



POSTAL NEWS

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USPS, FEDERAL HEALTH AGENCIES AGREE:

FURTHER SAMPLING FOR ANTHRAX SPORES AT POSTAL FACILITIES NOT NECESSARY

WASHINGTON, DC – A group of federal health, safety, and security agencies – working with the Postal Service – reported today that further testing is not necessary at postal facilities originally deemed free of anthrax spores following the attacks of 2001.

The report – which responds to Government Accountability Office (GAO) recommendations that the Postal Service reassess the risk levels to employees and customers in those facilities – was prepared by the Postal Service in concert with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Environmental Protection Agency, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the American Postal Workers Union, the National Association of Letter Carriers, the National Postal Mail Handlers Union, and the National Rural Letter Carriers Association.

Among the recommendations delivered before a congressional subcommittee meeting in May 2003, the GAO requested that the Postal Service and other relevant agencies:

- Reassess the risk level for postal workers and the public in tested facilities;
- Reconsider the advisability of retesting those facilities; and
- Communicate the results of the reassessment to employees and to the public.

The workgroup concluded that the anthrax risk level for postal workers in the facilities tested, and the general public served by those facilities, is negligible and that additional testing would not increase the safety of postal premises for employees or customers. Factors contributing to the workgroup's conclusions included the facts that:

- No facilities were deemed free of anthrax based solely on a single sampling result;
- Continuation of illness tracking by the Postal Service and federal, state, and local health agencies reveal that no epidemiological evidence of inhalation or cutaneous anthrax has occurred in postal employees or customers since November 2001; and,
- The Postal Service continues to use anthrax-related engineering controls and work practices that reduce the potential for a re-aerosolization event.

A copy of the full report is available online at the Postal Service web site – www.usps.com.

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