



Wisconsin Unknown Substance Protocol March 21, 2011

The Wisconsin Unknown Substance Protocol was developed as a tool for first responders to deal with an unknown substance (e.g. “white powder”, unknown liquid, “suspicious” package, etc.) that may pose a risk.

The protocol is designed to clarify when and what type of a response is necessary, whether laboratory testing is warranted, and whether there is a risk for persons exposed.

The protocol has two components: the first for law enforcement to assess if a threat exists, and the second, after the existence of an actual or implicit threat is determined, for public health to assess whether there is a danger to the health of persons exposed to that substance.

Since the anthrax letters of 2001, there have been thousands of white powder and unknown substance incidents in Wisconsin. None of the specimens have tested positive for anthrax and there were reasonable explanations for the presence of powder for most incidents. However, it is important to handle each situation in a uniform and systematic manner, as described in this protocol.

The Wisconsin Unknown Substance Protocol was developed by the Wisconsin Division of Public Health, with the expert advice of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), United States Postal Inspectors Service (USPIS), Wisconsin Capitol Police, Wisconsin National Guard (WING), Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) and the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene (WSLH).

This protocol should be incorporated into your local emergency plans and is available at the following location: <http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/preparedness/resources.htm>

This protocol is not designed for use in mailrooms. The United States Postal Service (USPS) provides guidance for mailrooms at: <http://www.usps.com/communications/news/security/mailcenter.htm>

Questions or concerns can be directed to: DHSSStockpile@wisconsin.gov

