Anthrax in the U.S. Postal System

Lessons That Stunned Us
U.S. Postal Service

- Delivers >200 billion pieces of mail/year to 134 million addresses
- Serves 7 million customers daily at 38,000 postal retail outlets
- Employs @800,000 career employees
- Delivers 2,300 pieces of mail/day/carrier to 500 addresses
U.S. Postal Service

- Handles 46% of world’s card and letter mail volume
- Transports mail by airplane, truck, railroad, boat, and mule (Grand Canyon)
November 7, 2001
FBI tests in the AFCS area and the DBCS/OSS area were positive on various machines. Tests by NJDHSS and CDC (NIOSH) showed that in other areas of the plant there are also positive results.

Cutaneous cases were found working on the night of October 9th in the DBCS/OSS area (env+) and in the OSS/BCS area. The suspected inhalation case worked in the ISS area (environmental tests above the workstation were positive).
Barcodes

• Series of vertical bars printed on mail to facilitate automated processing
• Can reveal letter’s origination and destination
Processing and Distribution Centers

- Large mail-sorting and dispatching plants
- Serve as hub for mail originating
  - post offices
  - collection boxes
  - customer mailboxes
  - large volume mailers
Epidemiologic Investigations

1. Palm Beach County – 10/3
2. New York City – 10/12
3. Washington, DC – 10/15
4. Trenton, NJ – 10/17
Postal Facilities Tested for *Bacillus anthracis*
EOC International Team:
Number of Responses by Date and Type of Request
Oct. 12 – Nov. 2

Summary: 94 total requests from 61 countries

Number of Calls per Day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Call</th>
<th>Number of Calls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/16</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/18</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/20</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/22</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/24</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>10/26</td>
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<td>10/28</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Request</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anthrax vaccine</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bioterrorism preparedness</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental/occupational request</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lab-related</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request for information</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Requests</strong></td>
<td><strong>94</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The chart shows the number of calls per day from October 12 to November 2, with the highest number of calls on October 20. The table lists the number of calls for each type of request, with 'Request for information' being the most frequent at 30 calls.
Postal Workers and Mailhandlers
Mail Industry

- Employs 9 million people
- Accounts for 8% gross domestic product
- Anthrax Hoax: 132 powder-laden packages sent clinics in at least three states product
Bioterrorism-associated Anthrax Cases

Inhalation Disease
- Postal worker/Mail handler
- Non mail handler

Date of Onset

NYC letters*

Senate letters*

*Postmarked date of known contaminated letters.
Anthrax Cases

Cases

Date of Onset

NYC letters postmarked Trenton, NJ
Daschle letter postmarked Trenton, NJ
Daschle letter processed Brentwood facility

NYC
NJ
FL
DC

9/17 9/21 9/25 9/29 10/3 10/7 10/11 10/15 10/19 10/23 10/27
Anthrax and the Mail
IMPACT ON POSAL WORKERS AND MAIL HANDLERS

• Cases of inhalation or cutaneous anthrax
• Deaths among postal workers
• Postal facilities closed due to environmental contamination with *Bacillus anthracis*
• Numerous inquiries to CDC, health departments and US Postal Service (USPS) regarding mail and workplace safety
Anthrax and the Mail
PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDELINES

• OCTOBER 26: Investigation of Bioterrorism-Related Anthrax and Interim Guidelines for Exposure Management and Antimicrobial Therapy, October 2001
• OCTOBER 31: CDC Interim Recommendations for Protecting Workers from Exposure to Bacillus anthracis in Work Sites Where Mail is Handled or Processed
• NOVEMBER 4: Interim Guidelines for Investigation of and Response to Bacillus anthracis Exposures
EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF POSTAL WORKERS

- Basics of anthrax
- Personal protective equipment and workplace safety
- Recognition/handling suspicious mail
- Postexposure management
Conclusions

• USPS used as vehicle for executing anthrax bioterror attack
• Intentional delivery of *B. anthracis* resulted in illness and death among mailhandlers and others, contamination and closure of postal facilities, curtailment in mail services, implementation of new security measures
Conclusions

• Partnerships with public and private sector partners is essential to adequately prepare and respond to bioterrorist attacks
“This has been a year of challenge. It has been a year of success. It has been a year of change.”

Chief Financial Officer, USPS
November 9, 2001