

Handbook

Mailroom security



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Preface

This Handbook was prepared by Standards Australia to provide guidance material based on best practice in mailroom safety and security. In its development the document was subject to peer review by industry representatives who have served on standards development committees in this field.

The aim of the Handbook is to improve understanding of mailroom security and to provide organisations with information on the range of threats that may affect the mail process or those people receiving mail and the steps that should be taken to minimise the effects of such incidents.

Mailroom security is a serious security and safety issue and should be recognised as such and appropriate resources allocated to provide a safe and secure mail handling capability.

Organisations need to identify, assess and control risks as they relate to the mail process including the identification and response to suspicious and/or hazardous items. This Handbook provides guidance on how such risk assessments can be undertaken and the factors that should be considered including: recognition of the operating context, the assets at risk, the likelihood factors and consideration of the consequences should a risk relating to the mail be realised.

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Foreword

Far from surface mail being an outmoded form of communication in the electronic information age, the volumes of physical mail and private courier items have steadily increased over the last decade. Mail handling processes and assets are important elements of a business and as such need to be protected. Mail services are also a means of delivering hazardous and threatening material to organisations and individuals and therefore protective measures are required to detect and safely respond to such items.

Many organisations experience mail-related incidents including hate mail, hazardous mail, suspicious mail, items purporting to contain hazardous substances (hoaxes), and the theft of mail and mail related assets. The consequences of such events may include increased stress, injury or death of employees, disruption to business operations, financial loss and denial of service.

There is awareness amongst private and public sector organisations that preparedness, response and training are the key elements in ensuring a safe work environment that protects the mail handling process and protects staff from hazardous mail. This Handbook addresses protection of the mail process and assets; and identification and safe response to a range of mail-related threats.

1 Scope and definitions

1.1 Scope

This Handbook provides organisations and individuals with information on the range of threats that may affect the mail process, and the steps that should be taken to minimise the effects of such incidents.

Based on a risk management framework, this Handbook provides the reader with the knowledge and tools to develop strategies, policies, procedures and training to enhance mailroom security and thereby protect the people, assets and functions of the organisation.

This Handbook should be read in conjunction with AS/NZS 4360, *Risk management*, AS 3745, *Emergency control organisation and procedures for buildings, structures and workplaces*, and HB 167, *Security risk management*.

The guidance in this Handbook is for mailroom managers, emergency managers, security managers, Chief Wardens (refer to AS 3745, *Emergency control organisation and procedures for buildings, structures and workplaces*), OHS managers, consultants, mailroom personnel, personal assistants and receptionists and anyone receiving and opening mail.

The Handbook identifies the key risks relating to the protection of the mail process and protection from hazardous mail items and the key risk analysis and risk management considerations.

The Handbook provides guidance on developing policies, procedures and physical measures to protect the organisation from hazardous mail items.

Following the main text is a series of Action Guides providing step-by-step guidelines on how to deal with specific threats.

1.2 Definitions

1.2.1 Biological substance

Any substance containing an infectious micro-organism usually in the form of an infectious powder, liquid or aerosol e.g. anthrax. A living organism, such as blood, body fluids, smallpox or anthrax. See Action Guide C.

1.2.2 Chemical substance

Any substance used in, or derived from, a chemical reaction that may cause death or serious bodily injury through the release,

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