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Beware of mystery mail, feds urge

By ANDY SOLTIS

The FBI and postal officials are urging Americans to be wary of any suspicious letters and packages they receive, amid suspicion that anthrax is being spread through the U.S. mail.

"We're advising everybody to be cautious, particularly our employees," Postmaster General John Potter said.

"Obviously we have a heightened sense of awareness."

Officials said if you receive a suspicious parcel, don't try to open it — but evacuate the area and call the police or postal inspectors.

The FBI also warned against shaking, smelling or tasting a suspicious package.

If you've already opened the package and you suspect it contains biological or chemical weapons, the FBI said you should also wash your hands in soap and warm water and contact the bureau or police.

"We handle 680 million pieces of mail a day. Obviously, there are going to be some pieces of mail that will draw concern," Potter said.

"We take this very, very seriously."

Investigators are also concerned that the publicity over the anthrax incidents in Florida and New York will prompt hoaxes.

"We need it to be reinforced that we are going to do everything we can to track down the source if there's a hoax and prosecute," Potter said.

He also said postal employees receive regular training in dealing with potentially dangerous items.

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