

Suspected Biological Agent

Supersedes:

Effective: 10-12-01

In collaboration with Boston Public Health Commission, the BPD and BFD, Boston EMS has developed the following response guidelines to a suspected biological agent in a parcel or letter.

1. Call Taking: 9-1-1 callers will be triaged and given pre-arrival instructions by BEMS call takers. In accordance with EMD guidelines. The call will be entered in the CAD system as a BIOT or BIOC.
2. Dispatch: Unless the patient has some current medical complaint, BEMS will dispatch a single person unit, i.e. supervisors, squad or tango unit. If not available, an ambulance should be dispatched. Boston Police and BFD will also respond.
3. On scene Operations: BPD will secure the scene, BFD will be responsible to enter any building and isolate any possible biological substance. The BFD may test the substance, however a sample will be secured and delivered to State Laboratory in Jamaica Plain for definite testing by the BPD.
4. Patient Care and Decontamination: Any victim that handled the parcel that has a suspected biological agent on it should be instructed to wash their hands with soap and water. It is only necessary to remove clothing if the substance was spread on it. In any case it is advisable for the victim to wash their clothes as soon as possible. . After washing hands and removing any exposed clothing, it is safe to evaluate and treat any patient.
 - 4.1. If a patient reports symptoms immediately after exposure, it is most likely not a biological incident your are dealing with. You should consider a chemical agent. A patient who develops symptoms sometime after a known exposure may be infected.
 - 4.2. Documentation/Patient Contact Form: Unless a victim is currently complaining of any medical symptoms, there is no indication for transport to a medical facility for any victim who has handled a suspected biological agent, or was in close proximity. (within 3 feet of package when it was opened is considered close proximity). However, if anyone wishes transport we shall transport. BEMS personnel will fill out a BPHC contact information sheet for any victim that was in close proximity. The BPHC contact information form has instructions for the patient, and contact number at Public Health. In addition, the patient's personal information is collected on a portion of this form. BEMS will retain the patient information and forward it to Public Health. Any patient evaluation or care should be documented on a BEMS PCR.