat Reviews

All clear given after report of suspicious powder at Supreme Court of Alabama

Montgomery, Ala. – Aug. 8, 2023

A large police and fire presence was outside the Supreme Court of Alabama building in downtown Montgomery Tuesday afternoon.

Supreme Court of Alabama officials confirmed that the response was due to a suspicious powder found Tuesday in a piece of mail opened in a secure, non-public area of the building.

The powder was tested and proved to be harmless, and employees were able to return back to work.

No further information has been made available at this time.



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United States Mail Threat Reviews

Milwaukee federal courthouse hazmat response: 4 decontaminated, no threat

Milwaukee, Wisc. – Aug. 11, 2023

Four people were transported to the hospital as a precaution on Friday after officials say an unknown substance was discovered at the federal courthouse in Milwaukee. An investigation found there to be no evidence of anything hazardous.

According to Assistant Chief Schuyler L. Belott, individuals opened an envelope and reported a “powder of some sort” inside the letter around 2 p.m. According to the U.S. Marshals Service, the package was delivered to the U.S. Secret Service field office at 517 E. Wisconsin Ave.

In response, a large number of police and fire department personnel responded to the courthouse, including the hazmat response team.

Based on the conditions, Belott says employees were sheltered in place during the investigation.

Four people were evacuated from one office, decontaminated outside the building, and then transferred to the hospital as a precaution. No one was experiencing any symptoms.



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United States Mail Threat Reviews

Drugs Shipped To Fairfax Nail Salon Seized, Suspect Arrested: Police

Fairfax, Ca. – Aug. 23, 2023

A suspicious package led Marin County investigators to more than 3,500 doses of GHB, officials said this week.

The Marin County Sheriff's Office has made an arrest after U.S. Customs agents seized a drug shipment en route to a Fairfax nail salon, according to investigators.

In a news release Tuesday, officials said the county's special investigations unit was notified by the Homeland Security Investigations Division of a package containing 3.5 kilograms of GBL/GHB, often referred to as the "date rape drug."

Photos provided by the sheriff's office showed the liquids concealed in shampoo and cosmetics bottles.

Customs agents turned over the shipment to HSI, who provided it to Marin County investigators. Working with the U.S. Postal Service, deputies completed a "controlled delivery" to the nail salon, arresting the person who accepted the package. Officials identified the suspect as Long Tran and received a search warrant for his San Francisco residence. There, deputies said they found more of the same drug.

During the investigation, the sheriff's office tallied more than 3,500 doses of the drug, valued between \$15,000 and \$20,000.



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United States Mail Threat Reviews

Sheriff's office: Suspect arrested after trying to receive 5 pounds of marijuana through mail

Thomasville, Ga. – Aug. 24, 2023

An arrest has been made in connection to a package of marijuana that was sent to a Thomasville Walgreens.

The package containing around five pounds of marijuana was discovered by a FedEx facility in Tallahassee on August 16, according to the Thomas Co. Sheriff's Office. The package was to be delivered to Walgreens in a drop box.

Narcotics agents set up surveillance in the Walgreens parking lot. They say they saw Sebastain Juwon Courtney, to whom the package was addressed, pick up the package.

He was then arrested and the marijuana was recovered.



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United States Mail Threat Reviews

Suspicious Package At NH Education Department Was ‘No Threat’

Concord, NH. – Aug. 30, 2023

The office was evacuated after mail was opened, employees were exposed to powder Wednesday; state police say the package was misdelivered.

The state Department of Education office in Concord was evacuated Wednesday due to a “white powder incident” in the building.

Concord police were sent to the Granite State College building at 25 Hall St. at 4:30 p.m. for a report of a suspicious package with white powder inside that employees were exposed to, according to police dispatch. Dispatch also sent fire and rescue teams, and a county sheriff employee, hearing the call, also arrived to assist.

The building was evacuated while police spoke to employees. During the investigation, police and firefighters learned an employee was opening mail when they became exposed to the powder. Two others were reportedly exposed to the powder during the incident.

Concord fire command requested the hazmat unit while police sealed the building and parking lot and confirmed no employees were left inside.

Police ran checks of the names on the package, which had a return address from Providence, Rhode Island, according to scanner chatter. The package was initially addressed to Pleasant Street — the former location of the DOE and also had a second Pleasant Street address.

At around 6 p.m., Concord firefighters prepared the hazmat unit to examine the package and powder. An officer also attempted to speak to a possible suspect connected to the package on the city’s West Side.



Firefighters, police, and New Hampshire State Police troopers cleared the incident just before 7:30 p.m.

According to Amber Lagace, a public information officer for state police, the case was a false alarm.

“After a collaborative investigation with law enforcement partners,” she said, “it was determined that there was no threat, and this was simply an incident of mail being delivered to the wrong address.”

The owner of the package was contacted and the situation was cleared up, she said.

The department was relocated to the Granite State College building while Lonergan Hall’s former office at the Gallen State Office Complex was renovated. During renovations, asbestos and other hazardous materials were found, prompting the state to request funds to purchase the Hall Street building from the state university system as a permanent office for the DOE.



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United States Mail Threat Reviews

FBI Investigating Suspicious Package Sent to Lionsgate

Santa Monica, Ca. – Aug. 31, 2023

A suspicious package filled with white powder that was sent to the Santa Monica offices of Lionsgate prompted local emergency services to rush to the scene on Thursday afternoon, The Ankler has learned.

At around noon a package bearing a white powder addressed to Lionsgate was discovered by an employee on the first floor of the offices who quickly called 911. The Santa Monica Fire Department was dispatched and once on the scene, several firemen cordoned off the first floor on the 2700 block of Colorado Avenue where the package was opened, according to several employees present. Wearing hazmat suits, several firemen removed the package and then tested the powder, which was non-threatening. Lionsgate offices were not evacuated. According to several sources, a number of these packages — dozens perhaps — were sent to a variety of businesses on Thursday, although The Ankler has only been able to confirm the package sent to Lionsgate.

A spokesman for Lionsgate declined to comment and directed our inquiry to the FBI. The FBI did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Lionsgate's mailroom is on the first floor along with a Vietnamese restaurant, reception, and some screening rooms, and is sparsely populated. The film team is on the fourth floor while television executives and the C-suite are on the fifth floor.



Tensions have been rising in recent weeks as the WGA strike approaches its fourth month while SAG-AFTRA is in seventh week. On Friday, IATSE Local 80 closed its offices after they received a threatening letter that was reportedly sent from an out-of-work grip.

Whether these packages with the white powder that arrived on Thursday are related to the strike is unclear.

One Lionsgate employee tells The Ankler: "I appreciate how they handled it. They didn't overreact and they didn't under-react. They did exactly what they should've done."



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Will Plummer is the Chief Security Officer of RaySecur.

Will's 25-year career with the US Army and Department of Defense spans service as a Master Explosives Ordnance Disposal Technician, to managing EOD operations as a commanding officer for all of Southeast Asia. He holds a Masters Degree in National Security and Irregular Warfare from the Naval War College.

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raysecur.com | [617-855-9938](tel:617-855-9938) | info@raysecur.com