



Preventing and Responding to Unknown Substance Exposure

Quick Reference Fact Sheet | FOR ALL DOCCS Facility Staff

PREVENTION: RECOGNIZING RISK

- Be alert to unknown substances on incarcerated individuals, in cells, cubes, common areas, and incoming mail.
- Watch for visible powders, white residue, unusual odors, or drug paraphernalia near any emergency scene.
- If a hazard escalates — remove yourself immediately. Do not re-enter without upgrading to Tier 2 PPE.
- Minimize contact with unknown materials. Do not touch your face (eyes, nose, mouth) at any time.
- **Do not:** Avoid actions that can aerosolize substances:
 - Run fans near unknown substances
 - Sweep or disturb powder residue

TWO-TIER RESPONSE SYSTEM

TIER 1 / LEVEL 1 — Low Risk / Routine Emergency

Example: Medical emergencies with no visible powder or known drug presence.

Required PPE:

- N95 respirator (fit-tested & medically cleared)
- Nitrile gloves — minimum 5 mil

Additional protocols:

- Maintain situational awareness for escalation signs
- Notify medical/supervisory staff if hazard escalates
- Exit immediately — upgrade to Tier 2 if needed

TIER 2 / LEVEL 2 — Elevated Risk / Suspected Exposure

Example: Unknown powder, suspected fentanyl, white residue, or paraphernalia near scene.

Required PPE:

- N100 / P100 respirator
- Full disposable Tyvek hooded coveralls
- Nitrile gloves — 5 mil
- Anti-fog goggles (eye protection)

Additional protocols:

- Isolate area — restrict access, limit response staff
- Notify EMS and environmental response teams immediately
- Follow full decontamination and reporting post-incident

EMERGENCY RESPONSE STEPS

1. Secure the scene and restrict access.
2. Don the appropriate PPE for the tier level before entering.
3. Notify your supervisor immediately.
4. Activate Emergency Medical Services (EMS) if exposure is suspected.
5. Do not aerosolize substances — no fans, no sweeping.
6. Keep Tier 2 response staff to a minimum.
7. Administer Narcan / Naloxone per appropriate medical direction if needed.
8. Complete full decontamination and incident reporting after the event.

AFTER AN EXPOSURE: MEDICAL SURVEILLANCE

- Seek prompt medical evaluation immediately following any suspected exposure.
- Discard the used respirator and any PPE in a hazardous material bag — do not reuse.
- Follow up per DOCCS medical direction; document all exposure details.
- Report the incident to your supervisor and facility PPE coordinator (FSO / Tool Control) for PPE replacement.
- Contact your local PEF leadership to inform them of the incident, request support, and ensure appropriate follow-up actions are taken

RESPIRATOR RULES AT A GLANCE

- Must be medically cleared and fit-tested annually before use (OSHA 29 CFR § 1910.134).
- Replace after 40 hours of use or 30 days — whichever comes first.
- Replace immediately if: damaged, soiled, contaminated, or breathing becomes difficult.
- Discard after any confirmed drug exposure — dispose in a hazardous materials bag.
- Beards, stubble, or facial hair contacting the seal are NOT permitted (OSHA § 1910.134(g)(1)(i)(a)).
- Store in a clean, dry, labeled bag (name + issue date) — protect from dust, sunlight, and moisture.

OSHA REQUIREMENT: No employee shall wear a tight-fitting respirator if facial hair comes between the sealing surface of the facepiece and the face (29 CFR § 1910.134, Appendix A). *Annual training and refresher courses required for ongoing compliance.*



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This factsheet references the NYSDOCCS Exposure Control Plan (ECP), which provides procedures to protect staff from occupational exposure to unknown or hazardous substances, including fentanyl.