

No. 157/2018

16 March 2018

Our Ref: E1/18

Hanwell Delivery Office - Suspect Packet – White Powder Incident Thursday 15 March 2018:

To: All Branches

Dear Colleagues,

Some rather sensational reports appeared in yesterday's national tabloid newspapers referring to Postal Workers being treated by paramedics after a suspicious package was found at Royal Mail's Hanwell Delivery Office in West London at 7:40am yesterday morning and went on to report that Police swarmed to the Hanwell Delivery Office, rushing to control the scene, setting up road closures as part of the investigation, specialist officers assessing the package and three people being treated by paramedics as a serious emergency situation developed etc.

The facts are that during delivery walk preparation sorting, a badly wrapped package leaking powder went over the duty holder working at a sorting frame, and others nearby. The Met Police who attended the scene declared the package and contents as "non-suspicious" and "non-malicious" soon thereafter, confirming that the contents of the parcel were harmless and the item was not sent with any malicious intent. No staff were injured and all are back at work, with mail deliveries being made to customers in Hanwell as usual without major disruption. The London Ambulance Service checked three people at the scene as a precaution but none were taken any to hospital.

The damaged packet contents were identified as "Borax" (sodium tetraborate decahydrate), which can be purchased over the counter and is sold as a naturally occurring mineral compound best known as a laundry booster and water softener. Borax is also used as a multi-purpose household cleaner with many uses throughout the house including craft projects.

A Royal Mail Statement read "The incident at Hanwell DO was reported to the Police and the area was cleared as a precaution. The safety of our people is of the utmost importance to Royal Mail and we have strict procedures in place to deal with any such incidents, which fortunately are very rare."(End)

The scare comes just days after 4 malicious, suspicious packages were sent to 4 Labour MPs' Westminster Offices and which are subject to a full scale Police investigation. This was reported in LTB 152/18.

RM Operations, RM Group Security, the CWU and Unite/CMA wish to remind all Royal Mail Offices and staff again to be vigilant at all times and to follow the "Be Aware"/"Stay Calm"

Guidance and Risk Assessment process for any suspect items of mail that may be found in the postal system.

The Stay Calm guide for suspect items can be found online at: <http://staycalm.online/on-site/incident/>

Yours sincerely



Dave Joyce
National Health, Safety & Environment Officer