



F06-01-MS A Privacy Breach in Every Double-stuffed Envelope

As a result of human error in the mail sorting room, a public body inadvertently double stuffed envelopes containing medical test results. The individuals receiving the envelopes received their own results and one other person's results. In total, 477 reports were inappropriately disclosed.

The OIPC immediately looked into the matter. With our assistance, the public body followed the four key steps we recommended for responding to privacy breaches (see our publication "Key Steps for Physicians in Responding to Privacy Breaches", found on our website at: [http://www.oipc.bc.ca/pdfs/private/PhysicianKeyStepsPrivacyBreach\(June2006\).pdf](http://www.oipc.bc.ca/pdfs/private/PhysicianKeyStepsPrivacyBreach(June2006).pdf)).

First, it took immediate mitigation steps by changing two key mail room processes and by contacting all individuals who had received other people's information in order to retrieve the medical test results.

As a second step, the public body assessed the risks associated with the breach and used that information to determine that notification was required and to identify longer-term strategies to reduce the chance of a recurrence of this type of error.

The third key step taken was to notify not only our office but also the individuals whose information was inappropriately disclosed and the doctors who had ordered the tests. The notifications advised that the breach had occurred, described the steps taken to mitigate the problem and provided contact information for further assistance if needed.

Finally, the public body developed several new mail room processes and changes to the programming of the mail-sorting computer as a further safeguard against error.