

FAS: Security Strategies

Security strategies

Laboratory management plays a vital role in ensuring the safety and security of staff and visitors.

The laboratory has developed security strategies with the DA Investigative team that cover ongoing, potential or the most likely threats that may occur at or near the laboratory facility or be directed towards staff members.

Management responsibilities

To achieve optimum preparedness, laboratory management should

- maintain written documentation of all threats and violent events
 - post local, state, and national emergency hotline telephone numbers for reporting suspicious substances
 - provide information, training, and emergency drills to enhance staff response to emergencies under pressure
 - coordinate and communicate with the District Attorney's Investigations Bureau, local law enforcement, and federal agencies, to inform them when problems arise
 - ensure that the receptionist has a point of contact to call in an emergency
 - restrict dissemination of all personal information and names of staff
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General security strategies

General security strategies to prevent incidents include an increasing awareness of the potential risks to the security of the building, evidence, and laboratory employees.

Employees of the crime laboratory should

- be aware of surroundings, and report suspicious objects, people, and packages to the Laboratory Director or a Supervising Criminalist
 - remain calm and act in a professional manner during an emergency
 - write threat incidents or events down as soon as possible after the incident and forward to the attention of the Laboratory Director or a Supervising Criminalist
 - follow procedures for entry and exit during the business day and securing the facility after hours
 - when in doubt, call the Laboratory Director or a Supervising Criminalist
 - keep important phone numbers handy
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Telephone bomb threat

In the event of a telephone bomb threat:

- DO NOT PANIC—stay calm and alert
 - keep the caller on the line as long as possible by asking questions
 - attempt to get someone else to listen to the call
 - immediately report the incident to the Laboratory Director or a Supervising Criminalist
 - when the caller hangs up, notify the DA Investigators
 - evacuate the building using appropriate evacuation procedures
 - wait for the DA Investigator and follow their instructions
 - complete a written report
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E-mail threats

If you receive an e-mail threat, the following steps should be taken.

- Immediately notify and forward a copy of the e-mail to the Laboratory Director
 - Save the e-mail—do not delete it.
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Hostile person as a threat

If you have to deal with an irate or angry person, you should

- assume an open posture and do not hide your hands
 - maintain eye contact
 - whenever possible, get the person seated because this is a less hostile position
 - keep your voice a little below your normal volume
 - acknowledge the hostile person's anger and irritation
 - avoid ultimatums, threats, or intimidations towards the hostile person
 - inform the Laboratory Director or a Supervising Criminalist and document the incident
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Violent or intrusive threat

If a person enters the laboratory building with a threat of violence you should

- immediately get out of harm's way
 - use a duress button to summon law enforcement help
 - alert other laboratory employees in the building when it is safe to do so
 - do not confront the intruder
 - lock yourself in a designated safe area or safely exit the building
 - remain in a safe area until the police arrive and follow their instructions
 - document the incident and everything you remember about the intruder
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Biohazard threat

If a letter is received claiming to contain anthrax or contains an unknown powdery substance, the following steps should be taken:

- remain calm—there is a very low risk of disease transmission, but still be cautious
 - move people away from the immediate area
 - close the envelope and place it in a paper or plastic bag
 - immediately wash your hands and arms thoroughly with soap and water if you handled the package
 - notify the Laboratory Director or a Supervising Criminalist
 - call 911
 - call the local, state, or national emergency hotline numbers designated for reporting suspicious substances
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Chemical threat

Chemical may have a strong odor. If you come into contact with a chemical or strong suspicious odor, the following steps should be taken:

- notify the Laboratory Director or a Supervising Criminalist
 - call 911
 - evacuate the building immediately
 - wait for the police and hazardous materials team and follow their instructions
 - document the incident
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Fire threat

In case of fire, the first person at the scene should:

- alert staff and visitors
- pull the lever on the fire alarm box
- call 911
- evacuate everyone in immediate danger from the fire
- evacuate the building
- if possible, confine the fire by using an extinguisher and closing all doors

If trapped in a room during a fire:

- place cloth material under the door to prevent smoke from entering
- retreat and close as many doors as possible between you and the fire
- be prepared to signal for help from a window

If caught in smoke, drop to your hands and knees and crawl. If clothes catch on fire: stop, drop, and roll.

To use a fire extinguisher, remember **P.A.S.S.**:

- **P** – Pull the safety pin. To break the plastic safety tie, first twist then pull.
- **A** – Aim at the base of the fire.
- **S** – Squeeze the trigger hands together.
- **S** – Sweep from side to side across the base of the fire.

Even if you are able to contain the fire, the fire department should be called to report the incident. The Fire Department should check the building for any residual risk.

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Suspicious packages or mail threat

When handling mail, the following are a few ways to identify a suspicious package or letter:

- excessive or no postage
- inaccurate or misspelled names and addresses
- lack of return address or return address and postmark are from different areas
- noticeable messiness or discoloration, unusual odors, lopsided or unprofessional wrapping
- drawing, unusual statements, poor typing, or handwritten address
- Statements such as “Open by addresses only,” “Special Delivery,” or “Personal and Confidential”
- restrictive markings
- addressed to title only (for instance, Criminalist)
- wrong name with title
- rigid or bulky
- badly typed or written
- fictitious, unfamiliar, or no return address
- protruding wires

What to do:

- trust your instincts—if the package doesn’t “feel” right, do not handle it
- isolate the package
- notify the Laboratory Director or a Supervising Criminalist
- notify police and follow evacuation procedures if necessary

What **NOT** to do:

- **do not** shake a suspicious article
- **do not** open a suspicious article
- **do not** place a suspicious article in a confined space such as a cabinet or desk drawer
- **do not** call, page, or use any other electronic device in the vicinity of the suspicious package

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Stalking and following threats

If you are being followed or stalked while walking, you should

- never confront the person following you
- walk quietly to a well-lit, populated safe area, and call the police
- if confronted or attacked, attempt to escape and run to the nearest well-lit, populated safe area

If you are being followed or stalked while driving, you should make four successive right turns and observe through your rear view mirror. If the vehicle is still following attempt to drive to the nearest well-lit and populated area.

- If you have a cell phone, call 911 and follow instructions.
- If possible, memorize the license plate and vehicle description.
- Never stop your vehicle and confront the driver.
- Never drive home when being followed.

Be proactive. It is always a good idea to keep your gas tank at least half-full.
