EMERGENCY RESPONSE
ANTHRAX

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1. General Emergency Guidelines

1.1 Purpose

The basic emergency procedures outlined in this manual are to enhance the protection of lives through effective use of the University and campus community resources.

1.2 Scope

These procedures apply to all personnel, including students, buildings and grounds, owned, operated or under the control of the University of Natal Pietermaritzburg. These procedures are also extended to those peripheral areas where University personnel and students are placed.

1.3 Definition of Emergency

An incident, potential or actual, which affects an entire building or buildings, and which will disrupt the operations of the University. Outside emergency services will be required as well as the establishment of an Emergency Command Post i.e. Risk Management Services. This type of emergency must be reported immediately to Risk Management Services on extension 5211 who will, in turn, contact the required agencies/specialist services.

1.4 What is Anthrax?

Anthrax is a disease of warm-blooded animals, including humans, caused by the bacterium Bacilus anthracis. One of the oldest known diseases, it was once epidemic and still appears in many world areas including Africa, but only sporadically in the western and southern United States. Animals acquire the disease from drinking water draining from contaminated soil, in which the infectious bacteria may live for years; from eating infected carcasses and feedstuffs; and from bites of blood sucking insects.

1.5 Anthrax used as a Bio-weapon

Nearly all common antibiotics, except cephalosporins, are effective against anthrax when it occurs naturally, however, when developed as a bio-weapon, bacteria can have antibiotic resistance genes introduced. It is therefore, impossible to know for sure what antibiotics will work, in advance of an attack. If there is an anthrax release, the organism will be cultured and we will know within 48 hours what antibiotics to use.

1.6 What is the risk of Anthrax to me?

Anthrax is only deadly when you inhale a huge number of spores. Once the spores hit the ground, they stay there, so the risk from re-aerosolization is minuscule.

Anthrax does NOT spread from person to person! When it travels with the wind, it follows a narrow path, and does NOT spread out widely over long distances.
If Anthrax is used, it will affect only a limited area, and relatively small numbers of people.

It is a good terrorist weapon, as any use will strike terror in millions or billions of people.

BUT

It is a BAD weapon if you are trying to inflict a massive amount of casualties.

1.7 How is Anthrax Transmitted?

1.7.1 Infection can occur in three ways:

- cutaneous (skin)
- inhalation, and
- gastrointestinal (ingestion)

1.7.2 Humans can become infected with anthrax by:

- Handling products from infected animals (hair, wool, hides, flesh, bone meal)
- inhaling anthrax spores
- eating undercooked meat from infected animals

1.8 What about gas masks and protective equipment?

If you are in the vicinity of an attack, the best protection is to get inside and close all windows and doors. As long as you do not breathe in the tens of thousands or more spores required to induce illness, you will be fine.

1.9 Communications and Media Relations

A critical aspect of the University's strength is its ability to communicate effectively in this type of emergency. It is the responsibility of Risk Management Services to deal with the emergency; Ms. M. Bolton will be responsible for informing/notifying the Pietermaritzburg University community timeously and Mr. W. Saunderson-Meyer will be responsible for ensuring the issue of appropriate information to the media.

2. Response to Emergency

2.1 Co-Ordination of Emergency

All emergency operations will be directed by the Director, Risk Management Services or his Deputies. Risk Management Services will take immediate overall control of the emergency situation and accordingly supersede all other authorities during the emergency.

2.2 Emergency Preparedness

Emergency communications equipment and other materials necessary for the operation of the Command Post shall be maintained in a state of readiness by Risk Management Services.

2.3 Emergency Response

The Campus Emergency Response Team shall consist of the following personnel:-

2.3.1 Director, Risk Management Services, the Security Manager and SHE Consultant

2.3.2 Clinic personnel

2.3.3 Director Campus Administration

2.3.4 Campus Media Representative

2.3.5 Specialist emergency services i.e. Hazmat Emergency Response (Fire Brigade), SAPS, Greys etc.

2.4 Emergency Notification System

The telephone is the primary means of emergency notification at the University of Natal Pietermaritzburg. This is intended for the immediate transmission of specific information regarding the emergency. E-mail may be used for dissemination of information by the media representative.

2.5 Risk Management Services Response to Emergency

2.5.1 The Controller at Risk Management Services will obtain relevant information about the location and status of the suspicious letter or package i.e. obtain all information regarding what the caller can see or has seen regarding the suspicious letter or package.

2.5.2 S/he will determine whether the letter or package has been opened.

2.5.3 S/he will instruct the caller not to open or touch the letter or package again.

2.5.4 S/he will instruct the caller to hand articles such as clothing sealed in a container etc. to members of the Emergency Response Team only. Such persons will be identified by Risk Management Services (e.g. members of Hazmat (Fire Brigade), members of SAPS etc.)

2.5.5 S/he will notify the Director, Risk Management Services or his Deputy immediately for further action.

2.5.6 The Director, Risk Management Services will notify specialist services, the Director of Administration and other relevant personnel.

2.5.7 The affected area will be cordoned off by Risk Management Services Personnel (must wear gloves, dust masks or respirators).

2.5.8 If area affected has ventilation system, shut it down if possible or request Estates Department to assist.

3. Emergency Procedures Guide

3.1 Identifying a suspicious package and/or letter

The following characteristics may assist the identification of a suspicious letter or package.

3.1.1 Addressee's name or title may be inaccurate.

3.1.2 Return address may be fictitious or not available.

3.1.3 Hazardous mail may have distorted handwriting or the name may be prepared with homemade labels or cut and paste lettering.

3.1.4 Cancellation or post mark may show a different location than the return address.

3.1.5 Hazardous mail may have excessive postage.

3.1.6 Letter bombs may feel rigid, or appear uneven or lopsided.

3.1.7 Hazardous mail may have an irregular shape, soft spots, or bulges.

3.1.8 Hazardous mail may make a sloshing sound. Although placed devices may buzz or tick, mailed bombs generally do not.

3.1.9 Package bombs may be unprofessionally wrapped with several combinations of tape used to secure the package and may be endorsed "Fragile - Handle with Care" or "Rush - Do not Delay".

3.2 Mail Handling Awareness

When handling mail delivered to your work area look for suspicious letters or packages. If such a letter or package is received:

3.2.1 Do not shake or empty the contents of the suspicious envelope or package.

3.2.2 Place the envelope or package in a plastic bag or some other type of container to prevent leakage of contents.

3.2.3 If you do not have any container, then cover the envelope or package with anything available i.e. paper, bin etc. and do not remove this cover.

3.2.4 Switch off all fans, air conditioners and windows to ensure the spores do not spread.

3.2.5 Leave the room and close the door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering. DO NOT LEAVE THE AREA - WAIT UNTIL THE RESPONSE TEAM ARRIVES.

3.2.6 Wash your hands with soap and water to prevent spreading any powder to your face.

3.2.7 Instruct all those in the immediate vicinity wash their hands with soap and water and report back to the H.O.D. or Supervisor for that area immediately.

3.2.8 Notify Risk Management Services immediately.

3.2.9 Provide Risk Management Services with a list of all those who were in the room or area when this suspicious letter or package was opened.

3.3 Envelope or Package with powder and powder spills onto work surface

3.3.1 DO NOT try to clean up the powder. Cover the spilled contents immediately and do not remove this cover.

3.3.2 If you do not have any container, then cover the envelope or package with anything available i.e. paper, bin etc. and do not remove this cover.

3.3.3 Switch off all fans, air conditioners and windows to ensure the spores do not spread.

3.3.4 Then leave the room and close the door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering. DO NOT LEAVE THE AREA - WAIT FOR THE EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM ARRIVES.

3.3.5 Wash your hands with soap and water to prevent spreading any powder to your face.

3.3.6 Notify Risk Management Services immediately.

3.3.7 Provide Risk Management Services with a list of those who were in the room or area when this suspicious letter or package was opened.

3.3.8 Remove heavily contaminated clothing as soon as possible and place in a plastic bag, or some other container that can be sealed. Hand this to the Emergency Response team on their arrival as instructed by Risk Management Services.

3.3.9 Shower with soap and water as soon as possible.

3.4 Medical Response

Medical personnel will conduct testing once area has been contained. Samples will be taken, organisms will be cultured and we will know within 48 hours what antibiotics to use.