

POLICE

Hand cream not a hazard

*Mystery box treated
with kid gloves*

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN
STAFF WRITER

It cost close to \$19,000 to determine a suspicious package found by a cleaner at Pacific Mall last weekend contained nothing but hand cream.

And among the many questions still to be answered in this bizarre case is, who will pay the tab?

A female cleaner came upon the plastic-wrapped box Saturday night in an office area of the mall at Kennedy Road and Steeles Avenue.

She noticed a strange smell and when she opened the plastic and the box, she discovered a tubular object.

But she was stopped short by the warning printed on the object: Do Not Open. Contains Virus.

After alerting security, the woman said she felt her fingertips becoming numb. That's when police were called.

She was taken to Scarborough Grace Hospital, where she spent two days under observation as a precaution.

Police enlisted the help of Markham firefighters, who are trained in the handling of hazardous materials, as well as trained Toronto police officers who secured the package in a special container while dozens of calls were made including one to the Centre for Disease Control in Atlanta — to determine what should be done next.

"Who knows what it may have contained — especially after the cleaner reported a reaction. We had to go this route to protect the public," Det. Sgt. Bruce Powley said.

Approval was given for a Hamilton-based company, Team 1 Environmental Services, to pick up the item and transport it to their facility.

Tests determined the jelly-like substance was 100 per cent hand cream, Det. Const. Keith Freemantle said.

Removal of the item cost an approximate \$7,000 while the analysis is estimated at close to \$12,000.

Teacher loses licence over sex with student

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN
STAFF WRITER

A Unionville High School teacher charged criminally after having sex with a student has had his licence suspended for 18 months.

The Ontario Teachers College handed down the penalty Tuesday after a disciplinary committee found David Peckham guilty of professional misconduct.

Peckham, a Markham resident, was charged with sexual exploitation in May 1997 after a two-month affair with a 17-year-old student. He also sent explicitly sexual e-mails to the girl.

The student's parents alerted police. In February, 1998, Peckham pleaded guilty to that charge as well as breaching a court order to stay away from the girl.

He was handed a one-year suspended sentence, ordered to get counselling and not be in a position of authority with anyone under 18.

Peckham, who worked at the high school for 18 years, was fired with cause from his position as computer science department head soon after the charges were laid.



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ADVERTISING CORRECTION

In our Spring Preview insert (promo #676) included in this newspaper, please note: Page 58 - DKNY ties, \$45 to \$55 - was incorrectly described. Copy should read: "DKNY ties, \$55 to \$62.50". We sincerely apologize to our valued customers and regret any inconvenience or confusion this may have caused.

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