Introduction to PAS 97:2012

A specification for mail screening and security
PAS 97:2012 is a specification for mail screening and security within your organization. It contains everything you need to help identify and implement appropriate postal security and screening measures that address the risks your organization faces.

Even in this electronic age, most businesses and other organizations rely on the ability to receive and send physical items of mail. As an essential part of normal operations, mail presents various potentially significant vulnerabilities. Mail streams into and within an organization provide a vector for malicious attacks and scope for other security incidents, all of which can adversely affect the day-to-day business of the organization, as well as its reputation.

PAS 97 specifies measures to assist businesses and other organizations in identifying and minimizing the impact of items of mail that represent a threat, or could otherwise cause concern or disruption. It also addresses broader postal security measures aimed at ensuring all incoming, outgoing and internal mail streams are managed so as to minimize the risk of loss or theft of valuable or sensitive items or information.

The focus is on letters and small parcels entering the organization from any external source, including public/commercial postal services, by hand or by courier delivery.

PAS 97:2012 was commissioned by the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI), who provided the initial draft for development. Its production was facilitated by the British Standards Institution (BSI) with input from a panel of industry experts1).

This booklet provides an introduction to PAS 97. The full version is available to order from [http://shop.bsigroup.com/pas97](http://shop.bsigroup.com/pas97).

Who is it for?

PAS 97 gives requirements and recommendations for mail screening, set in the broader context of postal security. It is targeted at those responsible for planning, delivering or procuring mail handling and screening services within organizations, as well as commercial providers of such services.

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1) See back cover
**Summary of PAS 97 process**

**Decision to consider developing and implementing mail screening and security measures**

1. **Assess the risk to the organization from postal threats**
   - Understand the postal threat
   - Understand the ways in which items of mail may cause concern, disruption, or harm
   - Assess the extent to which the organization is a target
   - Understand the organization’s mail streams
   - Assess vulnerability of the organization to, and impact on the organization of, suspicious or hazardous mail
   - Understand the significance to the organization of valuable items and sensitive information that may be sent or received by post

2. **Select Screening Levels commensurate with the risk**

3. **Identify suitable location for screening facility and appropriate Physical Security Measures**

4. **Formally record the organization’s requirements for mail screening and security**

5. **Implement mail screening and security measures**
   - General postal security measures
   - Management and responsibility
   - Internal provision vs. outsourcing
   - Operating procedures and emergency procedures
   - Mail room location, design, layout and construction
   - Screening methods and equipment
   - Human factors
   - Health and safety

6. **Review regularly, and in response to postal security incidents and significant internal or external changes**
Screening Levels

A key component of PAS 97 is a series of screening levels.

Generally the greater the commitment of resource and effort to mail screening, the greater the protection that is likely to be achieved. It is, however, important to achieve an appropriate level of screening, balancing the threat with the need for operational efficiency, whilst having the flexibility to adapt screening in response to changes to the threat or business requirements.

It may be appropriate to apply different levels of screening to different mail streams, to reflect the different risks associated with the various streams.

What are discrete threat objects and “white powders”?

From a screening perspective it is helpful to consider hazardous items and materials as falling into two categories:

1. Discrete threat objects and bulk materials;
2. “White powders”.

Discrete threat objects and bulk materials covers items and bulk quantities of hazardous materials whose presence should be clearly discernible when mail is X-rayed, even if a large volume of mail is screened at once.

This category includes:

- Explosive and incendiary devices;
- Firearms and ammunition;
- Knives;
- Blades and other sharp items (e.g. syringe needles, broken glass);
- Offensive material (e.g. faeces, urine);
- Bulk chemicals – toxic, corrosive or otherwise harmful, including narcotics;
- Bulk biological materials;
- Bulk radiological (radioactive) materials.

People often refer to “white powders” in the context of postal threats. These can include hazardous chemical (including explosive or narcotic), biological or radiological materials, as well as benign materials. Such materials may not be “white” and may not be “powders”; materials may be crystalline (e.g. sugar), oily or waxy residues, or liquids, and may be present in sufficiently small quantities as to be undetectable by typical X-ray-based screening processes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Screening method</th>
<th>Measures common to all screening levels</th>
<th>Protection afforded against</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>No screening, other than basic, but widespread staff awareness of general postal threats</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Very low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>• External visual inspection of every item.</td>
<td>Very good to excellent</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• X-ray anything of concern, especially larger items (packets, parcels, etc).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>• X-ray all items in bulk/large batches initially.</td>
<td>Very good to excellent</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• X-ray again individually or in smaller batches if anything anomalous is observed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• X-ray larger packets and parcels individually.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Level 2 followed by:</td>
<td>(Negligible further benefit)</td>
<td>Low to moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• External visual inspection of every item.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• For each item, tap to encourage any powders or similar materials to move to one edge/corner, and feel for presence of any such anomalies.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• For any items identified as anomalous, open side of envelope or packaging by cutting, and without removing, examine contents visually; remove contents if satisfied safe to do so; inspect outer wrapping and contents for any further evidence of powders and other anomalous items or materials.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Level 2 followed by:</td>
<td>(Negligible further benefit)</td>
<td>Moderate to good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• External visual inspection of every item.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• For each item, remove a corner of the envelope/packaging by cutting; tap gently to encourage any powders or other materials and small items to move to that corner, and inspect visually for presence of any such anomalies.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• For any items identified as anomalous, open side of envelope or packaging by cutting, and without removing, examine contents visually; remove contents if satisfied safe to do so; inspect outer wrapping and contents for any further evidence of powders and other anomalous items or materials.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Level 2 followed by:</td>
<td>(Negligible further benefit)</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• External visual inspection of every item.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• For each item, open side of envelope or packaging by cutting, and without removing, examine contents visually; remove contents if satisfied safe to do so; inspect outer wrapping and contents for any further evidence of powders and other anomalous items or materials.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Protective measures

Once the different mail streams within the organization have been identified and assessed, and the appropriate screening levels assigned, the next step is to specify and implement the necessary screening and security measures and facilities.

Several classes of physical protection measures are detailed in PAS 97; these predominantly relate to the design, construction (including ventilation) and layout of the mail room, but also include personal protective measures.

Included in PAS 97

- Description of physical protection classes
- Recommended minimum physical protection classes for each screening level
- Example schematic layouts for mail room design

Recording the organization’s requirements

It is important for the organization to formally record its requirements for mail screening and security to enable unambiguous implementation either by its own staff, or by a contractor. The information to be recorded includes:

- A summary of the mail streams, including volumes and time constraints;
- A summary of the threats the organization faces;
- The required level of screening for each mail stream;
- The physical protective measures associated with the mail handling and screening processes;
- The location of the mail screening activity;
- Other general postal security measures.

It is also important that organizations consider postal security as an integral part of the wider security measures.

Included in PAS 97

- General postal security measures
- Management and responsibility
- Operating procedures (including emergency procedures)
- Mail room/screening facility location, design, layout and construction
- Screening methods and equipment
- Human factors (including staff training and process ergonomics)
- Health and safety considerations

Implementation

Once the organization’s requirements for mail security and screening have been formally stated, the various aspects of implementation can be addressed.

Many of the strands will be interrelated so it is important not to consider them in isolation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action upon discovery of any suspicious delivered item from <a href="http://www.cpni.gov.uk">www.cpni.gov.uk</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You could discover a suspicious item in a mail room, or anywhere else in the building – ensure you have appropriate emergency response plans in place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid unnecessary handling and X-raying:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• if you are holding the item, put it down on a cleared flat surface;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• keep it separate so it is easily identifiable;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• do not move it, even to X-ray it;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• if it is in an X-ray facility, leave it there.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Move away immediately:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• clear immediate area and each adjacent room, including rooms above and below;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• if there is any suggestion of chemical, biological or radiological materials, move those directly affected to a safe location close to the incident – keep these individuals separate from those not involved;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• prevent others approaching or accessing the cleared areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not use mobile phones or two-way radios in the cleared area or within fifteen metres of the suspect package.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate regularly with staff, visitors and the public.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notify police:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• if the item has been opened, or partially opened prior to being deemed suspicious, it is vital that this is communicated to the police;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ensure informants and witnesses remain available to brief the police, and that the accuracy of their observations is preserved: encourage witnesses to immediately record their observations in writing, and discourage them from discussing the incident or their observations with others prior to the arrival of the police.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further information provided in PAS 97

PAS 97 includes annexes as follows:

- **Annex A** – Sources of advice and information
- **Annex B** – Possible indicators that a delivered item may be of concern
- **Annex C** – Action upon discovery of any suspicious delivered item
- **Annex D** – Mail facility layout and construction to minimize the effects of an explosive device
- **Annex E** – Additional information on X-ray machines for mail screening
PAS 97 provides a comprehensive framework to help organizations identify and implement effective postal security measures to reduce their vulnerability to postal threats.

Acknowledgement

PAS 97 was commissioned by the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI), who provided the initial draft for development. Its production was facilitated by the British Standards Institution (BSI). In addition we would like to thank the following contributing organizations:

- Arup
- BP
- G4S
- Home Office
- MFD Group
- Palace of Westminster
- Pitney Bowes
- Royal Mail
- Sister Banks Group
- Swiss Post Solutions

Acknowledgement is also given to the wider review panel who were consulted in the development of PAS 97.

How to order a copy

Copies of PAS 97 can be purchased from http://shop.bsigroup.com/pas97