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Mailroom Safety News

The Mail Center is the First Line of Defense

December 31,, 2008

Greetings!

Best wishes to you for a safe and Happy New Year!

Whenever I see one of those commercials encouraging the viewer to gather up all the "unwanted gold" in the house and blindly send it off in a prepaid mailer to a total stranger I wonder what percentage of those packages make it to the addressee. You might get a kick out of one of the stories in this edition of the newsletter. A postal employee stole the gold from a package that a pawn shop had sent by mail and then mistakenly attempted to sell the same gold back to the same pawn shop. Just another heart warming story to keep us wondering as we transition from one year to the next.

As always, thanks for your continuing interest. We publish this free newsletter because awareness of events and trends can contribute to safety and security. We hope you enjoy it. New Subscribers are always welcome. You can subscribe online from our [web site](#) or by sending us an e-mail at service@mailroomsafety.us.

Included within are news items that have been reported in "legitimate" papers. We attempt to avoid including opinion pieces/editorials/commercial press releases unless they have news value. If presented, they will be identified as such. Dates and sources are included with the item on our website www.mailroomsafety.us You will also find other news items that, due to space constraints, were not included within the newsletter.

This newsletter is also available as a downloadable PDF document that you can print, save, or forward to your colleagues. To download the latest newsletter, just go to our website (www.mailroomsafety.us) and navigate to the Mailroom Safety News page. The link to the PDF is located at the top of the page. If you have any problems, just drop us a note at service@mailroomsafety.us

Marc Lane

Anthrax Scares As Suspect Packages Sent To US Embassies

Cyprus--EMERGENCY services were called to the American embassy yesterday in an anthrax scare after a suspect package believed to contain a powder was

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received at the compound. Six fire engines with fire brigade personnel in protective gear rushed to the Embassy at around 9am. The package roused the suspicions of the embassy staff, and police were called in.

Embassy spokesman James Ellickson-Brown said, "We discovered a suspicious package which had arrived in the mail. The package was detected around 8.20am and under the normal procedure followed in such cases we alerted the local authorities, who responded immediately and came in to investigate the matter." Brown said he could not comment on specifics of the case or from where the package had been dispatched. "The work has been done, the package is no longer here at the embassy," Ellickson-Brown said. "It could take several days to complete inquiries," he added.

Brown expressed the appreciation of the American Ambassador for the "excellent assistance we got from local authorities". Fire Department Spokeswoman Lisa Kemmidji said that, "The fire service took a sealed envelope of unknown content, which has been sent to health services for further tests."

American embassies in 18 countries have received envelopes with white powder since December 8. At 16 of the missions the letters were found to be harmless, while envelopes sent to embassies in Prague and Tokyo last week were being tested for toxins. US authorities have been on alert for such letters since 2001, when envelopes laced with the anthrax toxin were sent to media outlets and to US politicians, killing five people.

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Disgruntled Client Causes Mail Scare At Social Security Office in Wisconsin

Fond u Lac, WI--A disgruntled 83-year-old Fond du Lac woman got the attention of the FBI and Homeland Security Monday with a pinch of salt, pepper and garlic powder. Fond du Lac Police Department Major Kevin Lemke said the woman sent the envelope containing the spices to the Social Security office, 16 Guindon Boulevard, along with a letter she thought was informing her of cut benefits. He added her benefits were, in fact, not being dropped.

Even though a worker noted the white grains looked like salt, the Fond du Lac Police and Fire Department responded, and paramedics performed health checks on workers at about 12:30 p.m. A detective with the Police Department talked with the woman - who placed seven additional stamps on the envelope and placed two return address labels upside down on both the front on back of the envelope. Lemke said he thinks the woman will not do it again.

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50 National Guard Facilities Receive Suspicious Packages

AUSTIN, TX. - Camp Mabry, Texas, was added to the growing list of National Guard installations Wednesday to receive a suspicious package through the mail. Under the oversight of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Austin Police Department Bomb Squad, the 6th Civil Support Team (CST) responded to a request to remove and analyze two suspicious packages received here by the Armed Forces Reserve Center.

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Since Dec. 12, more than 50 packages with anti-war compact discs have been discovered at National Guard facilities around the country, said Mark Allen, a spokesman for the National Guard. The packages appear to be someone exercising their First Amendment right to freedom of expression, which is not a crime, said Rich Kolko, a spokesman for the Federal Bureau of Investigation. When the packages were discovered at Camp Mabry, they were removed by experts from the CST.

The 6th CST is one of 55 National Guard such teams stationed across the nation and is a rapidly deployable, full-time Army and Air National Guard unit available to respond to incidents involving possible weapons of mass destruction, as well as other disasters and catastrophes. The 22-person team represents both federal and state governments by providing support to local emergency responders and has trained in many different cities throughout the country. CST team members usually deploy within one-hour's notice, but since the "threat" was basically in their backyard, they responded within minutes. They operate as a state asset under the command and control of the state governor, but provide direct support to civilian incident commanders.

In this case, an FBI representative was the incident commander. Equipped with monitoring equipment, CST members advanced on the packages, reported initial field findings and readings and were cleared to transport the material to the mobile lab. Sgt. Eric Lebeaux, Spc. Robert Delano and Sgt. Reggie Book were the three CST members who donned their level-C suits under the direction of Capt. Mike Torres, the team leader. Lt. Col. Samuel West monitored their vital signs. Torres, who briefed his team on weather conditions and hydration, said: "The packages do not appear to contain an explosives hazard, but any suspicious packages received through the mail should be considered dangerous and definitely should be investigated."

Torres reported to his team that the FBI wanted handlers to maintain the integrity of the evidence on the packages and an APD officer would take care of evidentiary sealing and over packs. The Mobile Analytical Lab System was used to analyze the packages. The MALS is based on a gas chromatograph mass spectrometer system able to identify more than 125,000 dangerous substances. Technicians can do a preliminary analysis of material inside the box before introducing the suspected packages to the main laboratory, avoiding contamination of people and equipment.

As it turned out, there was no threat of contamination and the FBI, Austin police and CST wrapped up the mission, determining the packages to be nonhazardous. At no time were Camp Mabry personnel or neighboring homes in danger, officials said. They said evacuation orders would have been issued if there was a threat of contamination.

Three other Texas National Guard installations received similar packages. One was delivered to the 149th Fighter Wing at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, another found at the 136th Airlift Wing in Fort Worth and a third at the 147th Reconnaissance Wing in Houston. These packages were analyzed in similar fashion and determined to be nonhazardous, officials said. "This was an excellent exercise with an element of urgency because we did not know for sure that this would be harmless," said Col. Jet Hays, commander of the 6th CST. "We thank our FBI and Austin police partners for their quick response and excellent coordination with our team." Hays said his CST will continue to be vigilant "about anything suspicious found or delivered to one of its facilities regardless of the number of times we have to roll out."

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Connecticut Man's Ex Charged After Bomb Squad Examines Christmas Present

BRISTOL, Conn. -- A 25-year-old Bristol man told police Sunday that his ex-girlfriend had sent him a suspicious package, which was sitting in the trunk of his car. The man

said a card was sent with the package that mentioned an exploding grenade. He said he thought there may have been an explosive in the package. Officers went to the vehicle, parked across the street from the Bristol Police Department, and established a safety zone and perimeter before proceeding. The Hartford Bomb Squad was also called to the scene. After examining the package, the bomb squad reported that it contained no explosive or any type of imitation explosive.

The man's ex-girlfriend, Emanuela Darragiati, 25, of Bristol, said she had sent her ex-boyfriend a holiday gift and used certain words in a metaphor but didn't intend to alarm him. Police deemed the incident a family-violence-type incident. They determined that Darragiati "recklessly" caused annoyance and alarm and was therefore arrested and charged with second-degree breach of peace and second-degree harassment. Darragiati was processed, released and scheduled to appear in Bristol Superior Court Monday.

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Hate Mail Sent To Dead Tot's Parents In Australia

Queensland, Australia--VICIOUS hate mail has been sent to the parents of a young drowning victim over their campaign for tougher pool safety laws in Queensland. Andrew and Katherine Plint, of Laidley, west of Brisbane, have been devastated by the emails and letters from people angered by the prospect of compulsory pool inspections, The Courier-Mail reports.

The measure is one of several being considered by a task force set up by Premier Anna Bligh, to overhaul Queensland's pool safety laws. The Plints have lobbied vigorously for the changes since the death of their two-year-old daughter Hannah in October last year. But their happiness at the success of their campaign has been shortlived, after receiving the hate mail.

One email titled "Poor Hannah" even suggested any new pool safety legislation should not be called "Hannah's Law" but "Irresponsible Parents' Law". "Instead of campaigning to register and inspect pools regularly, why not accept responsibility finally and campaign for more fines and other steeper punishments for parents who fail in their supervisory duties for their children?" read the email from a "mother of three and responsible pool owner". Mrs Plint said she was disgusted and sickened by the heartlessness of the email's author.

"It's not just us who have had this sort of hate mail. Other parents of drowning victims have also been targeted through Facebook, letters, even the memory sites set up for their children," she said. "They just don't realise the effect it's having on families. We all want to try and move forward one step at a time, but taking those steps is very painful and getting one of these emails takes us 150 steps back."

The coroner leading the inquest into Hannah's death yesterday recommended the Australian standard for swimming pools and fences be upgraded to incorporate locks that fix both vertically and horizontally. Coroner Kay Ryan further recommended all local authorities adopt a system to identify all properties which have both inground and above ground pools installed and conduct regular inspections to ensure they comply with safety standards. In addition, Ms Ryan called on the Real Estate Institute of Queensland and the Queensland Law Society to instigate new procedures for house sale contracts with mandatory certificates of compliance and clearance for pools to be received from local governments prior to the sale. The Plints did not receive a compliance certificate for the pool when they purchased the property in October 2006.

Ms Bligh said yesterday she was also shocked by the written attacks on the Plints. "The Plint family has been through a terrible tragedy and I can only imagine the pain

they must experience every day of their lives," Ms Bligh said. "As a mother, I'm appalled anyone could send such vicious material to these grieving parents." Ms Bligh encouraged anyone with views about the new safety laws to contact her office and "not the Plints or any other grieving parent".

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Reward Offered For Information On Suspicious Letters

The FBI is looking for help identifying the people who are sending suspicious letters filled with white powder to government offices around the country. These envelopes have the following characteristics:

1. The postmarks reflect mailing on Dec. 4, Dec. 8, or Dec. 11, 2008.
2. The postmark is either "Dallas, Texas" or "North Texas." The "North Texas" postmark reflects the envelope was processed through the mail facility in Coppell, Texas, a suburb of Dallas.
3. The return addresses used have been one of four addresses for FBI offices in Dallas, San Antonio, Houston and El Paso, Texas. Names have been placed with these addresses; the FBI is not disclosing that information at this time.
4. There is a note within the envelope. The content of that note has been the same in each mailing. Although the content of the note is not being disclosed at this time, the meaning of the message is not clear.

The letters were sent in envelopes like these to the offices of more than 40 governors including Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. The white powder was tested and found to be harmless; however, sending these types of letters is a federal crime. A reward of up to \$100,000 dollars is being offered for information.

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Oregon, Officers Mourn Trooper Slain By Parcel Bomb

SALEM, Ore. - Hundreds of law enforcement officers and Oregon leaders paid tribute Saturday to Senior Trooper William Hakim, calling him one of the best in the dangerous business of disarming bombs. At a memorial service in Salem, many cited Hakim's 20 years as an underwater demolitions expert for the Navy who put himself back in harm's way by joining the Oregon State Police bomb section. "It takes extraordinary courage to put on the uniform of a bomb technician," said Colleen Domenesh, a U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agent and friend of Hakim.

Hakim was killed Dec. 12 along with Woodburn Police Capt. Tom Tennant when a bomb exploded at a West Coast Bank branch in Woodburn. The blast also critically injured Woodburn Police Chief Scott Russell. A father and son, Bruce and Joshua Turnidge, have been arrested and charged with aggravated murder in the bombing. Prosecutors so far haven't publicly discussed a motive in the case. Hakim and Tennant were killed while trying to open what Hakim believed to be a hoax bomb. The device, in a green metal box, was found outside the bank and taken into the bank by Hakim, who planned to dismantle it for evidence.

State police officials have deferred any comment on the handling of the bomb until after a multiagency investigation is completed. At Saturday's memorial, friends and colleagues remembered Hakim as a courageous bomb disposal expert, devoted family man and volunteer who loved coaching youth soccer teams. John Hallock, an FBI special agent and bomb technician who worked with Hakim for five years, said after being notified about the bomb threat in Woodburn, he immediately got in touch with Hakim. "On Dec. 12, I had the privilege to work with Bill one last time," Hallock said. "I made one call, and that was to my friend Bill, knowing that he would be available

and that he would be there for me. Bill always wanted to do this job. He never said no. He never complained."

Gov. Ted Kulongoski noted the unusually cold and bitter winter weather that has gripped Oregon in the week since Hakim was killed in the line of duty. "The blowing wind and biting cold do not feel out of place ... not when our hearts are filled with pain and sadness that a man of supreme grace and courage has been taken from us by an act of supreme cowardice," Kulongoski said. He urged Hakim's friends and colleagues not to be consumed by thoughts of revenge against the alleged perpetrators. "The system will run its course; and justice will be done - I am certain of that," Kulongoski said.

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Dallas FBI Appeals For Public Aid On Hoax Letters

Dallas FBI officials are appealing to the public for help in catching the person sending hoax letters to governors' offices throughout the U.S. and American embassies abroad. For the first time since the letters began showing up Dec. 8, the FBI on Friday released detailed information about their makeup and contents, hoping to elicit tips.

Postmarks indicate they were sent from either Dallas or "North Texas," a reference to something mailed from any one of several ZIP codes beginning with the digits 750 and routed through the U.S. Postal Service's North Texas Processing and Distribution Center in Coppell, authorities said. That means some letters were mailed from a Dallas County suburb, or even Collin County, some of which is covered by a ZIP code starting with 750, said Amanda McMurrey, a Postal Inspection Service spokeswoman in Fort Worth. "We can't nail it down to a specific site," she said.

The letters all were mailed on Dec. 4, Dec. 8 or Dec. 11, officials said. The return addresses purport to be FBI offices in Dallas, San Antonio, Houston or El Paso. But the addresses listed for two field divisions are incorrect, outdated addresses. Officials have said that in some instances, the letters were addressed to former governors. "I can't say if they had an old list, or this was done on purpose," Ms. McMurrey said. El Paso is misspelled as "Al Paso" on the letters listing that city's return address. Investigators did not release the names on the return addresses.

The FBI isn't saying much about what's inside the envelopes, other than identical letters and harmless white powder. As for the content of the letters: "The message is not clear," according to an FBI statement. In the last two weeks, letters have shown up in the mailrooms of 46 governors' and 18 U.S. embassies in Europe and Asia. All states, except Arkansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, and Ohio, have received letters. The State Department says that embassies targeted include those in Berlin; Bern, Switzerland; Brussels, Belgium; Bucharest, Romania; Copenhagen, Denmark; Dublin, Ireland; Luxembourg; Madrid, Spain; Oslo, Norway; Paris; Prague, Czech Republic; Reykjavik, Iceland; Riga, Latvia; Rome; Stockholm, Sweden; Tallinn, Estonia; The Hague, Netherlands; and Tokyo.

Even though the letters are harmless, officials say, the police response and building shutdowns waste time and resources. Federal laws on threats and hoaxes in general call for a five-year maximum prison sentence, but mailing a threatening communication can bring 10 years per count, officials said. The U.S. Postal Inspection Service is offering a \$100,000 reward for information leading to an arrest and conviction in the case. Anyone with information can call their local police or contact the FBI at 1-800-225-5324 or postal inspectors at 1-877-876-2455.

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Ohio Teen Accused Of Threat Letters, Bomb-Like Devices

COLUMBUS, Ohio-Suspicious bomb-like packages caused several evacuations in a Columbus neighborhood. Now, investigators said a 15-year-old boy is to blame for the terroristic threats, NBC 4 reported. According to a search warrant, Robert Lindsey made three threats over the summer and another earlier this month. In each incident, according to the search warrant, Lindsey either wrote a threatening letter or planted a bomb-like device. Investigators said a forensic handwriting analyst linked the letters back to the suspect by comparing it to his homework samples. The Columbus Bomb Squad said that even though the packages were hoaxes, they take every situation seriously. Lindsey is charged with four counts of inducing panic.

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Connecticut Home Gets Suspicious Powder With Mail

SOUTHINGTON, CT - Federal officials say testing is still being done on some powder contained in a threatening letter sent to a Southington home. Robert Bobinski says the letter, addressed to him and his wife, Wanda, had no return address and the printing seemed strange. He waited until his wife got home Saturday and a white powder spilled from the envelope. The couple called 911. Bobinski says part of the note said something like "both of you are dead." The Bobinskis were taken out of the house and kept in their car until federal officials and state police arrived. A field test shows the powder is not anthrax. But officials say more extensive testing is being done and it could take some time to identify the substance.

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Quarantined Employee in Nevada "Livid" After Friday's Anthrax Scare

The 15 employees quarantined in Friday's anthrax scare in Carson City are now questioning the response of the officials to the incident and why they were left in the dark following final test results. News 4's Lemor Shlomof, one of those quarantined after an envelope containing an unknown substance was discovered at the state mailroom by an employee, revisits her place of confinement. This time it is to investigate whether it could have been avoided.

According to Shlomof, when she arrived on the scene late afternoon, she found several employees scattered outside the hazmat portable tent. She says some were laughing during the incident, taking the threat lightly. Not long after her arrival, the News 4 reporter was taken into custody when officials told her she wandered to close to the contaminated area. It was an area that she says, gave no indication of a threat. Shlomof says it wasn't until after onsite results returned with positive hits on anthrax that officials actually taped off the 'contaminated' area. But Carson City Fire Chief, Stacey Giomi says tape is just a visual. "A given area doesn't need tape," Giomi says. "It just needs to be isolated."

One employee quarantined along with Shlomof says she is "livid." An anonymous mailroom employee says she was never notified when officials received word that the powder that had her isolated in the cold for more than seven hours was actually cooking flour. She says she wasn't the only one, neither were her coworkers. Chief Giomi says some sort of disciplinary action will follow regarding the lack of communication that followed but exactly what will happen will be private.

Another anthrax scare that left a business in Carson City on edge Monday morning turned out to be a hoax after onsite testing revealed the suspicious substance was actually crushed aspirin. The letter containing the harmless substance was not

addressed to a governor this time but instead an accounting firm.

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No Suspects Named In Two Anthrax Hoaxes in Nevada

A pair of apparent anthrax hoaxes struck Carson City over the past week, with the state mailroom and a local accountant's office receiving envelopes stuffed with white powder. No actual poisons were discovered in either case and no suspect had been named as of Monday. The first incident occurred Dec. 12 when a powdery substance was found in an envelope in the state mailroom, public safety officials reported. The suspicious 4-by-5-inch manila envelope with a powdery substance was addressed to former Gov. Kenny Guinn, who left office in January of 2007. Initial field testing showed that the substance could be related to anthrax, but further analysis revealed it to be flour. About 15 people were kept in a cordoned-off area while testing and precautionary decontamination efforts continued.

Cpl. Randal Smith of the Capitol Police said governors in 37 states have now received similar envelopes. The envelope was also similar to one that arrived earlier the same day at the state mailroom in Las Vegas, Nevada Division of Investigation Chief Scott Jackson said. The letters, all postmarked in Texas, began arriving at governors' offices across the country earlier this month. So far, tests have indicated the powders to be harmless, though further testing is under way, the FBI said.

A similar incident occurred Monday when several envelopes containing a suspicious white powder arrived at the Bullis & Company accounting office on Division Street, prompting the quarantine of five employees, witnesses said. Responders closed down the 200 block of Division Street while firefighters and government specialists removed the substance, which was determined to be crushed aspirin. The envelopes were self-addressed packages used by the firm rather than the standard manila envelopes used in the earlier mailings, police said. The office reopened for business the same day, but workers were instructed not to discuss the matter pending an official statement from management. One employee described the morning's events as "hectic" and expressed relief that everyone was safe.

"We treat these matters very, very seriously and these substances very seriously," said Daniel Burns, a spokesman for Gov. Jim Gibbons. The Carson City scares did not affect anyone at the Capitol, Burns said, adding that it is typical for anyone exposed to potentially dangerous substances to be quarantined until test results are in. It remained unclear if the scares were related to one another or to the larger hoax, police said. The Department of Homeland Security and other governmental agencies have since taken over the investigation, Carson City Sheriff's Lt. Jeffrey Melvin said. "The FBI's handling our part now," he said. "We pretty much got out there and provided the perimeter while they went in to get it. But I know a team tested it at the scene and it turned out to be benign."

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Multiple Suspicious Powder Incidents Takes Toll on Resources

Since November, 106 suspicious packages have been sent to U.S. embassies, churches and National Guard bases around the country and the world. Now the Federal Bureau of Investigations and the Postal Inspector are trying to figure out who is behind the mailings. "It's an unfortunate crime because it is a big drain on resources," says U.S Attorney for the District of Utah, Brett Tolman. That drain of resources has hit Utah especially hard. Starting in November someone sent an envelope filled with a powdery substance to the Salt Lake Temple in downtown Salt Lake City. The same day a similar package was sent to the LDS Temple in Los

Angeles. At the beginning of the month a suspicious package filled with a white substance was sent to the office of the Utah governor as well as 39 other governors nationwide.

Just this week, a suspicious package was mailed to the National Guard Post in Draper, Utah causing the evacuation of all the employees. This was one of 51 packages sent to National Guard offices around the country. "You don't know if this is some organization that is doing this to test what our security is, or is this an individual who has a problem with the government." In some cases it appears whoever sent some of the packages has a strange sense of humor. "Some of these mailing have a return address of an FBI office," says Tim Fuhrman, Special Agent in charge of the Salt Lake City FBI office, "it may be somebody whose trying to pull something over on the FBI," he says.

All of the packages that included a powdery substance turned out not to be toxic according to forensic testing, but that kind of hoax, regardless of if anyone got hurt, is still a federal crime. "There are at least 22 criminal statues that may be applicable (to this kind of crime) says Tolman, "many of those are penalties of up to twenty year in jail and a \$250,000 fine. Tolman says despite the financial cost of these attacks, estimated in the 10's of thousands, there is also a human toll. "They don't know if they have been infected by some terrible powder or substance that is going to make them sick or ultimately even kill them."

Investigators say they are making progress on the investigations. The FBI says all of the letters sent to the governor's offices have Texas postmarks, while all of the letters sent to the National Guard offices have a Tennessee postmark. Officials say if and when they find the people responsible, those criminals will be facing serious charges, "it is a serious crime we will prosecute you, we will put you in federal jail," says Tolman.

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Military: Repeat Of Anthrax Attacks Harder Today

WASHINGTON - Tighter background checks and improved security would help prevent a repeat of the deadly 2001 anthrax attacks, military officials said Thursday, while acknowledging there are no guarantees. It was five months that an Army biodefense lab scientist, Bruce E. Ivins, committed suicide after being named the prime suspect in those attacks. "I can't say for certain it could not happen today," Army Maj. Gen. Robert Lennox, assistant deputy chief of staff for operations and training, told reporters. "But it would be much more difficult." He said there are more hurdles now before someone could remove a biological agent or toxin from a lab and seek to use it.

Lennox said military safety reviews in recent months endorsed many of the security changes already made, from improved cameras and lights to satellite surveillance. But other changes were deemed not workable or too expensive, including limits on scientists' hours or a system that would prohibit workers from being alone with a toxin. The Air Force and Navy also said they are preparing to resume shipments of dangerous biological agents to and from their medical and research labs. The Army briefly halted its shipments in August, then resumed them after tightening some rules.

The greatest vulnerability, Lennox said, is being able to determine whether someone might be a threat. Ivins' activities largely went undetected by military authorities at the Fort Detrick lab in Maryland despite revelations that emerged that he was a likely threat. As for transporting toxins, there are now requirements that two workers be present at all times during transit and that there be satellite coverage of the shipment. Also, the military is giving supervisors more training to be able to detect employees who may have problems, and expanding the security clearance checks of potential employees.

Workers at 12 military labs - five Army, five Navy and two Air Force - conduct biomedical research to support counterterrorism efforts, research protection for the armed forces and keep track of infectious diseases across the globe. Employees work with a range of dangerous materials such as anthrax and germs that cause Avian flu and encephalitis. Ivins allegedly obtained and refined the anthrax used in the deadly mailings that killed five people and sickened 17 others. He committed suicide after being told he would be charged in connection with the attacks.

David R. Franz, who commanded the flagship U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases at Fort Detrick from 1995 to 1998, said a too-tight focus on preventing insider abuses could slow research and cause the U.S. to fall behind in scientific advances. For example, he said, investigating lab workers for the equivalent of top-secret security clearance can sometimes take years. "I'm assuming it will chase some scientists away who might choose just to work someplace else if they have a very invasive system," Franz said. "The Chinese and Indians and so on are much less likely to regulate their science than we are. It becomes a national security issue if we're slowing progress in America." He said biodefense scientists must work harder on showing the public and policy makers the benefits of their work. "I see more good coming from the life science enterprise than harm," Franz said.

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Garda Station In Anthrax Alert

Ireland--A mystery powder which sparked a panic and closed down a Dublin garda station for a time yesterday was not anthrax. The Army was called into Mountjoy Garda Station after an envelope containing the powder was brought to the station by two women. One of them brought the package to the gardai after reading a note accompanying it, which warned that anyone coming in contact with it would be "dead within hours". The white powder had been found by her in the Finglas home of her boyfriend. Gardai alerted the Army and the station was evacuated at around 3pm yesterday. People who had come in contact with the material were traced as Army experts checked the powder on site. They established last night that it was not anthrax.

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Michigan Postal Worker Nabbed For Stolen Gold

MOUNT CLEMENS, MI -- A postal worker got caught when he stole gold from a mailed parcel and tried to sell the gold to the same pawn shop that had sent the parcel, federal authorities allege. William A. Perko, 43, a mail processing clerk at the Mount Clemens Post Office, was charged Wednesday with embezzling mail, according to a criminal complaint filed in U.S. District Court in Detroit. Perko took melted down solid gold to the G&S Brokers, a pawn shop in Mount Clemens on Nov. 7, 2008 and sold it for \$320, according to an affidavit filed by a special agent with the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General.

But when the jeweler at the pawn shop saw the gold the pawn shop manager had just paid for, he recognized it as gold he recently had melted down and mailed to a business in Ann Arbor, the affidavit said. "I was in shock; I was speechless," jeweler James Zelinske said Thursday. Zelinske said he mailed the package using his own name, not the name of the pawn shop. "It was a one in a million fluke that this could have happened," he said.

The pawn shop owner recognized Perko as a postal worker. Officials went to federal authorities, who installed hidden cameras at Perko's work station. "On Nov. 29, 2008 and Dec. 6, 2008, video footage was obtained of Perko rifling through undeliverable

bulk business mail and taking items from the mail," the complaint alleges. Perko, who could not be reached for comment Thursday, later admitted taking the gold and other items, the affidavit said.

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California Postal Worker With Loss Prevention Experience Held In Money Thefts

Marysville CA--A U.S. Postal Service employee from East Linda has been arrested on suspicion of stealing money from birthday cards at a mail processing facility in Olivehurst. Dean Edward Hudson, of the 1700 block of River Run Drive, allegedly opened more than 1,000 pieces of mail between July and this month, according to a complaint filed Friday in U.S. District Court in Sacramento. Hudson was a loss prevention specialist at Wal-Mart before being hired by the Postal Service, the complaint said. "Suspects with loss prevention and asset protection experience commonly have knowledge of how to avoid detection when stealing items," Shani Lee of the Postal Service's Office of Inspector General wrote in the complaint.

Hudson was arrested Monday and released on \$25,000 bond, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office. Lee wrote in the complaint that she observed Hudson behaving "furtively," rifling through mail and taking numerous breaks and trips to the restroom. The investigation began after customers in Chico, which is served by the Olivehurst facility, complained that cash was missing from birthday cards. Besides Chico, cities served by the Olivehurst facility include Yuba City, Marysville, Linda and Oroville. A preliminary hearing for Hudson is scheduled Dec. 31.

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Judge Reprimanded After Sending Threatening Letters to Newspaper

Superior Court Judge Ernest B. Murphy was publicly reprimanded by the state's highest court for writing threatening letters to the publisher of the Boston Herald after winning a \$2 million libel verdict against the newspaper. In a 12-page decision released today, the Supreme Judicial Court ruled that Murphy "plainly crossed the line" by writing two letters to publisher Patrick Purcell on court stationery demanding that the newspaper drop its appeal of the verdict and hand him a check for \$3.26 million. "For a sitting judge to state with repeated emphasis that he knows with complete certainty what will happen in a case is a misuse of the power and prestige of judicial office," the SJC wrote in its decision. "The judge's use of an official court stationery envelope to mail the message exacerbated the misuse."

Murphy has agreed to leave the bench because of an unspecified disability. He has been on a paid leave of absence since July 30, 2007, because, he said, he suffers from post-traumatic stress as a result of his long legal battle with the Herald. Murphy, who had been a lawyer for 30 years before his appointment to the bench in 2000, came under attack in a series of Herald articles in 2002 that portrayed him as soft on criminals and insensitive to victims. One story, quoting anonymous sources, alleged the judge had instructed lawyers during a conference in his chambers to tell a 14-year-old rape victim to "get over it." Murphy, who successfully sued the Herald for libel, testified at the Suffolk Superior Court trial that he had said the victim would need help to get over the attack. The judge said the stories prompted a deluge of hate mail and threats to his family. In February 2005, a jury found that the Herald had maliciously published false and defamatory material about Murphy and ordered the newspaper to pay him \$2 million.

After the verdict, Murphy wrote two letters to Herald publisher Patrick Purcell on court

stationery, demanding that the newspaper drop its appeal of the verdict and hand him a check. Murphy warned in the letters that it would be a "BIG mistake" for Purcell to share the letters with his lawyers and wrote, "You have a ZERO chance of reversing my jury verdict on appeal." The Herald did not settle the case because of the letters, but published excerpts from them in December 2005, about the same time Murphy launched an unsuccessful effort to have the newspaper's assets frozen until his case was resolved. During a hearing in November, Purcell testified that the letters were intimidating and looked like ransom notes. Murphy apologized for writing them on court stationery but insisted they were truthful and proper. A hearing officer recommended a public reprimand for Murphy. But in April the Judicial Conduct Commission found the letters reflected "willful misconduct" that damaged the judiciary's reputation, and urged the Supreme Judicial Court to impose much tougher penalties.

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Crushed Candy Canes Cause Concern, Bring out Hazmat Team at Marion VA

Marion, IL- A suspicious envelope creates a hazmat situation at the Marion V-A Hospital. A mail room employee discovered the envelope Wednesday morning. The Marion Fire Department's hazmat team was called in to retrieve the package and decontaminate the area. The envelope was not opened and employees in the area were decontaminated. After the mail room and envelope were sealed off investigators determined the source of the white powder. Turns out someone sent a Christmas card with a candy cane inside. By the time it arrived at the V-A the candy was crushed and the small grains were coming through the envelope.

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Other News Stories Posted on Our Website

Here's a sampling of other news stories that we didn't have room for in the newsletter. They can be viewed and read in their entirety on our website. Just go to the Mailroom Safety News page of our site: www.mailroomsafety.us

- Oregon Post Office Reopens After Bomb Scare
- San Antonio Man Jailed for Possession of Pipe Bombs
- White Powder False Alarm At Denver Cop Shop
- Suspicious Package Keeps Virgin Workers Quarantined
- Suspicious Powder Mailed To Inmate At Arizona Prison
- 'Anthrax' Letter Mailed To California Highway Patrol Academy
- New Zealand Woman Sentenced for Sending Threat Mail to Boss
- Idaho State Police Had Been Ready For Hoax Anthrax Letter
- Suspicious Mail Shows Positive in Initial Anthrax Tests
- Katie And Tom Cruise Call In FBI After 'Death Threats From Anti-Scientology Group

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Our Fall/Winter Mail Center Security Seminar schedule is now available. Details and registration information can be viewed on the [Seminars](#) page of our website. We are currently scheduled in the following cities:

- Washington, DC - December 17, 2008
- Philadelphia, PA - January 13, 2009
- New York City - January 14, 2009
- Boston, MA - January 16, 2009
- San Francisco, CA - January 22, 2009
- Los Angeles, CA - January 27, 2009
- San Diego, CA - January 29, 2009
- Phoenix, AZ - February 3, 2009
- Albuquerque, NM - February 5, 2009

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