

KERN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Detentions Bureau Policies and Procedures

TITLE: Receiving and Searching Incarcerated Persons Packages

F-200

EFFECTIVE:	REVIEWED:	REVISED:	UPDATED:
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REFERENCE: DBPPM F-100, DBPPM F-150, DBPPM F-300,

POLICY

This policy is intended to establish a safe and effective method of handling suspicious incoming packages received at Sheriff's Office Detentions Facilities.

Items received via the US Postal Service or any other package delivery service that are unauthorized or deemed to be subject to limitation and regulation in accordance with Detentions Bureau Policy and Procedures for facility security, safety, order, discipline, and for any other legitimate governmental / penological interests, will be considered contraband.

In order to maintain facility security, only authorized soft-cover publications mailed directly from a publisher or online retailers such as Amazon, [BN.com](#), or similar, or other book/periodical distribution centers (not brick and mortar retail bookstores) will be received into Sheriff's Office jail facilities.

DEFINITIONS:

Items of contraband include, but are not limited to the following:

- Stickers
- Tape
- Blank paper
- Postage stamps
- Magnets
- Greeting cards
- Personal checks
- Narcotics
- Dangerous or sharp objects

- Items which are sold in commissary
- Items containing non-hygienic material such as lipstick or human hair
- Currency and coins

Suspicious Packages: Any package that is believed to pose a threat to facility security or to the safety of staff, incarcerated people, or visitors. Indications that a package may pose a threat include, but are not limited to, the following criteria:

- Contains some form of articulated threat or “does not look right”.
- Unverifiable return address or none at all.
- Excessive postage, usually multiple hand applied stamps.
- Address contains misspelled words.
- Addressee no longer with office or item is otherwise outdated.
- Addressed to title only or title doesn’t match name.
- Poorly typed or written.
- Postmark indicates a city that does not match return address/zip code.

Unusual weight given its size. Lopsided or oddly shaped.

- Rigid or bulky.
- Excessive tape or string around envelope or package.
- Package well wrapped, such as multiple layers of wrapping paper.
- Marked with restrictive endorsements such as “personal” or “confidential”.
- Received from a hostile group/person, or a recently suspended/terminated employee.

Hazardous Material Packages: Indications that an item may contain a hazardous material include, but are not limited to, the following criteria:

- Envelope or package completely sealed with tape.
- Contains loose material on the inside, such as dust, powder, or liquid.
- Metallic or sand like sound, or items loose inside the package.
- Contains or is leaking material that is believed to be flammable, caustic and/or toxic.
- Contains protruding wires, strange odors, oily stains, discoloration, or crystallization.

Unauthorized packages including any item(s) which:

- Aid incarcerated persons in the construction or use of improvised weapons or explosive devices.

- Assist incarcerated persons to escape from the facility, including plans, diagrams and blueprints of Sheriff's Office or other County facilities.
- Depict or describe procedures for the improvised manufacture of alcohol or drugs.
- Depict nudity, gang graffiti/symbolism and/or groups.
- Are written in code.
- Are prison or jail union/solidarity publications.
- Encourage or instruct in the commission of any criminal activity.
- Are detrimental to the security, safety, order, discipline, and other legitimate governmental / penological interests of the Detentions Bureau as determined by a Section Manager.

If you are unable to determine whether an item is contraband or not, ask your immediate supervisor.

DIRECTIVE #1

Unauthorized packages containing contraband as detailed above, shall be processed in accordance with DBPPM F-100 - Correspondence.

The following provisions shall apply to all processing and handling of packages:

Staff responsible for opening packages will:

- Wash their hands thoroughly before and after handling packages;
- Wear departmentally provided disposable (latex, vinyl, or nitrile) gloves while handling packages;
 - Additionally, staff members may choose to wear a departmentally provided mask and/or eye shield.
- When possible, open mail in an isolated area or office

Procedure A: Handling Suspicious packages believed to be contaminated

Any staff member that has reason to believe a unopened package is suspicious and believed to be contaminated will:

- Not move or open the package;
- Not attempt to clean up or otherwise disturb any unknown material (liquid or powder) that may have leaked from an unopened of suspicious package;

- Immediately notify a supervisor;
- Not leave the area until directed to do so by the Shift Supervisor.

Any staff that has reason to believe a opened package is suspicious and believed to be contaminated will:

- Not move the package;
- Not attempt to clean up or otherwise disturb any unknown material (liquid or powder) that became apparent after opening a package;
- Immediately notify a supervisor;
- If staff members are believed to be contaminated, staff will not leave the area until decontaminated.
- If staff are not believed to be contaminated, staff will:
 - Remove gloves and gently place them on a nearby tabletop or desktop location as to not agitate or further disperse the substance believed to be a contaminate;
 - Post a 'Do Not Enter' sign on the door of the room in which the package is in;
 - If possible, post another staff member near the area to ensure that no one enters the area believed to be contaminated until the Shift Supervisor arrives;
 - Immediately wash their hands in the sink or nearest restroom that is a safe distance away from the substance believed to be a contaminate;
 - Exit the package sorting area of the building and wait for the Shift Supervisor to arrive;
 - Explain the suspicious package details to the Shift Supervisor. **The**

Shift Supervisor will:

- If necessary, put on departmentally provided disposable (latex, vinyl, or nitrile) gloves;

- To the degree possible, ensure that everyone remains calm;
- Ensure that the immediate area is secured preventing any entry or exiting of the area to avoid a possible spread of contamination;
- Ensure that nearby areas are evacuated if necessary;
- Assess the situation to determine if it warrants Haz-Mat reporting in accordance with the definition of hazardous material mail as detailed above;
 - If not, dispose of the item as if trash or junk mail and have the employee wash skin areas exposed for at least one minute in warm soapy water as a precautionary measure. If disposing of the item, follow all applicable procedures outlined in DBPPM F-200.
 - If it does warrant reporting, initiate the Haz-Mat procedures detailed in Procedure B.

Procedure B: Packages requiring a Haz-Mat response

If the Shift Supervisor determines that a package poses a threat involving hazardous materials, the Shift Supervisor will:

- Notify the Communications Center, the Section Manager, and the Department Risk Manager [661-391-7552];
 - **Note: The Communications Center may either start a Haz-Mat call-out or connect the Shift Supervisor through to Haz-Mat personnel for additional information or advisement based on the request of the Shift Supervisor;**
- To the best degree possible, take steps necessary to isolate the exposure of additional area or people, including denying any further entry to the building;
- Consider shutting off any heating, cooling, and fan units;
- Direct the employee to wash skin areas exposed to the substance for at least one minute in warm soapy water;
- If exposed to suspicious material, the Shift Supervisor should isolate themselves from others and designate an appropriate staff member to take control of the scene;
- Wait for responding hazardous material personnel and follow their direction only.

Procedure C: Handling suspicious package that is believed to contain an explosive or other dangerous device

Any staff member that has reason to believe an unopened or open package contains an explosive or other dangerous device will:

- Not move or (continue to) open the package;
- Advise all other staff in proximity to the suspicious package that there is a danger and direct them to leave the area/building immediately;
- Immediately leave the area/building and close any doors on your way out to prevent further entry into the area;
- Make personal contact with the Shift Supervisor and advise them of the situation;
- Stay a safe distance away from the suspicious package, but remain in the general area so that other people can be advised to not enter the immediate vicinity of the suspicious package;
- Wait in the safe area for the Shift Supervisor to arrive and do not leave until being directed to do so.

The Shift Supervisor will:

- To the degree possible, ensure that everyone remains calm;
- Ensure that the immediate area is secured preventing any entry of the area;
- If possible and appropriate, ensure that any nearby areas are evacuated;
- Quickly assess the situation to determine if a Bomb Squad call-out is necessary;

Provided a Bomb Squad call-out is reasonably believed to be necessary:

- Notify the Communications Center, the Section Manager, and the Department Risk Manager [661-391-7552];
- **Note: The Communications Center may either start a Bomb Squad call-out or connect the Shift Supervisor through to Bomb Squad personnel for additional information or advisement based on the request of the Shift Supervisor;**

- To the best degree possible, take steps necessary to isolate the exposure of additional area or people, including denying any further entry to the building;

Wait for responding Bomb Squad personnel and follow their direction only.**DIRECTIVE #2**

- Packages marked as C.O.D. or "Postage Due" will not be accepted.

Staff accepting incoming packages will:

- Confirm that the incarcerated persons is currently in custody and verify the incarcerated persons housing location shown on the envelope is correct.

Note: Packages directed to incarcerated persons not in custody will be processed in accordance with **Procedure E** below.

- Write the incarcerated persons current housing location on the outside of the package;
 - If the incarcerated persons is in custody at another Sheriff's Office facility, place the package in the appropriate inter-office mailbox in the administrative office.
- Thoroughly search all packages for contraband, except those articles labeled "Legal Mail";
 - If any incoming package reasonably appears to be Legal Mail, it shall be processed in accordance with DBPPM F-300: Legal Mail.

Procedure D: Packages containing weapons, drugs, or other items of a Criminal nature

Upon finding packages containing weapons, drugs, or other items of a criminal nature, items that threaten the security of the facility, or hazardous contraband, staff will:

- Immediately notify the Shift Supervisor.

The Shift Supervisor shall:

- Assign a deputy to investigate the matter.

The investigating Deputy shall:

- Seize any drugs, dangerous items and/or evidence;
- Obtain a crime case number and complete an Incident Report;
- Book all seized items/property:
 - Items seized at the Lerdo facilities will be booked into an available on-site evidence storage locker. (unless the items seized are drugs or drug paraphernalia) these items will be booked at the property room.
 - Provide the incarcerated persons with a completed Incarcerated persons Notification of Contraband Received in Mail form (DBPPM F-200, Attachment 'A') detailing the disposition of all seized items.

Procedure E: Packages containing cash or other currency**When a package is found to contain currency, the staff member will:**

- Place the currency in an envelope;
- Write the incarcerated persons name, booking number, and the amount of currency on the outside of the envelope;
- Seal the envelope and place it in an empty valuable property storage bag;
- Seal the valuable property storage bag containing the envelope with alpha numerically identified tie seal and attach it to the inmate's original valuable property storage bag;
- Maintain the inmate's property in JMS, noting the amount and type of currency, if it is not United States currency that is added.
- Return the original package to the sender and notify the incarcerated persons in accordance with **Procedure F**.

Procedure F: Mail containing other contraband

When non-criminal contraband is found in the package, staff will:

- Stamp the item with a "Return to Sender" stamp and seal the package;
- Legibly document the item with the specific reason as to why it is being returned;
- Notify the incarcerated persons that contraband was received using the Incarcerated persons Notification of Contraband form (DBPPM F-200, Attachment 'A');
- Obtain the incarcerated persons signature on the Notification of Contraband form (Attachment 'A') or note the incarcerated persons refusal to sign it as 'refused to sign';
- Provide a copy of the Notification of Contraband form to the incarcerated persons and place the original in the incarcerated persons file.

DIRECTIVE 3: Packages directed to incarcerated persons not in custody

Packages directed to incarcerated persons not in custody will be processed as follows:

Procedure F-1:

If the package has a return address:

Staff will:

- Stamp the item with a "Return to Sender" stamp and seal the package;
- Legibly document the item with the specific reason as to why it is being returned;
- Return the item to the sender if the return address is known;
- Notify the Shift Supervisor if the return address is unknown.

Procedure F-2:

If the mail or package does not have a return address:

The Shift Supervisor will:

- Assign a deputy to seize and book the package and contents.

The Deputy will:

- Seize the package;
- Open and search the package in order to determine its contents and maintain chain of custody;
- Itemize the contents of the package;
- Complete an Incident Report;
- Book all seized items and contents as found, if the property is not perishable.
 - Items seized at Lerdo, will be booked into an available on-site evidence storage locker.

If the property is perishable, contact the Sheriff's Office Property Room for the proper procedure to destroy the property.