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Michigan Department of Community Health Laboratory Testing Update

Michigan Department of Community Health Chief Medical Executive, David R. Johnson, M.D., today announced that initial testing conducted on samples of questionable powder substances from Southeast Michigan show no evidence of anthrax. While there is no initial evidence of anthrax spores in these samples, confirmatory testing ruling out the presence of anthrax continues and is expected to be complete over the next few days.

"We are pleased to report that initial laboratory testing on the samples show no sign of anthrax," said Dr. Johnson. "This rapid response to identify potential exposures and expedite testing has truly been a cooperative effort among local, state and federal health and law enforcement agencies."

With the recent national events, Michigan residents are naturally on a heightened state of alert. However, it is important for all Michigan citizens to proceed with reasonable precautions and not panic when opening mail and packages.

"If citizens have a concern about a letter or package because it contains either a threatening note or a large quantity of a powdery substance, they should leave the letter or package where it is, thoroughly wash their hands with soap and water and from another location contact their local law enforcement," said Johnson. "Local law enforcement, working in conjunction with the FBI would then assess the situation to determine if there is a credible threat and determine how to best proceed."

Anthrax exposure through the mail is extremely unlikely and symptoms of anthrax do not develop in a matter of hours. Even if someone has found a letter or package with a threatening note or large quantity of powdery substance, in the absence of illness there is no need to go directly to the hospital for anthrax treatment or testing. When someone who has found a letter or package with a threatening note or large quantity of powdery substance properly contacts local law enforcement, public health authorities will then be able to notify individuals if exposure has been confirmed and treatment is required.