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For Immediate Release:  
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## **Suspicious package causes courthouse evacuation; public safety interest paramount**

**Port Orchard, Wash.** -- A suspicious, box-like package that arrived at the Kitsap County Courthouse Friday afternoon raised concerns for the safety of courthouse employees and the visiting public.

The parcel, delivered to the courthouse through the U. S. Postal Service, was addressed to Kitsap County Prosecutor Russ Hauge. The arrival of the item was not expected. A name and return address on the package indicated that it had been sent by a prison inmate at Clallam Bay Corrections Center, Clallam Bay, Wash.

The box was moved outside the building to a more remote position at the southwest corner of the parking area behind the courthouse.

Officers from Port Orchard Police Department responded to the courthouse to establish a control perimeter and to coordinate further emergency response. In a preventive measure to ensure the safety of everyone inside the courthouse complex, Port Orchard Police subsequently issued an order to evacuate the building shortly after 3 p.m.

Fire and rescue units from Fire District 7 (South Kitsap) staged at an adjacent county facility. County officials, including Commissioners Chris Endresen, Jan Angel and Patty Lent, together with county departmental administrators and elected office holders, established a temporary command center in a county office building nearby.

Local law enforcement explosives technicians were not immediately available; a request for assistance was made to military authorities. Technicians from the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Mobile Unit 11 detachment at Naval Base Kitsap – Bangor, responded to the courthouse to attempt to determine the package's contents and, if necessary, render it safe or remove it from the premises.

In the interest of public safety and for the accountability of personnel, county commissioners authorized the release of courthouse employees for the remainder of the workday. Some employees were obliged to wait until the situation was safely resolved before they could return to the courthouse to get their personal possessions, secure their office spaces, and retrieve their vehicles that had been parked inside the safety exclusion zone established by police and EOD.

The Navy EOD technicians were able to determine that the parcel posed no threat -- it contained legal documents regarding a 1996 homicide case.

Robert Garry Carter, now age 52, is serving a sentence of life imprisonment for murder, in connection with the death of 34 year-old William Dean Leiter on April 20, 1996, in Central Kitsap. Carter is presently incarcerated at Clallam Bay. It is unknown why the package of legal documents pertaining to Carter's conviction was mailed to the county prosecutor.

By 5:10 p.m. the courthouse was re-opened to employees.

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