

SOUTH PORTLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT

STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES

SOG #:	6.633	Effective Date:	3/15/2011
Title:	Initial Response to Unknown Substances	# of pages:	2
Category:	Hazardous Materials Response	Classification:	Red

1. **PURPOSE:** To standardize the initial response to an incident involving unknown substances (i.e. white powder calls).

2. **PROCEDURES:**

Overview:

The likelihood of an unknown substance presenting a reasonable threat in the form of a biological, radiological or chemical agent is very slim. It is very important that the person in charge of this type of incident use the available screening tools and equipment carried on the permanent engine companies prior to upgrading the level of response.

Dispatchers

The dispatch center will attempt to obtain any and all information from the person reporting the unknown substance. The information should include, if possible:

- Location of the material
- Physical state of the material
- Approximate quantity of the leak/spill
- Where is the spill coming from (container, package, envelope etc.)
- Has anyone been exposed to the substance and if so, how?
- Is there anyone feeling ill effects as a result of exposure to the substance?

The normal initial response for this incident will be a still alarm for the district engine company (**Level 1 Hazmat Response**). If there are reports of physical exposure leading to illness or injury, the response should be upgraded to a box and appropriate level of EMS units assigned (**Level 2 Hazmat Response**).

Initial Responders

The first arriving officer should make contact with the reporting party and perform an initial size up, utilizing the *State of Maine Standard Suspicious Substance Screening Tool*. If there have been any ill effects from the material, this screening should not take place in the hazard area.

Initial testing of the material is only required if the threat assessment indicates a reasonable suspicion that the material is a hazard. If there is not a reasonable threat, explain to the concerned party our findings and in the interest of customer service, assist with the cleanup of the material.

Reasonable Threats

If a reasonable threat is determined after completion of the SSST, a Level 2 Hazmat response shall be requested and a plan for initial testing should be formulated. Notifications of a “Reasonable Threat” shall be made to:

- The Fire Department Duty Chief
- A Police Department Supervisor
- The Maine Information and Analysis Center

The Maine Information and Analysis Center should be contacted and an update given to the duty officer. 1-877-786-3636. The MIAC may provide instructions on how to proceed with sample collection if needed.

Any entry into an area with an unknown substance should include:

- The establishment of Technical Decon
- Completion of a Biocheck 20/20
- Completion of a PST5 Avdent Kit
- Environment monitoring with 4 gas meter
- Environment monitoring with Radiation pager

Safety

Safety of all fire personnel is the primary benchmark, and the minimum level of protection should be a Level B suit and positive pressure ventilation, either with SCBA or PAPR. This protection will not only insure personal safety, but also limit contamination of turnout gear. The initial testing can be performed with the items contained in the “quick kits” located on the permanent engine companies. Technical decontamination should also be established.

Sampling

The Department will not normally be used for taking samples that will be used as evidence; our main in taking a sample would for additional testing to verify identification of unknown substance. If sampling is required refer to the SPFD SOG on sampling.

3. REFERENCES:

- None

By Order Of:

Kevin W Guimond

Kevin W. Guimond
Fire Chief