THE CLEAN UP OF THE U.S. POSTAL SERVICE'S BRENTWOOD PROCESSING AND DISTRIBUTION CENTER

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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THE CLEAN UP OF THE U.S. POSTAL SERVICE'S BRENTWOOD PROCESSING AND DISTRIBUTION CENTER

FRIDAY, JULY 26, 2002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:19 a.m., at the Gallaudet University Kellogg Conference Center, Washington, DC, Hon. Eleanor Holmes Norton (acting chairwoman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representative Norton.

Staff present: Russell Smith, staff director; Heea Vazirani-Fales, counsel; Robert White, communications director; Matthew Batt, legislative assistant/clerk; Shalley Kim, staff assistant; Jon Bouker, minority counsel; Denise Wilson, minority professional staff member; and Jean Gosa, minority assistant clerk.

Ms. NORTON. I want to call this hearing to order and explain why I am the one calling it to order. The subcommittee chair, Representative Morella, of course has every intention of being here even now, but the homeland security bill, which has some amendments that she has submitted, has been moved up and is on the floor as we speak.

This hearing on the cleanup of the Brentwood postal facility and the effects of the tragedy and of the cleanup on employees and residents and customers we believe had to go forward in any case, particularly considering that cleanup is about to begin and that it would seriously inconvenience members of the public and witnesses if in light of the schedule of the Congress we were to postpone this hearing.

I must say, I have an amendment as well on the floor that has been incorporated into an important set of amendments as an amendment to preserve the same level of pay for civil servants who get moved, as they now have, when consolidation occurs. I also would very much want to be there. The difference between Ms. Morella and me is that she is allowed to vote on her amendment and I would not be allowed to vote anyway, so we thought we would just as well start the hearing.

But before we take up any business with respect to Brentwood, I would ask you to take a moment of silence in memory of Joseph Curseen Jr. and Thomas Morris Jr., the two Postal Service workers we lost at Brentwood in October.

Thank you.

I want to thank our chair, Representative Connie Morella, for responding to my request for a field hearing on the Brentwood facility and the tragedy that occurred there. The Postal Service and District officials have had meetings in the Brentwood community, but this is the first congressional hearing on Brentwood over which the Congress has jurisdiction.

I asked for this hearing in the field, as it is called, which brings the Congress to the community, rather than the other way around, to facilitate attendance by residents and employees and to stress the importance of ongoing congressional oversight over Brentwood itself. I am grateful to Gallaudet President I. King Jordan and the Kellogg Conference Center for contributing the excellent space that we are using today for our hearing in a beautiful facility located in the ward 5 Brentwood community not far from the post office itself.

This hearing comes as the cleanup is set to begin. However, there are many questions that remain unanswered following the anthrax tragedy. I will be particularly interested today in the health effects on employees and residents who may have been exposed, on what measures are planned to prevent any recurrence of a bioterrorist threat or events, and on what measures will be taken to protect the community from the substances to be used in the Brentwood decontamination process.

This hearing also will serve an important purpose if it helps to separate fact from conjecture, and if it helps to relieve fears among employees and residents. Anthrax is too serious a threat for armchair views about cause and effect. Even the experts were wrong on anthrax. The underdeveloped science led them to focus on the site where the deadly envelope was opened, not on Brentwood where it was processed.

Ironically, no one died or even became ill in the Senate Hart Building, but we lost two postal workers and two others became seriously ill at Brentwood. The anthrax experience encourages caution in our claims concerning what caused or will cause what effects. Brentwood teaches us all—experts, employees and residents alike—that understanding anthrax is a scientific work in progress.

I am particularly concerned that some employees and residents, whether exposed or not, fear that their health may be in danger now or in the future. In particular, the experience of African Americans in this country with health abuses by government officials from forced sterilization to the Tuskegee syphilis experiment has left residual doubts concerning government assurances during health controversies. The Brentwood tragedy did not help to allay such skepticism.

Yet despite the incomplete scientific understanding that led experts to underestimate the dangers of anthrax at Brentwood, the only way to get beyond our fears is to seek and use the best scientific knowledge available. Therefore, today I will ask the Centers for Disease Control to do a controlled study to assure that there are no residual effects on the health of employees and Postal Service customers now or in the future, resulting from anthrax contamination or from substances used to decontaminate anthrax.

There are a number of ways to accomplish this purpose, including an epidemiological study of the affected D.C. workers and residents here, compared to a comparable population where no anthrax contamination occurred. If mortality and health results are similar, there would be some reassurance concerning the health of the affected population here. If not, we would have reason to do further investigation here.

Brentwood is vastly different from Hart in size, configuration, purpose and machinery. However, Hart, where Senate offices are located, became the guinea pig for an anthrax cleanup. Every precaution was taken and no cost was spared there, we are told. The Hart Building has become the gold standard for cleanup, detection and prevention. Members of the Senate and their staffs and their loved ones and their children now go into Hart every day. We must insist that no less be done for Brentwood.

Similarly, Capitol Hill residents were the first whose community experienced a biohazard cleanup of anthrax, using substances that will be applied at Brentwood. The experience of that ward 6 D.C. community with preparation for the cleanup and its effects since, should be instructive to the ward 5 Brentwood community. We must take no chances at Brentwood. The Brentwood tragedy revealed just how thin our knowledge of anthrax was. We knew too little a year ago and we still know too little. For example, the government cannot yet identify who sent the letter.

The price employees paid at Brentwood in loss of life and health and in continuing fears, anxiety and dislocation has been too high. Today, employees, residents and this subcommittee are owed the highest degree of assurance of a safe cleanup, followed by a safe facility and a safe community. We welcome today's witnesses and will listen with great interest their concerns and to the remedies for those concerns.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Eleanor Holmes Norton follows:]

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

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COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

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CIVIL SERVICE AND AGENCY ORGANIZATION

Opening Statement of Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton
Subcommittee on the District of Columbia Hearing on the
"Cleanup of the U.S. Postal Service's Brentwood Processing and Distribution Center"

July 26, 2002

I want to thank our Chair, Representative Connie Morella for responding to my request for a field hearing on the Brentwood facility and the tragedy that occurred there. The Postal Service and District officials have had meetings in the Brentwood community, but this is the first congressional hearing on Brentwood, over which the Congress has jurisdiction. I asked for this hearing "in the field," which brings the Congress to the community, rather than the other way around, to facilitate attendance by residents and employees, and to stress the importance of ongoing congressional oversight over Brentwood itself. I am grateful to Gallaudet President, I. King Jordan and the Kellogg Conference Center for contributing this excellent space for a hearing in a beautiful facility located in the Ward 5 Brentwood community not far from the Post Office.

This hearing comes as the clean-up is set to begin. However, there are many questions that remain unanswered following the anthrax tragedy. I will be particularly interested today in the health effects on employees and residents who may have been exposed, on what measures are planned to prevent any recurrence of bioterrorist threats and events, and on what measures will be taken to protect the community from the substances to be used in the Brentwood decontamination process.

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I am particularly concerned that some employees and residents, whether exposed or not, fear that their health may be in danger now or in the future. In particular, the experience of African Americans in this country with health abuses by government officials—from forced

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sterilization to the Tuskegee syphilis experiment—has left residual doubts concerning government assurances during health controversies. The Brentwood tragedy did not help to allay such skepticism.

Yet despite the incomplete scientific understanding that led experts to underestimate the dangers of anthrax at Brentwood, the only way to get beyond our fears is to seek and use the best scientific knowledge available today. Therefore today, I will ask the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to do a controlled study to assure that there are no residual effects on the health of employees and Postal Service customers now or in the future resulting from anthrax contamination or from substances used to decontaminate anthrax. There are a number of ways to accomplish this purpose, including an epidemiological study of the affected D.C. workers and residents here compared to a comparable population where no anthrax contamination occurred. If mortality and health results are similar, there would be some reassurance concerning the health of the affected population here.

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The price employees paid at Brentwood in loss of life, and health and in continuing fears, anxiety, and dislocation have been too high. Today, employees, residents, and this subcommittee are owed the highest degree of assurance of a safe clean-up followed by a safe facility. We welcome today's witnesses and will listen with great interest to learn both of their concerns and of the remedies for those concerns.

Ms. NORTON. I would like to remind witnesses that the rules of the Committee on Government Reform require that all witnesses be administered an oath prior to testifying. I am pleased to recognize our first panel of witnesses, the Honorable Vincent Orange, Sr., who represents ward 5 and the Brentwood community—I see he has not come yet; Thomas Day, vice president for engineering, U.S. Postal Service; also Dennis Baca of the U.S. Postal Service, environmental engineer at Brentwood; Ted Gordon, senior deputy director for public health assurance, the D.C. Department of Health; also Dr. Vincent Nathan, assistant deputy director for the Environmental Health Administration; Peter LaPorte, D.C. emergency management; Dr. Rosemary K. Sokas, associate director of science, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, CDC; also Dr. Brad Perkins, chief of meningitis and special pathogen branch, division of bacteria and microbic diseases, National Center for Infectious Disease Centers at the CDC; Thomas Voltaggio, administrator, Environmental Protection Agency Region III; also Marcus Aquino, EPA onsite coordinator.

I would ask the first panel of witnesses if you would stand and raise your right hands to take the oath.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much. Let the record reflect that each witness answered this question in the affirmative. You may be seated.

We would like to hear first from Mr. Thomas Day, vice president of engineering, U.S. Postal Service.

STATEMENTS OF THOMAS DAY, VICE PRESIDENT OF ENGINEERING, U.S. POSTAL SERVICE; TED GORDON, SENIOR DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR PUBLIC HEALTH ASSURANCE, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH; DR. ROSEMARY K. SOKAS, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR SCIENCE, NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH, CDC; THOMAS VOLTAGGIO, ADMINISTRATOR, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY REGION III; AND VINCENT B. ORANGE, WARD 5, COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Mr. DAY. Good morning, Congresswoman Norton. Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you. We look forward to talking about the cleanup efforts here at Brentwood, as well as our Hamilton processing center in New Jersey. Although he is not here, I would also like to thank Councilmember Orange for helping us to hold a community meeting in the past on this important issue.

I do have a prepared statement that I am going to submit for the record, and as discussed with the staff, I will be making a brief presentation. Before I get into that, just let me briefly say a few words of thanks and praise to our own employees. We do share your concerns about our postal employees here at the Brentwood facility, as well as the surrounding communities.

I think as everyone knows, in spite of the anthrax attack that took place in October, postal workers around the country continued to provide service and do their daily round to get the mail delivered. That was especially true in Manhattan, New Jersey, Connecticut and here in Washington. Every postal center around the

country could have been part of that deadly attack, and those workers continued to do their jobs.

We are particularly proud of the efforts of our employees here in Washington. Their determination and performance is truly outstanding. It is heroic and represents the very best in public service. So my personal thanks and praise to each and every employee of the Washington, DC, post office.

Let me now begin my presentation. We began with the initial management decisions of the Postal Service going back to October. When we became aware of the severity of the situation on October 21, we did close and secure the Brentwood facility. We relocated workers to surrounding facilities and we began the actions to sanitize the facility.

Congresswoman, as you mentioned, it is important that we use the very best and brightest that are available, and we have worked with various other Federal agencies listed on the chart—Health and Human Services, both the CDC and NIOSH. We have worked with the local official in the D.C. Department of Health, EPA, OSHA, Department of Defense, and particularly AFRRI—Armed Forces Radiobiological Research Institute. So we have reached out to get the very best experts we can.

In terms of communicating with both the public and our employees, again thanks to Councilmember Orange, we did have a ward 5 community meeting on March 27. We conducted five employee town hall meetings in May. We held a further community update on June 27. It is all part of our ongoing commitment to the partnerships and working with community employees' unions and the leadership teams, particularly the ones set up here in the District.

Let me get into a summary of our anthrax response at Brentwood. It is a very big picture—I do not want to get into the details. Again, the first thing we did was to seal the building. During the process that has gone on in the last several months, we have cleaned known hot spots. We have gone in there and gotten to the very hottest spots where the contamination occurred and gotten them cleaned up.

The other thing we did was to get materials out of the building—basic materials like mail; also the equipment that we could remove from the facility was removed, decontaminated, and in the case of things like trays that letters are sorted into, they were decontaminated and then destroyed.

In the same timeframe, we have also been working with companies that have been under contract now to install the gas treatment equipment itself. The next step, of course, that has been ongoing is to get everyone trained for that process. We are now at the final step, as was announced yesterday, we are doing a limited test on Monday to test this process to assure that the equipment works properly and does what we expect. We believe that will go quite well.

Assuming it does go well, we will move forward to do the full treatment of the facility—the injection or the introduction of the chlorine dioxide gas to the facility, assuring that is dispersed throughout the building, held at the right concentration, temperature and humidity levels, and held there for 12 hours. That is the

gold standard that was established at Hart. We are following the same standard that was followed at the Hart Building.

To be sure that process works as we intend, there is an extensive post-treatment testing procedure we will follow. This probably has been one of the critical issues we have worked with the local District officials on is to determine the extent of the testing that should be done in the facility, how many and where, to be sure that when the treatment is done, it has been effective.

We have come up with a plan that we believe is scientifically valid and will truly indicate that the facility has been cleaned. To be clear, if those tests come back with anything other than 100 percent killed, then the fumigation will not be deemed effective and we will do it again.

Also, to point out that after the gas is introduced to the building, the other part of the process after the 12-hour period is to withdraw the gas, scrub it or neutralize it so that what you are left with are harmless byproducts, essentially salt and water. When we do get that final certification from the D.C. health officials that the building is clean, we will then begin the process to get the Brentwood facility reactivated and back into use.

What you see before you now is a floor plan of Brentwood. The red dots are where we have tested throughout the facility and found hot spots. Just to emphasize, we have focused on some of those key hot spots. One that I think many people are aware of is the machine, DBCS–17, that is a delivery bar code sorter——

Ms. NORTON. Could you define "hot spots"? Does that mean anthrax is there?

Mr. DAY. Anthrax positive, yes.

DBCS–17 was where the mail was first sorted. You can see the cluster of positives that came up there. And of course, this was government mail, so our government mail section in the building also had numerous hot spots. But you can see that they are dispersed throughout the facility—just to emphasize, that is the need to fumigate the entire facility. A critical aspect of this treatment is not just that we decontaminate the interior of the building, but that while this treatment process is going on, that we need to monitor the air outside the building to be assured that none of the chlorine dioxide gas is escaping.

Now, not only are we doing the monitoring, but what has been a major activity that has gone on is the contractors have spent months sealing every potential escape point in the building. I will show you some pictures very quickly of what that means. Further, before we introduce actual chlorine dioxide, we are going to test that by injecting a neutral substance into the building to make sure nothing is escaping. But further, when the actual treatment is going on, we will do air monitoring.

This chart you see depicts the radius around the building where we will do that. In addition as was done at the Hart Building, we will use what EPA calls the TAGA bus that will do mobile air monitoring around the facility. We have set an extremely low threshold, well below any level of harmful effect, that could potentially cause a problem. If we detect even at that very low threshold, we will shut down the process. We will do continuous air monitoring throughout the treatment.

Again, let me just go through some pictures to give you some visual ideas on what is going on. This is the actual chlorine dioxide distribution system. This is actually Brentwood itself. It has been assembled on the south side. This is the equipment that is also, then, on the north side of the building. An idea of what we have done in the interim, early on in the process when we first closed down the building, we did it on very quick notice, obviously. There was a great deal of mail that was inside the facility.

This is what was on the platform when we shut down the building. We have gotten the mail out of there, irradiated it, decontaminated it, as well as the equipment you see there. What you find now is that the platform is an open area. Two things—one, we have decontaminated all those things that were in there; and second, what it has done for us is it gives you a much more open area to fumigate.

Also what has gone on, when I talked earlier about the hot spots where the anthrax was found, this is the kind of spot cleanup that we have conducted on the individual pieces of automated equipment. We get right into the machine itself. It is not just a surface cleaning of the exterior.

In sealing the building, what this picture shows you, where you have got different things that enter in—pipes, electrical, plumbing, whatever around it—the image on the right shows you that even within electrical conduit, you go inside there and seal that up. You can understand, however, that this is a complex process to seal the building. This is a depiction of all the skylights that are on the roof. We have also had to seal doors, windows, and the platform docks.

In terms of other cleanup, we have gotten into the ceilings and rafters to clean those up with spot cleanup. On a daily basis to assure everyone that as these workers to in and do this cleanup, there is a control zone where they enter through and before they come back out of the building, they go through a decontamination area. This is a process that takes place virtually on a daily basis.

The bottom line, and to summarize ongoing actions of the Postal Service, we are introducing other safeguards to our entire system. Two basic things we are doing is that we are working to validate a bio-detection system—a test that is going on right now in Baltimore. Our intent is that system, when validated, and it looks very good that it will be, that we will deploy that nationwide and it will be capable of examining a full range of biological threats, and then the other thing we will do is vacuuming and filtration systems to protect out employees.

We have decontaminated the mail from both Trenton and Brentwood with irradiation. We have worked on emergency response plans. The bottom line is we have gotten back to the process of getting mailed delivered on a daily basis and doing it quite effectively. We want to open the Brentwood facility as soon as possible, but we will only do it when we are absolutely sure that it is safe and we are ready to go back in there.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Day follows:]

Testimony
of
Thomas Day
Vice President, Engineering
United States Postal Service
at the
House Subcommittee on the District of Columbia
Hearing on Brentwood Postal Facility Cleanup
Gallaudet University, Washington, DC
Friday, July 26, 2002

Good morning, Madam Chairwoman and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today about our cleanup efforts at the Brentwood and Hamilton Processing and Distribution Centers.

We share your concerns about the safety of Brentwood and Hamilton employees and the local communities during this complex process.

As you all know, the use of the US Mail to deliver anthrax-tainted letters – to Congress and to media organizations – left a trail of contamination through multiple facilities and numerous pieces of equipment.

Individually and collectively, our organization found itself tested as never before. Tragically, two of our own were taken from us when the mail was used as an instrument of terror.

Yet through it all, the people of the Postal Service have maintained the world's finest postal system. Postal workers around the nation stood united and continued on their daily rounds – in lower Manhattan, in New Jersey, in Connecticut and here in Washington, D.C. – and in every location that became a potential target of this silent, insidious and deadly attack.

I am proud of each one of them but I am particularly proud of the dedication and performance of every postal employee in Washington, D.C. Their determination and performance through the difficult months of last fall were nothing short of heroic and represent the best of public service.

In fact, despite losing their primary processing and distribution center, Capital District postal employees continue to provide mail service to the residents of Washington, D.C., at among the best service levels ever. I salute each and every one of them for a job very well done indeed.

It is a daunting and challenging proposition to protect a system so accessible and so ubiquitous against the threat of bioterrorism. However, as we have learned, we must take the proper actions to limit the vulnerability – and the extent – of any future terror attacks using the mail. The very lives and health of postal employees and the American people can be placed in jeopardy if we do not.

When we learned that the mailstream had been used to carry anthrax, we acted quickly. Our first concern was for the health of our employees and our customers.

We worked closely with public health officials to address the medical needs of our employees and we informed the public of the potential risks as they became known, and how to avoid them.

And, we closed Brentwood and Hamilton. Our goal in all of this was clear – to do everything we could to make sure that our employees were safe and that the mail we were bringing to America's homes, businesses and government officials presented no hazard.

That same goal applies to the cleanup of Brentwood and Hamilton.

The Postal Service is working closely with the EPA and the same contractors who successfully cleaned the Senate Hart Office Building to ensure that we clean both buildings as thoroughly and safely as possible.

To that end, we will use chlorine dioxide gas to fumigate the buildings – the same process used in the decontamination of the Hart Building. We will start with the Brentwood building and then use the same process for Hamilton.

The Brentwood building is currently being prepared for fumigation. We have held, and will continue to hold, community meetings to advise residents and businesses in the Brentwood vicinity of our process and schedule. We are also in the process of beginning those discussions in New Jersey as well.

And to monitor our success, we will use the same standard used on the Hart Building – specifically, no growth of anthrax spores from any of the extensive post-decontamination environmental sampling. The post-fumigation sampling protocol for Brentwood alone will require approximately 6,700 samples from locations throughout the building.

As for when we will reopen Brentwood, keep in mind that the decontamination of the Hart Building required the fumigation of less than 100,000 cubic feet of space; the cleanup at Brentwood requires the fumigation of 17.5 million cubic feet of space. Hamilton will present similar challenges.

So, while I am unable, at this time, to commit to a specific date for reopening these buildings, I can tell you that the Postal Service remains committed to reopening both facilities.

I want to be clear on one essential point. Neither I, nor any postal manager, will send our employees back into any facility unless we first receive assurances from our experts that it is safe to do so. That is our first priority.

In addition, we will do nothing that could threaten the safety of local residents. Let me emphasize this – we are extremely confident that the fumigation will not endanger anyone who lives or works in the areas surrounding these buildings, for five reasons:

First, we are using chlorine dioxide gas in these facilities at levels far below the concentrations that would be flammable or explosive. And, to be extra safe, we are delivering the gas to the site in the form of four separate chemicals that will be mixed on site as needed.

Second, chlorine dioxide gas is a well known chemical that has been safely and widely used for more than 70 years to disinfect the nation's food and water. More than 900 water treatment facilities around the nation use the chemical every day.

Third, over the past several months, contractors have carefully sealed every opening and every crack in the Brentwood building, and all possible escape routes for the gas, to ensure that during fumigation, the gas stays where it's needed – inside the building. The same process is underway in Hamilton. In addition, we will conduct a validation of the sealing process using a non-hazardous substance to ensure there are no leaks before the gas is used.

Fourth, several redundant systems will be in place to monitor the air in the area surrounding the Brentwood building, to immediately alert contractors if the gas begins to escape the building through a small leak somewhere.

Fifth, if a leak were detected, the gas emitters would be immediately shut down, the gas would be neutralized, and fumigation would stop until the problem was fully resolved.

Safety is our watchword throughout this process.

Now, as we look to the future, we want to do whatever we can to reduce the threat of these sorts of attacks happening again through the mail.

Needless to say, compromising the U.S. Mail system has the potential to adversely impact the entire nation through a single terrorist act, so we take threats to this system very seriously.

Last year, Congress provided the Postal Service with $500 million in the Fiscal Year 2002 Department of Defense Appropriations bill. The conference report required that the Postal Service prepare a comprehensive Emergency Preparedness Plan which we submitted to Congress on March 6, 2002.

The Postal Inspection Service provided the Postal Service with a threat assessment, which serves as a basis for our Emergency Preparedness Plan. The Postal Inspection Service maintains a continuous liaison with all appropriate federal law enforcement agencies and monitors threats to the nation and its mail.

The plan notes that the greatest opportunities to prevent or limit the damage of covert nuclear, biological, chemical, or conventional explosive attacks exist during the first phases of the incident.

Therefore, our Emergency Preparedness Plan places a premium on threat identification, combined with protection to both employees and customers of the Postal Service at the earliest feasible point in our distribution system.

The Postal Service is looking at a variety of process changes and technology initiatives that can be applied to the threat of chemical, biological and radiological hazards in the mail.

As described by the plan, the Postal Service is currently testing bio-detection technology on automated processing equipment at our Baltimore mail processing plant.

In addition, we are testing filtration devices to improve our employee safety and to minimize cross-contamination of the mail. We anticipate a contract award by the end of September.

Careful review and consideration is being given to all currently available processes and technologies. The paramount conclusion is that no single solution exists to solve the complex problem of using the mail as a tool of terrorism. Further, no solution or even series of solutions can totally eliminate the threat, but they can certainly minimize the consequences.

In addition we are in the process of updating a detailed threat assessment to review threats that may impinge on the mail, including the full spectrum of biological, chemical, explosive, and radiological threats. The assessment considers threats that may be directed at the Postal Service or may use the Postal Service as a vehicle.

As a result of this assessment, we will propose steps that may be taken to counter the threats and develop an overall risk/cost/benefit analysis, including an estimate of system effectiveness for protecting employees and customers, and for ensuring the continuity of postal operations in the event of a terror attack.

The viability of the Postal Service, and its value to the American people, is dependent upon an open and accessible system. Extreme procedural changes could reduce threats, but would significantly damage the usefulness of the mail to the American people – and the American economy.

Since the anthrax attacks, the Postal Service has worked closely with both the Office of Homeland Security and the President's Office of Science and Technology Policy. We provided both of these organizations with copies of our Emergency Preparedness Plan and followed up with briefings to their staffs.

Building upon our Emergency Preparedness Plan, we worked with Homeland Security in the development of a national Critical Infrastructure Plan. The Office of Science Technology and Policy has established the Inter-Agency Working Group for the protection of vulnerable systems, a group on which I sit, with specific responsibility for the Mail and Package Working Group.

This group is evaluating existing technology, as well as providing guidance as to where research and development efforts should be best directed.

We also continue to coordinate with all appropriate agencies about mail security to assure the safety of America's mail system.

To that end, we would be pleased to work with this Committee in any way possible to preserve the security and the value of the United States mail and protect the safety of our employees and all Americans.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. I would be happy to respond to any questions or suggestions you might have.

-- END --

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Day.

Mr. Ted Gordon—Dr. Gordon I guess it is—senior deputy director of public health assurance, D.C. Department of Health.

Mr. GORDON. Good morning, Congresswoman Norton.

I am Theodore Gordon, senior deputy director for public health assurance for the District of Columbia Department of Health. I am representing Mr. James A. Buford, the acting director of the department who is unable to be here today. I am also joined by Dr. Vincent Nathan, the assistant deputy director for environmental health science, the Environmental Health Administration.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present testimony to the subcommittee this morning on the department's role and its responsibilities in an effort to decontaminate and reopen the Brentwood Road mail processing and distribution facility located at 900 Brentwood Road, NE, in the District of Columbia.

Last year between October 19 and October 21, four workers at the Brentwood facility were hospitalized with inhalation anthrax. Two of those workers subsequently died. It is a tragic loss to the District of Columbia, and our most sincere condolences go out to the families of the victims.

The U.S. Postal Service and the Department of Health's investigations have thus far determined that the letter delivered to the Hart Senate Office Building from the Brentwood Road postal facility contained bacillus anthracis spores, thus contaminating both buildings. As a result, the Brentwood facility was closed on October 21, 2001.

It has become necessary to decontaminate the facility, particularly if the facility is to reopen. The Environmental Health Administration is responsible for identifying and assessing environmental issues and problems, particularly those linked to disease, dysfunction and premature deaths. In the decontamination of Brentwood postal facility, the Environmental Health Administration is primarily responsible for regulatory oversight and protecting the health and safety of the community.

The U.S. Postal Service is using chlorine dioxide fumigation to decontaminate the Brentwood facility, as was used to decontaminate the Hart Senate Office Building. However, this is the largest chlorine dioxide fumigation ever undertaken in the United States and possibly the world. The processing has three steps—one, prefumigation planning; two, chlorine dioxide fumigation; and three, post-fumigation cleaning and reoccupancy.

To ensure that the District's oversight and monitoring of this effort is carried our successfully, the mayor has assembled the Brentwood Scientific Advisory Panel charged with responsibility for reviewing all documents related to the decontamination activities at the site, and to include the following—assisting in the development of public information fact sheets and media releases; sampling protocols, air sampling protocols; waste disposal plans; final clearance determinations; reopening determination; and final reports.

The panel includes distinguished scientists in the field of microbiology, engineering, medicine, epidemiology, chemistry, toxicology and environmental health; and also members of the postal union and ward 5 community, Councilmember Vincent Orange, which encompasses the Brentwood facility.

We have participated in several community meetings to keep residents informed of the status of the decontamination process. There is nothing more important to the department than to protect the health of the District residents. The top technical issues of concern to the Department of Health has been from the beginning, one, protecting the community through the containment of chlorine dioxide gas; two, anthrax decontamination effectiveness; three, anthrax wall cavity sampling; four, proper chlorine dioxide dose; five, post-fumigation anthrax sampling protocols; and six, shut-down authority and reoccupancy clearance.

In this regard, the Department of Health has reviewed, along with the National Institutes for Occupational Safety and Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and the Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute, all results from the sampling and analysis plan, the wall cavity sampling and demonstration plan, the ambient air monitoring plan, the site-specific health and safety plan, the line 17 fumigation remedial action plan, and the negative pressure testing plan.

The Department of Health continues to review all plans presented to us to provide advice to the U.S. Public Health Service on sound public health science. The Department of Health has reviewed and advised the U.S. Public Health Service on the dispersion modeling plan for the facility and has issued several permits for testing and operation of boilers, air-handling units, and negative air pressure systems.

The Department of Health will be onsite during all phases of the process, which will include the presence of EPA's TAGA bus, which will be on the mobile or monitoring unit. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Health have consulted on the issuance of a Federal crisis exemption permit for the use of chlorine dioxide gas for the fumigation. The District has issued individual licenses to all onsite applicators who will be handling the gas.

Finally, the Department of Health co-chairs, along with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region III, the Environmental Clearance Committee. The Environmental Clearance Committee is an independent coordinated group of scientists with expertise in disciplines relevant to the assessment and cleanup of the facility, but independent of the U.S. Postal Service.

It serves as the committee charged with evaluating the effectiveness of the facility decontamination, post-fumigation measures, and the group will then make a recommendation on the appropriateness of reopening the facility. I might add, Councilmember Vincent Orange will serve on the clearance committee, as well as the two representatives from the postal unions who represent the postal workers.

That concludes my testimony. Congresswoman Norton, I am prepared to answer any questions you may have concerning the work of the department on behalf of the Department of Health.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Gordon follows:]

Testimony of
Theodore J. Gordon
Sr. Deputy Director for Public Health Assurance
District of Columbia Department of Health

Hearing on US Postal Service
Brentwood Road Mail Handling and Processing Facility
Subcommittee on the District of Columbia
Committee on Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
July 26, 2002
Gallaudet College
Washington, D.C.

GOOD MORNING CHAIRMAN MORELLA, RANKING MINORITY MEMBER NORTON, AND DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE.

I AM THEODORE GORDON, SR. DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR PUBLIC HEALTH ASSURANCE OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (DOH). I AM REPRESENTING MR. JAMES A. BUFORD, THE ACTING DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, WHO IS UNABLE TO BE HERE TODAY. I AM JOINED BY DR. VINCENT NATHAN, ASSISTANT DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (EHA). THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT TESTIMONY TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE THIS MORNING ON THE DEPARTMENT'S ROLE, AND ITS RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE EFFORT TO DECONTAMINATE AND RE-OPEN THE BRENTWOOD ROAD MAIL PROCESSING AND DISTRIBUTION FACILITY, LOCATED AT 900 BRENTWOOD ROAD, N.E. IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

LAST YEAR BETWEEN OCTOBER 19TH AND OCTOBER 21ST, FOUR WORKERS AT THE BRENTWOOD FACILITY WERE HOSPITALIZED WITH INHALATION ANTHRAX. TWO OF THOSE WORKERS SUBSEQUENTLY DIED. IT IS A TRAGIC LOSS TO THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA AND OUR MOST SINCERE CONDOLENCES GO OUT TO THE FAMILIES OF THE VICTIMS.

A UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE (USPS) AND DOH INVESTIGATION HAS THUS FAR DETERMINED THAT LETTERS DELIVERED TO THE HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING FROM THE BRENTWOOD ROAD POSTAL FACILITY CONTAINED *BACILLUS ANTHRACIS (BA)* SPORES, THUS CONTAMINATING BOTH BUILDINGS. AS A RESULT, THE BRENTWOOD FACILITY WAS CLOSED ON OCTOBER 21, 2001, AND IT HAS BECOME NECESSARY TO DECONTAMINATE THE FACILITY, PARTICULARLY IF THE FACILITY IS TO REOPEN.

THE EHA IS RESPONSIBLE FOR IDENTIFYING AND ASSESSING ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND PROBLEMS (PARTICULARLY THOSE LINKED TO DISEASE, DYSFUNCTION, AND PREMATURE DEATHS). IN THE DECONTAMINATION OF THE BRENTWOOD POSTAL FACILITY, EHA IS PRIMARILY RESPONSIBLE FOR REGULATORY OVERSIGHT AND PROTECTING THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF THE COMMUNITY.

THE USPS IS USING CHLORINE DIOXIDE FUMIGATION TO DECONTAMINATE THE BRENTWOOD FACILITY AS WAS USED TO DECONTAMINATE THE HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING, HOWEVER, THIS IS THE LARGEST CHLORINE DIOXIDE FUMIGATION EVER UNDERTAKEN IN THE UNITED STATES. THE PROCESS HAS THREE STEPS: (1) PRE-FUMIGATION PLANNING; (2) CHLORINE DIOXIDE FUMIGATION; AND (3) POST-FUMIGATION CLEANING AND RE-OCCUPANCY. TO ENSURE THAT THAT DISTRICT'S OVERSIGHT AND MONITORING OF THIS EFFORT IS CARRIED OUT SUCCCESSFULLY, THE MAYOR HAS ASSEMBLED THE BRENTWOOD SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY PANEL CHARGED WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR REVIEWING ALL DOCUMENTS RELATED TO THE DECONTAMINATION ACTIVITIES AT THE SITE, TO INCLUDE:

- ASSISTING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION FACT SHEETS AND MEDIA RELEASES
- SAMPLING PROTOCOLS, AIR SAMPLING PROTOCOLS
- WASTE DISPOSAL PLANS
- FINAL CLEARANCE DETERMINATION
- REOPENING DETERMINATION AND
- FINAL REPORTS

THE PANEL INCLUDES SPECIALISTS IN THE FIELDS OF MICROBIOLOGY, ENGINEERING, MEDICINE, EPIDEMIOLOGY, CHEMISTRY, TOXICOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH, AND ALSO MEMBERS OF THE POSTAL UNION AND WARD 5 COMMUNITY WHICH ENCOMPASSES THE BRENTWOOD

FACILITY. WE HAVE PARTICIPATED IN SEVERAL COMMUNITY MEETINGS TO KEEP RESIDENTS INFORMED ON THE STATUS OF THE DECONTAMINATION PROCESS. THERE IS NOTHING MORE IMPORTANT TO THE DEPARTMENT THAN TO PROTECT THE HEALTH OF THE DISTRICT'S RESIDENTS.

THE TOP TECHNICAL ISSUES OF CONCERN TO DOH HAS BEEN FROM THE BEGINNING: (1) PROTECTING THE COMMUNITY THROUGH THE CONTAINMENT OF CHLORINE DIOXIDE GAS; (2) ANTHRAX DECONTAMINATION EFFECTIVENESS; (3) ANTHRAX WALL CAVITY SAMPLING; (4) PROPER CHLORINE DIOXIDE DOSE; (5) POST-FUMIGATION ANTHRAX SAMPLING PROTOCOLS; AND (6) SHUT DOWN AUTHORITY AND RE-OCCUPANCY CLEARANCE.

IN THIS REGARD, DOH HAS REVIEWED, ALONG WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH, THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION, THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, THE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION, AND THE ARMED FORCES RADIOBIOLOGY RESEARCH INSTITUTE, ALL RESULTS FROM:

THE SAMPLING AND ANALYSIS PLAN,

THE WALL CAVITY SAMPLING DEMONSTRATION PLAN,

THE AMBIENT AIR MONITORING PLAN,

THE SITE-SPECIFIC HEALTH AND SAFETY PLAN,

THE LINE-17 FUMIGATION REMEDIAL ACTION PLAN (DBCS 17), AND

THE NEGATIVE-PRESSURE TESTING PLAN.

DOH CONTINUES TO REVIEW ALL PLANS PRESENTED TO US TO PROVIDE ADVICE TO USPS.

DOH HAS REVIEWED AND ADVISED USPS ON THE AIR DISPERSION MODELLING PLAN FOR THE FACILITY AND HAS ISSUED SEVERAL PERMITS FOR TESTING AND OPERATION OF THE BOILERS, AIR HANDLING UNITS, AND THE NEGATIVE AIR SYSTEM. DOH WILL BE ONSITE DURING ALL PHASES OF THE PROCESS, WHICH INCLUDE A PRESENCE ON THE EPA'S TAGA BUS, WHICH WILL BE THE MOBILE AIR MONITORING UNIT.

EPA AND DOH HAVE CONSULTED ON THE ISSUANCE OF A FEDERAL CRISIS EXEMPTION PERMIT FOR THE CHLORINE DIOXIDE GAS TO BE USED FOR THE FUMIGATION AND THE DISTRICT HAS ISSUED INDIVIDUAL LICENSES TO THE ONSITE APPLICATORS.

FINALLY, DOH CO-CHAIRS ALONG WITH THE US ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA) REGION III , THE ENVIRONMENTAL

CLEARANCE COMMITTEE (ECC). THE ECC IS AN INDEPENDENT, COORDINATED GROUP OF SCIENTISTS WITH EXPERTISE IN DISCIPLINES RELEVANT TO THE ASSESSMENT AND CLEANUP OF THE FACILITY (BUT INDEPENDENT OF USPS). IT SERVES AS THE COMMITTEE CHARGED WITH EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE FACILITY DECONTAMINATION (POST FUMIGATION) MEASURES. THE GROUP WILL THEN MAKE A RECOMMENDATION ON THE APPROPRIATENESS OF REOPENING THE FACILITY.

I AM PREPARED TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE CONCERNING THE WORK OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.

THANK YOU AGAIN FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SUBCOMMITTEE'S OVERSIGHT HEARING.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Dr. Gordon.

Dr. Rosemary Sokas, associate director for science, National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health at CDC.

Dr. SOKAS. Thank you, Madam Congresswoman and members of the subcommittee. I want to just start off by saying that NIOSH is part of CDC. We deal with worker safety and health. I am also happy to say that we have Dr. Brad Perkins here, who is from Atlanta; chief, as you know, of the special pathogens branch in the CDC's National Center for Infectious Diseases.

On behalf of the CDC and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, I am pleased to describer out role in cleanup and safety-related activities at the Brentwood Mail Processing and Distribution Center in Washington, DC. The CDC and ATSDR are a part of the Department of Health and Human Services.

It is out mission to protect the public's health by preventing and controlling injuries, illnesses and disabilities, including those that occur from the deliberate release of biological agents. Today, I will review CDC and ATSDR's response activities at the Brentwood facility following last year's anthrax attacks, describe our role in the cleanup work being conducted at Brentwood, and discuss safety issues involved with the decontamination and reopening of the building.

Among the many responsibilities following the anthrax attacks of last fall, CDC and ATSDR have been working closely with our Federal, State and local public health partners toward the goal of successfully remediating the buildings contaminated by the anthrax spores. Our recommendations have been widely disseminated to Federal, State and local health and environmental agencies and are available at CDC's bioterrorism Web site. Our review of the lessons learned from these activities is ongoing and will be used to update our recommendations for responding to anthrax contamination.

Of the buildings contaminated from the anthrax attacks last fall, the Brentwood facility was the most severely affected. As you all know, during October 19 through 21, four postal workers from Brentwood were hospitalized with inhalational anthrax, and two of these patients died as a result of their exposure. What became all too clear was that the letters containing anthrax spores which were sent to Senators Daschle and Leahy in the Hart Senate Office Building had also contaminated the Brentwood facility, which processed mail addressed to zip codes in the Washington, DC, area.

The anthrax-contaminated letters passed through the Brentwood facility on the morning of Friday, October 12, 2001. The Brentwood facility was closed Sunday, October 21, when the first diagnosis of inhalational anthrax in a Brentwood employee was made. Beginning Monday, October 22, investigators from CDC, the U.S. Postal Service and a postal service contractor began evaluating the extent of anthrax contamination there.

This first investigation showed widespread contamination inside the facility, particularly around delivery bar code sorter No. 17, which you have already heard. That was the one that had processed the spore-containing letters. It also showed heavy contamination as you saw on the graph in the government mail area.

During subsequent investigations, CDC, ATSDR, the Postal Service and a postal service contractor conducted additional surface samplings in the facility to thoroughly characterize the distribution of the anthrax spores throughout the facility, including areas where workers did not become ill and including the building ventilation system. The broader goals of this effort were to compare and evaluate the different methods of collecting the surface samples and for analyzing those samples and to evaluate the effectiveness of cleanup efforts to remove spores from the known contaminated surfaces.

The results of this investigation were shared with the workers from the Brentwood facility with Postal Service management, the postal worker unions and the District of Columbia Department of Health. This information has been presented in scientific conferences and incorporated into our recommendations, improving our national capacity for present and future responses to anthrax.

Since the completion of that investigation, CDC and ATSDR scientists have been working with experts from EPA, the D.C. Department of Health, the Postal Service, the Department of Defense and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to review and provide input into the draft cleanup plans. The goal is to provide the Postal Service and the Brentwood incident commander and his team of consultants with the advice they need to ensure that the cleanup plans incorporate the best available protection for each worker and for each member of the community. These plans address issues such as the strategies for environmental remediation of the facility, the type of environmental sampling needed to evaluate the effectiveness of remediation, and measures to ensure that workers and the general public are protected during cleanup operations.

In addition, we currently are in discussion with the Postal Service about the quality assurance role we will play in conducting laboratory analysis of post-cleanup environmental samples collected from the Brentwood facility. The D.C. Department of Health and EPA are leading a multi-agency panel that will review the post-cleanup sampling data from Brentwood and advise when it is appropriate to reoccupy the building and return it to normal service.

We participate in this panel. To best protect the workers who will reoccupy the facility, decisions need to be based on the highest quality data that reflect site-specific findings, using the best and most current science and sampling methods. That sampling must be thoroughly and rigorously conducted and techniques used for sample collection and for cleanup should be those shown to be valid and effective. As with the Hart Building cleanup, the standard for determining that the building is clean should be that samples collected after cleanup showed zero detectable anthrax spores.

As with any other public health problem, it is the goal of the CDC to use the best science and technology available to minimize the risk of illness and disease to the greatest extent possible. It is not possible to eliminate risk entirely or to guarantee that a building is absolutely free of risk. But as with the successful reoccupancy of the Hart Building, we believe that a science-based process can allow workers to safely return to Brentwood and normal service to the building to safely resume.

CDC is working with the local health department to take other steps at the Brentwood facility such as investigating deaths that have occurred over the past 9 months among Postal Service employees to determine if there have been more deaths than usual or any suspicious deaths that might be related to anthrax. Our investigations have not found any factors different from what would be expected during a typical year. We plan to issue an updated version of this report in the next several weeks.

Thank you, and I would be glad to answer any questions that you have.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Sokas follows:]

Testimony
Before the Subcommittee on the District of Columbia
Committee on Government Reform
United States House of Representatives

CDC's Participation in Cleanup Activities at the Brentwood Mail Processing and Distribution Center

Statement of
Rosemary Sokas, M.D., M.O.H.
Associate Director for Science,
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health,
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Madame Chairwoman and members of the Subcommittee, my name is Dr. Rosemary Sokas, and I am Associate Director for Science with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). On behalf of the CDC and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), I am pleased to provide this testimony describing cleanup and safety-related activities involved in reopening the U.S. Postal Services's (USPS) Brentwood Mail Processing and Distribution Center in Washington, D.C. (the "Brentwood facility"), the building that was the most severely affected by the anthrax attacks of last Fall.

The CDC and ATSDR are part of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). As the nation's disease prevention and control agency, it is CDC's responsibility on behalf of DHHS to provide national leadership in the public health and medical communities in a concerted effort to detect, diagnose, respond to, and prevent illnesses, including those that occur as a result of a deliberate release of biological agents. This task is an integral part of CDC's and ATSDR's overall missions to monitor and protect the health of the U.S. population by preventing and controlling disease, injury, and disability.

Today I will review CDC and ATSDR's response activities at the Brentwood facility following last year's anthrax attacks, describe our role in the cleanup work being conducted there, and discuss safety issues involved with the decontamination and reopening of the building. The CDC and ATSDR's focus is on protecting the health and safety of the people who work at the Brentwood facility, their families,

and the general public. Therefore we continue to work diligently with our federal, state, and local public health partners toward the goal of successfully remediating the Brentwood facility.

Background

During the anthrax attacks of 2001, CDC assumed a wide range of responsibilities including surveillance to detect new cases of illness; epidemiologic investigations to assess the risks of infection; collection of environmental samples to determine the extent of contamination in affected buildings; analysis of environmental and clinical laboratory specimens; delivery of stockpiled antibiotics and vaccine; follow-up of persons receiving stockpile items; and communication with the public and with public health professionals to provide up-to-date guidance and recommendations.

One area of CDC and ATSDR focus was the assessment and cleanup of facilities contaminated as a result of the anthrax attacks. We refined methods for environmental testing to determine whether and how extensively anthrax contamination had occurred. This included both air and surface testing. Based on the best available information and ongoing experience, CDC and ATSDR issued and subsequently updated recommendations for conducting environmental sampling and how laboratories should analyze those samples to identify contaminated areas, to characterize the extent of contamination, and to guide cleanup. We also have developed guidelines related to matters of worker safety, such as recommendations for personal protective equipment and medical surveillance for first responders and cleanup workers.

Throughout these efforts, we have provided technical input to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which is assigned lead responsibility for cleaning up buildings and other sites contaminated by chemical or biological agents as a result of an act of terrorism. These recommendations have been widely disseminated to federal, state, and local health and environmental agencies, and are available at CDC's bioterrorism website (http://www.bt.cdc.gov). Our review of the lessons learned from these activities is ongoing and will be used to update our recommendations for responding to anthrax contamination.

Past CDC and ATSDR Activities at the Brentwood Postal Facility

During October 19-21, 2001, four postal workers at the Brentwood facility in Washington, D.C., were hospitalized with an illness that was subsequently diagnosed as inhalational anthrax. Two of these employees died as a result of their exposure. Subsequent investigations indicated that the Brentwood facility, the primary mail processing center receiving mail addressed to Zip codes in the Washington, D.C. area, had been contaminated by the letters sent to Senators Daschle and Leahy which were discovered to contain *Bacillus anthracis* spores and to have contaminated the Hart Senate Office building. These letters passed through the Brentwood facility on the morning of Friday, October 12, 2001.

The Brentwood facility was closed Sunday, October 21, when the first diagnosis of inhalational anthrax in a Brentwood employee was made. Beginning Monday, October 22, investigators from CDC, the

USPS, and a USPS contractor began evaluating the extent of *B. anthracis* contamination there. This first investigation showed widespread contamination inside the facility, particularly around Delivery Bar Code Sorter machine #17, which had processed the spore-containing letters, and in the Government Mail area, where the letters had been processed for distribution to U.S. government locations.

From December 17 through 20, 2001, investigators from CDC, ATSDR, the USPS, and a USPS contractor conducted an additional investigation at the Brentwood facility. This investigation had both an immediate health and safety purpose with respect to Brentwood and broader applied research goals regarding how to assess and clean up anthrax contamination. The immediate objective was to conduct additional surface sampling at the Brentwood facility to more thoroughly characterize the distribution of *B. anthracis* spores throughout the facility, including areas where workers did not become ill, and within the building ventilation system. The broader goals were to compare the effectiveness of different methods for collecting the samples used to detect anthrax spores on surfaces, to compare the results of different methods for analyzing those samples, and to evaluate the effectiveness of cleanup efforts to remove spores from known contaminated surfaces.

The results of this two-pronged investigation were shared with staff at the Brentwood facility, USPS management, the postal workers unions, and the District of Columbia Department of Health. This information has been presented in scientific conferences and incorporated into our recommendations, improving our national capacity for present and future responses to anthrax.

Current and Future CDC and ATSDR Role at Brentwood Postal Facility

Since the completion of that investigation, CDC and ATSDR scientific staff have been working with experts from EPA, D.C. Department of Health, USPS, Department of Defense, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to review and provide input into the draft cleanup plans. The goal is to provide the USPS and the Brentwood Incident Commander and his team of consultants with the advice they need to ensure that these plans incorporate the best available protection for workers and the community. These plans address issues such as the strategies for environmental remediation of the facility, the type of environmental sampling needed to evaluate the effectiveness of remediation, and measures to ensure that workers and the general public are protected during cleanup operations. In addition, we currently are in discussion with the USPS about the specific role that CDC and ATSDR might play in conducting laboratory analysis of environmental samples collected from the Brentwood facility.

The D.C. Department of Health and the EPA are leading a multi-agency panel that will review the post-cleanup sampling data from Brentwood and advise when it is appropriate to re-occupy the building and return it to normal service. CDC representatives are participating in this panel.

To best protect the workers who will re-occupy the Brentwood facility, decisions about re-occupancy should be based on data that are the highest quality available. CDC believes data should appropriately reflect site-specific contamination, past epidemiology findings, and remediation factors, using the best

and most current science and sampling methods. That sampling must be thoroughly and rigorously conducted, and techniques used for sample collection and for cleanup should be those shown to be valid and effective. As with the Hart Building cleanup, the standard for determining that the building is clean should be that samples collected after cleanup show zero detectable spores.

As with any other public health problem, it is the goal of the CDC to use the best science and technology available to minimize the risk of illness and disease to the greatest extent possible. It is not possible to eliminate risk entirely or guarantee that a building is absolutely free of risk. But as with the successful re-occupancy of the Hart building, we believe that a science-based process can allow a determination that the remediation was successful, that rigorous sampling was unable to find any residual viable spores, that workers can safely return, and that normal service to the public can safely resume.

CDC is working with local health departments to take other steps at the Brentwood facility, such as investigating deaths that have occurred over the past nine months among Postal Service employees to determine if there have been more deaths than usual or any suspicious deaths that might be related to anthrax. Our investigations have not found any factors different from what would be expected during a typical year. We plan to issue an updated report from this investigation in the next several weeks.

Conclusion

In summary, since shortly after the anthrax attacks of last year, CDC and ATSDR have been involved in assisting with response efforts at the buildings contaminated by anthrax spores. At the Brentwood postal facility, we helped to determine the extent and distribution of contamination, assessed the effectiveness of sampling methods, and evaluated cleanup methods. We continue to assist the USPS, EPA, and others responsible for decontamination of the Brentwood facility by providing statistical, methodological, technical, and risk assessment consultation regarding sampling to assess whether anthrax spores remain after decontamination efforts are carried out. We are developing approaches and procedures based on the knowledge we have gained to date. These approaches may continue to evolve as we learn more. CDC and ATSDR remain committed to the goal of protecting the health and safety of postal workers returning to the Brentwood facility, the public that uses the facility, and the neighboring community.

Thank you. I will be glad to answer any questions you may have.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much, Dr. Sokas.

Administrator Thomas Voltaggio, Environmental Protection Agency, Region III.

Mr. VOLTAGGIO. Good morning, Congresswoman Norton.

I am Thomas Voltaggio. I am the deputy regional administrator of the mid-Atlantic regional office of EPA. I also have been the senior regional manager of the EPA workers who had decontaminated the Hart Senate Office Building. I spent roughly 3 or 4 days a week for about 3 months there, implementing what I am gratified to learn has been called the "gold standard."

With me is Marcus Aquino, who is our EPA regional onsite coordinator at the Brentwood site. We are happy to be here. In today's testimony, I will outline EPA's role in the Brentwood cleanup operations. I will provide a short description of the current activities at Brentwood.

EPA's responsibilities can be divided into four categories: one, an independent authority that is responsible for protection of human health and the environment outside the facility; No. 2, regulator of chemicals used to kill anthrax spores; No. 3, a technical adviser to the U.S. Postal Service for the remediation inside the building; and fourth, the Federal entity that has the authority and resources to step in at any time that the neighborhood is threatened.

EPA is the national organization whose primary mission is the protection of human health and the environment. We are responsible, often in partnership with our State counterparts and the District in this case, for protecting the air, water and the lands. Although the anthrax contamination at the Brentwood postal facility is currently well-contained, we continue to monitor the situation there closely to ensure that the neighborhood is safe.

That means we are paying close attention to the proposed cleanup remedy in the building, while at the same time we are making sure the chemicals that are used to destroy the anthrax spores are handled properly, and any waste products produced during the cleanup operations are disposed of properly.

All pesticides used in the United States must be registered with EPA. We make sure that the products work effectively and when properly used pose no undue risk. Not surprisingly, here are no chemicals that have been registered to treat anthrax spores. Anyone that needs to clean an anthrax-contaminated site must get what is known as a crisis exemption from EPA. As an example, a crisis exemption was issued to use chlorine dioxide gas to fumigate the Daschle office suite in the Hart Senate Office Building. The Postal Service owns the Brentwood facility, and it is in charge of the anthrax remediation there.

That means that aside from the regulatory function I just outlined, EPA's role inside the fence line is to provide expert advice on the many technical issues involved in the cleanup. If at any time, however, EPA believes that there is an immediate public health or environmental threat that is not being appropriately handled by the Postal Service, then we can employ our powers as described in the national contingency plan to abate any such threat.

EPA has provided technical consultation about anthrax decontamination at the request of several Federal agencies ranging from GSA to the State Department, and privately owned facilities from

Florida to New York, as well as the Postal Service facilities in seven States and the District. The largest anthrax cleanup has been on Capitol Hill, where the contaminated letters that went through Brentwood were directed.

The cleanup of the Hart Senate Office Building posed the largest anthrax cleanup challenge ever undertaken in a building thus far. Fumigations with chlorine dioxide gas were conducted on December 1 and December 30, 2001. More than 3,000 test samples taken after the cleanup showed no remaining viable anthrax. On January 22, the Hart Building was reopened. Hundreds of employees and thousands of visitors have safely used the facility since then, and no one has become ill from any anthrax-related exposure.

It was at the trailer at the closed Brentwood plant that EPA scientists demonstrated last fall that chlorine dioxide gas would kill weapons-grade anthrax. Chlorine dioxide is a common disinfectant. It is used in the water spray that moistens fruits and vegetables on grocery shelves. It kills germs on contact, yet leaves no hazardous residue. Chlorine dioxide is the primary disinfectant used to purify water in cities like Los Angeles. It was used at the Hart Senate Office Building and is about to be used at Brentwood.

Last October, EPA Federal on-scene coordinator Marcus Aquino was dispatched to Brentwood from our regional emergency operations center in Philadelphia. Over the past 9 months, Mr. Aquino has been giving advice on subjects ranging from sampling methods, various cleanup technologies and their effectiveness, ways to ensure the building was properly sealed to prevent the escape of anthrax spores, and safety protocols for hazardous materials cleanup personnel. As an on-scene coordinator, Mr. Aquino is highly trained in hazardous materials cleanup procedures.

Even more importantly, however, he has the full resources of the EPA and the entire national response team behind him. That means that all the expertise and invaluable experience of all the groups associated with the national anthrax cleanup efforts are contributing to the Brentwood effort.

At Brentwood, EPA has issued a crisis exemption to use chlorine dioxide gas to conduct a test fumigation of lockers in the trailer. A second exemption has just been approved to fumigate delivery bar code sorters 16 to 18, better known as line 17, which are the most highly contaminated mail sorting machines.

A third crisis exemption request will be needed before they fumigate the entire building with chlorine dioxide. For the fumigation of line 17, EPA brought together a group of experts from the relevant Federal health research and regulatory agencies to review the plan which led to a number of revisions. This group will also review the results of the fumigation of line 17 prior to the fumigation of the entire building.

During the fumigations of the Brentwood facility, EPA is bringing its state-of-the-art mobile air monitoring equipment to the site. The TAGA bus, which is the trace atmospheric gas analyzer bus, will drive around the building during the fumigation, sniffing out any chlorine dioxide in the unlikely event that some might escape from the building.

If as little as 25 ppb—that is "b" for billion—are detected, an investigation will immediately be triggered. If it rises to 100 ppb, the

fumigation effort would be shut down. This is the same conservative level that is used to protect people who work with chlorine dioxide routinely, one that is considered safe, and that was used at the Hart Senate Office Building.

EPA and the D.C. Department of Health have established the Brentwood Environmental Clearance Committee, an independent group of scientists who will review the results of all the fumigations. This group will make recommendations on whether the facility should be cleared for reoccupancy by postal workers. The first meeting is set for next month.

In conclusion, EPA believes that the Brentwood cleanup effort is moving in the right direction. We will continue to provide technical assistance to the Postal Service, but ultimately we recognize that the health and safety of the citizens who live in the Brentwood neighborhood are our responsibility. I want to ensure the subcommittee, and most importantly the people who live in the community, that EPA will continue to provide vigilant oversight of the cleanup operations. Your health and safety are our primary considerations.

I would also like to again acknowledge the work of the other organizations that are involved in the cleanup effort—the Postal Service, the District of Columbia's Department of Health and its emergency management agency, the national health agencies, especially CDC. They deserve special praise.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I will be happy to answer any questions at the appropriate time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Voltaggio follows:]

TESTIMONY OF
THOMAS C. VOLTAGGIO
DEPUTY REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR
MID-ATLANTIC REGION
U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

July 26, 2002

Good morning, Chairwoman Morella and Members of the committee. I am Tom Voltaggio, Deputy Regional Administrator for the EPA's Mid-Atlantic Regional Office. With me today is Marcos Aquino, an EPA Federal On-Scene Coordinator who has been working on the Brentwood cleanup operation since last October. We are pleased to be here today to discuss the anthrax remediation activities at the United States Postal Service's Washington, D.C. Processing and Distribution Center, better known as the Brentwood facility.

In today's testimony, I would like to

- outline EPA's role in the Brentwood cleanup operations,
- describe the national system that is being used in response to biological terrorism,
- review the expertise that we have developed over the last nine months, and
- provide a short description of current activities at Brentwood.

EPA's role

EPA's responsibilities can be divided into four categories:

- an independent authority that is responsible for protection of human health and the environment outside the facility;
- regulator of the chemicals used to kill anthrax spores;
- technical advisor to the U.S. Postal Service for the remediation inside the building, and
- the Federal entity that has the authority and resources to step in at any time if the neighborhood is threatened.

EPA is the national organization whose primary mission is protection of human health and the environment. We are responsible, often in partnership with our state counterparts, for protecting the air that we breathe, the waters that we drink, and the lands that we use. Although the anthrax contamination at the Brentwood postal facility is currently well-contained, we continue to monitor the situation there closely to ensure that the neighborhood is safe. That

means we are paying close attention to the proposed cleanup remedy in the building, while, at the same time, we are making sure that the chemicals that will be used to destroy the anthrax spores are handled properly and that any waste products produced during the cleanup operations are disposed of properly.

All pesticides, including sporicides, that are used in the United States must be registered with the EPA. Before issuing pesticide registrations, EPA reviews available data to ensure that products work effectively and, when properly used, pose no undue risk. Not surprisingly, however, no chemicals have been registered to treat anthrax spores. Under Section 18 of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA), however, EPA has the authority to grant exemptions for uses of pesticidal substances that have not been registered. That is the mechanism being used to treat all of the contamination resulting from the 2001 anthrax attacks through the mail system. Any agency or corporation that needs to use such substances to clean a contaminated site and contaminated items from the site must request a FIFRA crisis exemption for use of each substance. To date, 40 crisis exemption requests have been submitted, of which 18 have been issued, four are still pending, and 18 have been rejected. Crisis exemptions were issued to treat the contamination at the Capitol Hill Anthrax Response. As an example, a crisis exemption was issued to use gaseous chlorine dioxide to fumigate the Daschle office suite and two air handling units in the Hart Senate Office Building.

The United States Postal Service owns and operates the Brentwood facility, and the Postal Service is in charge of the anthrax remediation there. The Postal Service has adopted a Unified Incident Command, modeled on the structure that EPA, the Coast Guard and other organizations use in major cleanup efforts. The Unified Incident Command is a highly adaptable organizational structure that has a single person who is ultimately in charge, the Incident Commander, with a number of organizational units that have discrete areas of responsibility. The Postal Service has selected John Bridges as Incident Commander. EPA's role inside the fenceline is to provide expert advice to Mr. Bridges, on the many technical issues involved in the cleanup, as well as on the need to have a full and open public participation process with the Brentwood community of workers and neighbors.

If at any time, EPA believes that there is an immediate public health or environmental threat that is not being appropriately handled by the USPS, then we will immediately escalate the issue. If necessary, we will employ our powers as described in the National Contingency Plan to abate any such threat. In the absence of such a threat, we will remain in an advice and consultation role throughout the cleanup effort.

A national response system exists

EPA is one of the chief guardians of public health and the environment in the United States. But we do not act alone.

EPA responded to last Fall's anthrax incidents as part of a larger National Response System (NRS) that has been in place for nearly 30 years to effectively deal with a wide range of environmental emergencies. Under the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP), National Response Team (NRT) member agencies engage in response efforts to environmental threats. The National Response Team, of which EPA is a key member, was activated on October 29, 2001.

The various anthrax contamination cases around the country were handled as individual responses with the NRT agencies working together to mitigate the health threats posed by anthrax using the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). The NRT allowed us to bring together national experts from numerous Federal agencies to share information and lessons learned in a real-time manner as each of the anthrax cleanups was being conducted. The following NRT member agencies represent the key players who have been involved in anthrax response activities: EPA , Health and Human Services, FEMA, Department of Justice, U.S. Coast Guard, General Services Administration, Department of State, Department of Defense (DoD), and Department of Labor/OSHA.

Because certain anthrax contaminated sites were determined to be crime scenes, EPA coordinated closely with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). DoD was also involved in providing expertise in bioweapons analysis. For human health advice, EPA sought support from HHS, and its Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. Public Health Service's Division of Federal Occupational Health, and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). To assist USPS in ongoing anthrax clean-up efforts, EPA helped to organize a National Coordination Council (NCC), a working group composed of NRT member agencies and USPS.

Technical expertise and oversight

In response to the USPS, other Federal agencies and privately owned facilities, EPA has provided technical consultation and advice regarding anthrax spore decontamination actions. In general, EPA response activities at anthrax sites can include any or all of the following:

- Sampling to confirm and determine the extent of contamination;
- Evaluating sampling results;
- Isolating areas to prevent the spread of contamination;
- Removing critical objects for special decontamination procedures;
- Working with the USPS and other agencies to evaluate the effectiveness of potential antimicrobial agents and clean-up technologies;
- Cleaning up localized areas of contamination; or
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the decontamination process.

EPA provides technical expertise in developing a site-specific clean-up plan once the extent of contamination is assessed. In a short time, EPA has significantly advanced the science

and technology of detecting and remediating anthrax. Based upon the cleanup activities to date, in which FIFRA crisis exemptions were issued, EPA has acquired significant data on the efficacy and other properties of the following chemicals:

- Chlorine dioxide;
- Ethylene oxide;
- Paraformaldehyde;
- Hydrogen peroxide and Peroxyacetic acid;
- Methyl bromide; and
- Sodium hypochlorite (liquid bleach).

A trailer at the closed Brentwood plant, which was donated by the USPS, became a lab where EPA scientists demonstrated that chlorine dioxide technology would kill weapons-grade anthrax. Chlorine dioxide is a common disinfectant widely used to purify drinking water, sewage and food – it's used in the water spray that moistens fruits and vegetables on grocery shelves. It kills germs on contact, yet leaves no hazardous residue. Chlorine dioxide is the primary disinfectant used to purify water in Los Angeles, Phoenix, Seattle and Corpus Christi.

To kill anthrax in an enclosed space, scientists have learned that chlorine dioxide gas is lethal to anthrax spores when maintained at a concentration of 750 parts per million for 12 hours at 75 degrees Fahrenheit and 75 percent relative humidity.

Anthrax decontamination is a rapidly evolving field, and new technologies are being tested and advanced. The EPA is responsible for ensuring that antimicrobial pesticides used in anthrax decontamination plans meet all federal requirements for safety and effectiveness. In developing decontamination strategies, EPA has consulted a variety of experts, including the following:

- EPA's Environmental Response Team (ERT)
- EPA research laboratories
- CDC
- U.S. Army Medical Research Institute for Infectious Diseases (USAMRID)
- Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA)
- State and local environmental and health officials
- National experts in universities and private industry

Major Response Sites

1. U.S. Postal Service facilities

Since the original anthrax contamination was discovered EPA has provided USPS with technical expertise and advice in the cleanup of contaminated USPS facilities. USPS requested EPA to provide full-time On Scene Coordinator presence at the USPS command center for consolidation of information and coordination. EPA has also worked diligently in supporting the USPS as they have addressed anthrax contamination at other postal facilities around the country,

including:

- Boca Raton main postal facility, Boca Raton, Florida;
- Hamilton postal facility, Hamilton Twp., New Jersey;
- Green Acres postal facility, Lake Worth, Florida;
- West Trenton postal facility, Trenton, New Jersey;
- Lucerne Station postal facility, Lake Worth, Florida;
- USPS Westgate Processing and Distribution Center, Raleigh, North Carolina;
- Lake Worth Main postal facility, Lake Worth, Florida;
- USPS Postal Distribution Center, Wallingford, Connecticut;
- West Palm Beach postal facility, West Palm Beach, Florida;
- DDD Building (USPS Contractor), Indianapolis, Indiana;
- Brentwood mail processing facility, Washington, DC;
- USPS Stamp Fulfilment Center, Kansas City, Missouri; and
- Morgan postal facility, New York, New York.

2. Facilities of other Federal agencies

EPA continues to provide technical support and assistance to a number of other Federal agencies with anthrax-contaminated facilities. For example, EPA assigned a Region 3 On Scene Coordinator (OSC) to support and monitor the progress of the removal and remediation operations being conducted by Federal agencies in the Washington Metro area other than USPS (such as the General Services Administration, Department of State, and Department of Justice). EPA collected data from each response, including health and safety standards and procedures, sampling and analysis methods, remediation and treatment methods and technologies, and waste disposal procedures.

3. American Media, Inc. and private facilities

EPA oversees private-sector sampling and clean-up efforts when requested by local, state, or other Federal agencies, such as the FBI. EPA provided assistance in varying capacities to several privately-owned facilities in Florida (including the AMI Building in Boca Raton), and New York, and to privately owned facilities of USPS contractors in Missouri and Indiana. The AMI building remains sealed.

4. Capitol Hill facilities (Washington, DC)

To date, the most extensive cleanup action occurred when EPA provided massive technical support and assistance as part of a multi agency effort in response to anthrax contamination discovered in Congressional buildings in the Capitol Complex.

After anthrax spores were detected in the letter opened in Senator Daschle's office in the

Hart Senate Office Building, several areas of the building were immediately evacuated and closed. Two days later, the entire Hart Building and the House of Representatives office buildings were closed because of health and safety concerns. The immediate threat to the United States government's Legislative Branch resulted in extensive sampling of Capitol Hill buildings and testing of staff for exposure. A Unified Incident Command Structure was established, with EPA reporting to an Incident Commander (IC). EPA emergency responders took thousands of samples in more than 30 buildings to determine the presence of anthrax, and to design and carry out site-specific clean-up strategies where contamination was found. Positive results indicating the presence of anthrax spores were found at the Ford and Longworth House Office buildings, the Hart and Dirksen Senate Office buildings, and the P Street Mail Warehouse on Capitol Hill. Once a decision was made to decontaminate a building, EPA and CDC worked together to advise the IC about the extent to which a building must be cleaned to make it safe.

The cleanup of the Hart Building posed the largest anthrax clean-up challenge ever undertaken in a building. The Hart Building is a 10,000,000 cubic foot building that houses the offices and staffs of 50 senators. Following the initial discovery, further contamination was detected on several floors of the building, as well as in filters within a portion of the HVAC system. Fumigation with chlorine dioxide gas was conducted on December 1 and on December 30, 2001. The first fumigation addressed the Daschle suite where the highest concentration of spores existed. The second fumigation was performed on the air handling system that serves that portion of the building. Throughout the fall and winter other suites and common areas in the Hart Building and in other buildings in the Capitol Complex were cleaned using chlorine dioxide liquid, foam, and high efficiency particle air (HEPA) filter vacuuming. More than 3,000 test samples taken after the clean-up showed no remaining viable anthrax, and on January 22, the Hart Building was cleared for reoccupancy. Hundreds of employees and thousands of visitors have safely used the facility since then, and no one has become ill from any anthrax-related exposure.

Before the Hart Building was successfully fumigated, some scientists had believed that a building contaminated with anthrax could never be cleaned up. The EPA and the other members of the Capitol Hill cleanup team proved that a large enclosed space could be cleaned and made safe, removing any threat from the deadly bacteria. Working with our partners, EPA demonstrated that the cleanup could be done safely without adverse impacts for the surrounding community. The lessons learned from this anthrax cleanup effort are the cornerstone for the on-going response effort at Brentwood.

The response at Brentwood

Ever since the Postal Service closed the Brentwood facility last October, EPA has provided full-time staff to the cleanup effort. Federal On-Scene Coordinator Marcos Aquino was dispatched to Brentwood from EPA's regional emergency operations center in Philadelphia. Over the past nine months, Mr. Aquino has provided expert assistance to the Postal Service, giving advice on subjects ranging from sampling methods, various cleanup technologies and their effectiveness, ways to assure that the building was properly sealed to prevent the escape of

anthrax spores, and safety protocols for hazardous materials cleanup personnel.

As a Federal On-Scene Coordinator, Mr. Aquino is highly trained in hazardous materials cleanup procedures. Even more important than the extensive personal expertise that he brings to the effort, Mr. Aquino has the full resources of the Environmental Protection Agency and the entire National Response Team behind him. That means that all the expertise and invaluable experience of all the groups associated with the national anthrax cleanup effort are contributing to the remediation effort at Brentwood.

At Brentwood, EPA has issued a crisis exemption to use gaseous chlorine dioxide to conduct a test fumigation of lockers in a trailer. A second exemption has just been approved for the use of gaseous chlorine dioxide to fumigate Delivery Bar Code Sorters 16-18 (better known as "Line 17"), which are the most highly contaminated mail sorting machines. Just as the Daschle suite was isolated from the rest of the Hart building during the fumigation, Line 17 is enclosed within the Brentwood building during its fumigation. A third crisis exemption request will be submitted by the US Postal Service after the fumigation of Line 17, that will apply to the fumigation of the entire building with chlorine dioxide. For the fumigation of Line 17, EPA brought together a group of multi-disciplinary experts from the relevant Federal health research and regulatory agencies to review the draft remedial action plan and make recommendations for enhancing the final plan. The review process was quite successful, and a number of revisions were made to the plan. This group will also review the results of the fumigation of Line 17 as it performs its evaluation of the remedial action plan to be prepared for the fumigation of the entire building.

During the large-scale fumigation of the Brentwood facility, EPA plans to bring its state-of-the-art mobile air monitoring equipment to the site. The TAGA (Trace Atmospheric Gas Analyzer) bus will drive along the perimeter of the building during the fumigation and monitor air quality in the Brentwood area. The TAGA bus, which was also used for the Hart Building fumigation, can analyze chemicals as fine as one part per quadrillion. The bus will be able to sniff out any chlorine dioxide in the unlikely event that some might escape from the building. If as little as 25 ppb are detected, an investigation of the facility will immediately be triggered. If levels rise to 100 ppb, the fumigation effort would be shut down until the leak is corrected. This is the same conservative level used to protect people who work with chlorine dioxide routinely, and one that is considered safe.

In addition to the TAGA bus, EPA and DOH are reviewing the air monitoring plan that will be put into operation outside the facility while the fumigation is underway. We will install additional single point monitors at or near the property boundaries, if necessary, to make sure that the local community is fully protected.

At the request of the USPS, EPA and the D.C. Department of Health have established the Brentwood Environmental Clearance Committee, an independent group of scientists with

expertise in the relevant scientific disciplines, which will review the results of all fumigations at the Brentwood facility to determine whether the fumigations have been effective in decontaminating the site. Based upon its findings, this group will make recommendations on the whether the facility should be cleared for re-occupancy by postal workers. Scientists from the DC Department of Health and from EPA Region 3 will serve as the Chair and Co-chair, respectively, of the Committee. The first meeting of the Clearance Committee is planned for August 2002.

Conclusion

EPA believes that the Brentwood cleanup effort is moving in the right direction. We will continue to provide technical assistance to the Incident Command and lend the unique capabilities that the Agency has to offer. Ultimately, we recognize that the health and safety of the citizens who live in the Brentwood neighborhood are our responsibility. I also want to assure the subcommittee and most importantly the people who live in the community that EPA will continue to provide vigilant oversight of the Postal Service's cleanup operations. Your health and safety are our primary consideration.

I would also like to again acknowledge the work of the other organizations that have been involved in this cleanup effort. The Postal Service continues to commit substantial resources, expertise and effort to this extremely challenging project. The District of Columbia has again been a valuable partner, providing support through both the Department of Health and the Emergency Management Agency. National health agencies also deserves special praise, especially CDC. OSHA is also lending its expertise as well. Working together, EPA and our partners will continue our efforts to clean up this facility in a manner that is protective to the Brentwood community.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions.

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Ms. NORTON. Thank you Mr. Voltaggio.

Councilman Orange, you were not here when I swore in the witnesses. I must ask you to stand therefore to be sworn in.

[Witness sworn.]

Ms. NORTON. Thank you. Let the record show that Mr. Orange answered the question in the affirmative. You may be seated. We will be pleased to hear your testimony at this time.

Mr. ORANGE. Thank you very much.

Good morning, Congresswoman Norton and distinguished members of the subcommittee. I am Vincent Bernard Orange, Sr., the District of Columbia councilmember representing ward 5. I am also the chairman of the D.C. Committee on Government Operations.

I welcome the opportunity to appear before you today to comment on the Brentwood Road mail handling and processing facility cleanup. As you know, this cleanup represents the largest chlorine dioxide fumigation ever undertaken in the United States and perhaps the world. Thus, as you might imagine, the residents and businesses of ward 5 where the Brentwood facility is located and I are extremely concerned about this operation.

We believe that the ultimate goal is the safety of the residents and the employees of the facility and the full disclosure as to all phases of the cleanup operation. This goal was articulated loud and clear on March 27, 2002 at the first town hall meeting hosted by me with respect to the cleanup. Over 800 people were in attendance.

The consensus of the meeting was that the safety of the residents and the employees of the Brentwood facility was first and foremost. The residents expressed skepticism with the Federal Government in their overall approach to the cleanup and the accurate disclosure of information.

We certainly have tried to create a sense of trust and cooperation with the Federal Government, in particular the U.S. Postal Service who is in charge of this operation. We also recognize, however, that the U.S. Postal Service authority is not absolute. It has checks and balances and can be overridden by the Environmental Protection Agency if certain conditions were to exist. On June 27, the U.S. Postal Service held a town hall meeting to respond to community concerns and to present an overview of their plan of operation. We appreciate the efforts that have been made to date.

However, we are here today to demand strict adherence to the 72-hour notification to the public on any test runs of fumigation and actual fumigation of the 17.5 cubic feet facility in our community. Many residents have made it clear that they do not wish to be present in the ward or the District of Columbia during the cleanup operation. We would also like to know the inventory of chemicals presently located in the ward for the operation.

It is our understanding that the chemicals will be mixed to form chlorine dioxide gas to be pumped into the Brentwood post office for the decontamination process. The question is, how much chlorine dioxide will be onsite? Will it be in excess of the 20,000 tons as reported in the Washington Post, or the 2,000 pounds that has been reported over the past few weeks? Are these chemicals being brought into the ward under D.C. police and Federal police protection?

We are told that the current cleanup plan calls for no evacuation. What is the contingency plan for evacuation? The perimeter for the cleanup is .16 miles. Thus, Home Depot, McDonald's, BET, etc., can still operate and street traffic can still flow during the cleanup.

However, if it is determined that the chlorine dioxide fumigations is escaping the Brentwood facility, how will the businesses, customers and residents be notified in a timely fashion? Also, Ted Gordon, who is the senior director for the Department of Health, made a good point yesterday. From the perspective of the Department of Health and from the sciences, it is clearly determined that the operation that has been put in place is sufficient.

But when you look at it from a community perspective and you look at it from a public safety perspective, we need to ascertain whether or not Brentwood Road should be shut down during the actual fumigation process.

Clearly, the operation as I understand it would probably take no more than 24 hours if everything was to go properly, so a 24-hour shut-down of Brentwood Road just to make sure that we do not have customers in the area if anything goes wrong, that we will not have to deal with all the traffic that is coming off of New York Avenue or Rhode Island Avenue into that particular area. So that would be strictly from a public safety community perspective, but I understand from the Department of Health and from the science perspective that the plan that has been placed on the table is sufficient as well.

We have been informed that a chlorine dioxide fumigation to decontaminate line 17 where the two postal workers who lost their lives worked will take place on Monday, July 29. How will the results be analyzed? By whom? And when will the results of the test run be reported to the public?

The reporting of the success or failure of this test must be in advance of the actual full-scale chlorine dioxide fumigation process. We have been told that it may take 5 to 7 days to actually get the results back. It may take another 2 weeks to actually analyze those results.

So looking at that timeframe, we could possibly be into the end of August, early September before actual fumigation process, and clearly I would think that would be unacceptable because now we are into the school year, and to more individuals actually being in the community. There is a school right down the street at Brentwood Elementary School, where noise and school is also utilizing that facility as well.

So we are hopeful that we will be able to speed up the analysis of the test on Monday, and get those results back a lot sooner and be able to actually start this process somewhere in the middle of August, so we could have this all put to bed by September.

Finally, information is needed on public information fact sheets, daily updates and media releases, radio-broadcast media. Where will the public information center be located? When will the daily updates take place? Is there a Web site for immediate updates? Is there an 800 number to call for emergencies? All this information I believe is in place, but it needs to be broadcast widely so everyone is aware that this is how they can make contact with this particular operation.

I believe I have provided enough insight into the thinking of the ward 5 community, the local elected D.C. officials, and the city as a whole on the subject matter for this subcommittee to take the lead in ensuring the safety and integrity of the cleanup process. The old saying that anything that can go wrong, will go wrong—are we prepared? At what confidence level can the Federal Government answer this question—are we prepared? Are adequate contingency plans in place?

I end my testimony by praying that God leads us and guides us through this process without harm to our residents, businesses, community and the many workers on this cleanup process.

Thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity to testify before this subcommittee this morning.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Orange follows:]

TESTIMONY OF DC COUNCILMEMBER VINCENT BERNARD ORANGE, SR.

JULY 26, 2002

GOOD MORNING CHAIRMAN MORELLA, CONGRESSWOMAN NORTON AND DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE.

I AM VINCENT BERNARD ORANGE, SR. AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COUNCILMEMBER REPRESENTING WARD 5. I AM ALSO CHAIRMAN OF THE DC COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS.

I WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR BEFORE YOU TODAY TO COMMENT ON THE BRENTWOOD ROAD MAIL HANDLING AND PROCESSING FACILITY CLEAN UP. AS YOU KNOW, THIS CLEAN UP REPRESENTS THE LARGEST CHLORINE DIOXIDE FUMIGATION EVER UNDERTAKEN IN THE UNITED STATES. AND PERHAPS, THE WORLD. THUS, AS YOU MIGHT IMAGINE, THE RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES OF WARD 5, WHERE THE BRENTWOOD FACILITY IS LOCATED AND I, ARE EXTREMELY CONCERNED ABOUT THIS OPERATION. WE BELIEVE THAT THE ULTIMATE GOAL IS THE SAFETY OF THE RESIDENTS AND FULL DISCLOSURE AS TO ALL PHASES OF THIS CLEAN UP OPERATION.

THIS GOAL WAS ARTICULATED LOUD AND CLEAR ON MARCH 27, 2002 AT THE FIRST TOWNHALL MEETING HOSTED BY ME WITH RESPECT TO THE CLEAN UP. OVER 800 PEOPLE WERE IN ATTENDANCE. THE CONSENSUS OF THE MEETING WAS THAT THE SAFETY OF THE RESIDENTS WAS FIRST AND FOREMOST. THE RESIDENTS EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN THEIR OVERALL APPROACH TO THE CLEAN UP AND THE ACCURATE DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION. WE CERTAINLY HAVE TRIED TO CREATE A SENSE OF TRUST AND COOPERATION WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, IN PARTICULAR, THE UNITED STATE POSTAL SERVICE WHO IS IN CHARGE OF THIS OPERATION. WE ALSO RECOGNIZE THAT THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICES AUTHORITY IS NOT ABSOLUTE; IT HAS CHECKS AND BALANCES AND CAN BE OVERRIDDEN BY THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY IF CERTAIN CONDITIONS WERE TO EXIST.

ON JUNE 27, THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICES HELD A TOWNHALL MEETING TO RESPOND TO COMMUNITY CONCERNS AND TO PRESENT AN OVERVIEW OF THEIR PLAN OF OPERATION. WE APPRECIATE THE EFFORTS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE TO DATE.

HOWEVER, WE ARE HERE TODAY, TO DEMAND STRICT ADHERENCE TO THE 72 HOUR NOTIFICATION TO THE PUBLIC ON ANY TEST RUNS OF FUMIGATION AND ACTUAL FUMIGATION OF THE 17.5 MILLION CUBIC FEET FACILITY IN OUR COMMUNITY. MANY RESIDENTS HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THEY DO

NOT WISH TO BE PRESENT IN THE WARD OR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA DURING THIS CLEAN UP OPERATION. WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO KNOW THE INVENTORY OF CHEMICALS PRESENTLY LOCATED IN THE WARD FOR THIS OPERATION. IT IS OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT THE CHEMICALS WILL BE MIXED TO FORM CHLORINE DIOXIDE GAS TO BE PUMPED INTO BRENTWOOD POST OFFICE FOR THE DECONTAMINATION PROCESS. THE QUESTION IS HOW MUCH CHLORINE DIOXIDE GAS WILL BE ON SITE. WILL IT BE IN EXCESS OF 20,000 TONS AS REPORTED IN THE WASHINGTON POST? ARE THESE CHEMICAL BEING BROUGHT INTO THE WARD UNDER DC POLICE AND FEDERAL POLICE PROTECTION?

WE ARE TOLD THAT THE CURRENT CLEAN UP PLAN CALLS FOR NO EVACUATION? WHAT IS THE CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR EVACUATION? THE PERIMETER FOR THE CLEAN UP IS .O6 MILES. THUS, HOME DEPOT, MCDONALDS, BET ETC. CAN STILL OPERATE AND STREET TRAFFIC CAN STILL FLOW DURING THE CLEAN UP. HOWEVER, IF IT IS DETERMINED THAT THE CHLORINE DIOXIDE FUMIGATION IS ESCAPING THE BRENTWOOD FACILITY, HOW WILL THE BUSINESSES, CUSTOMERS AND RESIDENTS BE NOTIFIED.

WE HAVE BEEN INFORMED THAT A CHLORINE DIOXIDE FUMIGATION TO DECONTAMINATE LINE 17 WHERE THE TWO POSTAL WORKERS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES WORKED WILL TAKE PLACE ON MONDAY, JULY 29. HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE ANALYZED, BY WHO AND WHEN WILL THEY BE REPORTED TO THE PUBLIC. THE REPORTING OF THESE RESULTS MUST BE IN ADVANCE OF THE ACTUAL FULL SCALE CHLORINE DIOXIDE FUMIGATION PROCESS.

FINALLY, INFORMATION IS NEEDED ON PUBLIC INFORMATION FACT SHEETS, DAILY UPDATES, MEDIA RELEASES. WHERE WILL THE PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTER BE LOCATED? WHEN WILL THE DAILY UPDATES TAKE PLACE. IS THERE A WEB SITE FOR IMMEDIATE UPDATES. IS THERE AN 800 NUMBER TO CALL FOR EMERGENCIES?

I BELIEVE, I HAVE PROVIDED ENOUGH INSIGHT INTO THE THINKING OF THE COMMUNITY AND DC THE LOCAL ELECTED DC OFFICIALS ON THIS SUBJECT MATTER FOR THIS SUBCOMMITTEE TO TAKE THE LEAD IN ENSURING THE SAFETY AND INTEGRITY OF THIS CLEAN-UP PROCESS. THE OLD SAYING IS ANYTHING THAT CAN GO WRONG WILL GO WRONG. ARE WE PREPARED? AT WHAT CONFIDENCE LEVEL CAN YOU ANSWER THE QUESTION, ARE WE PREPARED? ARE ADEQUATE CONTINGENCIES PLANS IN PLACE?

I END MY TESTIMONY BY PRAYING THAT GOD LEAD US AND GUIDE US THROUGH THIS PROCESS WITHOUT HARM TO OUR RESIDENTS, BUSINESSES, COMMUNITY, AND THE MANY WORKERS ON THIS CLEAN UP.

THANK YOU FOR ALLOWING ME TO TESTIFY TODAY.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much, Councilmember Orange.

I want to proceed with questions. I am compelled to proceed from the remaining, the leftover concerns about health before we get to the new concerns that are arising with respect to decontamination and to health inside the community. I should preface this by saying I have absolutely no compunctions about going in Hart. I do not even think about it any longer.

So I have to say that going into a building as I do regularly that was a building where the deadly envelope was opened, has not bothered me. I have confidence in what was done—so much confidence that I do not think that those—not only do I not think about it when I go into Hart, which is fairly often, but I think that those who go in Hart each and every day no longer think about it. That gives me some confidence that we can put this behind us.

But there is a great difference between Hart and Brentwood. Nobody lost his or her life at Hart. Nobody has complained of being ill in Hart—at least not that I know of and not that anyone in the Congress has been informed of.

But not long ago, indeed this very month, people woke up to read in the paper an article concerning continuing effects from Brentwood that I must say surprised me, particularly given what I have just told you about Hart. Essentially what this article says, and one of the reasons I wanted this hearing to be held, is that people cannot rely upon what they read in the newspaper for their health. This is an official hearing where we are trying to find out what exactly we know and what can be done about it.

Here comes an article in the Washington Times on July 19—"Anthrax Ailments Linger in Some, Recovery Could Require Years." Dr. Sokas, you have testified about the toxicity. I think that was a very wise thing to do. You all clearly are to some degree following these workers trying to respond to concerns.

But here is a newspaper article where the quotes are from doctors who have—and here I am going to use some of the language from the article—they have documented the symptoms in a postal inspector from the Brentwood facility in northeast who handled anthrax spores mailed to Members of Congress in October. However, blood tests on the man failed to detect anthrax.

Now we learn, again in this article—I want to hear from the experts—we learn that 60 people seen at Sinai Hospital who were in the Brentwood facility, who processed mail there or worked there, that at least six of them showed some signs of illness. These are reports from their doctors, and their doctors are listed here. Again, the Sinai Hospital doctors found, and here I am quoting from the article, "previously unreported symptoms of fluid buildup around the heart, hormone shifts" and so forth.

The reason I think we are taking this seriously is we really do not know enough about anthrax. Clearly, from what we have learned, I think, unless I hear differently from you, to be terribly definitive about this substance. One doctor says, basically, I have got one patient who is sick and we cannot explain why he is sick.

Then, of course, a large proportion of folks believe they are suffering from the effects of anthrax. The fact is that I recognize that when there has been a major problem in a facility there will be people who believe no matter what you tell them that it really had

to have been that. That is why I am going to ask you the following. Leave aside the people who cannot be convinced.

The fact is that the average person it seems to me can be convinced by scientific studies and the scientific method lives. I certainly am a subscriber to the scientific method. I do not believe in conspiracies. I believe that conspiracy theories will drive people out of this wonderful community. I believe one does a disservice if one spreads rumors that I know they must—do not believe what they tell you.

But I also know that there is no way to counter this kind of rumor and conjecture except by coming forward with definitive information so far as you have it, that people can look to as a basis for comparison. When you find that your next door neighbor is having symptoms that the doctor says you never had before, even though you had regular checkups, and you were in Brentwood, then you are going to believe your next door neighbor and his doctor, rather than the generic assurances from the experts and from the Postal Service that things are going to be all right.

That is why I am asking you if—and her I suppose this is directed to Dr. Sokas—if you would be willing to do an epidemiological study that would take this population of workers and residents who entered the facility and live near the city, and compare them to a comparable group of workers in a post office environment and residents who use that post office, as one way, and I am open to your suggestions as to other ways, and this is certainly consistent with the scientific method as I know it, as one way to reassure residents; or in the alternative, if we find differences, to lead us to new studies so that we can protect the health of these workers and these residents.

Dr. SOKAS. Congresswoman Norton, we can today assure you that we will discuss this with the director of CDC and respond to you in a more complete fashion. I believe we have already in place enough infrastructure to allow the kind of a study that you are describing to happen to take place without much difficulty.

But obviously, we would have to pull together the experts from the National Center for Infectious Diseases, as well as from the leadership of CDC. I would ask your staff to let us know who you would like to be involved with the discussion of that kind of work, and certainly we would bring in the other agencies, as well as unions, who would be involved. But we will commit to developing a proposal and then sharing it.

Ms. NORTON. I very much appreciate that. I would ask the chair when she and I can get together to have a preliminary meeting with the appropriate actors so that the kind of study that I think this kind of event deserves can be done. Of course, I ask it in light of the fact that we know still so little about anthrax, that to say that there will be no after effects is perhaps to say what we cannot stand behind.

Dr. SOKAS. Right. Congresswoman, I would like to say that in addition to the head of CDC, obviously the Secretary for Health and Human Services would be involved with the decision on how that should proceed. I also would like to say that again we clearly did not know what we did not know last October, and that is the car-

dinal sin that resulted in tragic deaths. And so we are very careful about what we say now in the future.

We did learn, however, that every piece of information that came in over the fall taught us that what was different about this was the behavior of the spores; that they had clearly been treated; that they clearly were much more readily dispersed into the air than the naturally occurring spores that had been studied for years.

Ms. NORTON. Well, just a followup on that, the notion of what kind of hypotheses to develop is going to be very important. The fact is if somebody sends something through the mail, it apparently did not occur to the CDC that they were sending cow spores. I mean, they were sending military-grade spores. They meant to do harm. And if you had in fact hypothesized that these were military-grade, then of course you might have looked at Brentwood and not simply opened it, because then of course the notion of its dispersing would have been more apparent.

I have the greatest respect for CDC for your own work, Dr. Sokas, and for American science, frankly. It is because I so believe in science that I would like the best science to be developed here so that residents can have the state-of-the-art science. Look, if there is stuff that nobody knew, we are not God.

But to the extent that mortals can in fact assure us that those who have been exposed are not in danger, then people will come back into this facility in a way that people may be reluctant to do now. I mean, members of the community, you might imagine—I speak about Hart, but Hart was not closed for almost a year.

Members of the community see this as a kind of giant tomb, and you wonder if you want to walk into that place which was so much larger than Hart, and for which there is no precedent for cleanup. Again, I think this can be overcome, but I think we have to go the extra mile and be terribly proactive in trying to do so.

I would like to ask about time. I am not a critic of the fact that it has taken too long. I do not think people would have wanted to go in very soon anyway. So I do not say, why don't you do it fast. In fact, I say do it slow, just do it right.

But I think we have—we need some sense of what, at least roughly, a time line would be, assuming a go on the decontamination test you are about to do. How long after that go would we get to total decontamination? And according to what you know now, how long would decontamination take? Bear in mind, Mr. Voltaggio, that even at Hart, because you had never done this before, you had to do it more than once because you went in and you found that in fact there was still some contamination there.

So I can only ask for your best sense at this time, and I understand that nobody can hold you to what no human being knows at this time, but I think we have a right to know. Do we imagine that this facility will open, for example, in the year 2003 at all? Are we in for some terribly long-term matter where Councilmember Orange has to prepare his community for a long period of time to wait and therefore perhaps to have the experts come back time and again? What is your best sense of the steps and how long the steps will take? Is this Dr. Gordon or Mr. Day? I do not know which of you have the best sense of that.

Mr. DAY. Congresswoman, I can at least start with the answer. I would agree with you to say up front that we are willing to sacrifice time in order to do this not only safely, but with full coordination and notification not only amongst agencies, but with the public as well. The tests that will take place on Monday really defines how quickly we move forward. Let's be optimistic.

We think everything that we have done to get ready for that test that it will be successful, as quickly, and I would agree with Councilman Orange, anything we can do to expedite the return of those results and the analysis of the results we certainly are interested in doing.

I believe, again assuming success of that test, that we are within weeks of being able to do the first full fumigation of the building. Now, it is 17 million cubic feet. The caution I would say, as occurred in the Hart Building on a smaller scale, I do not think we can necessarily assume that the very first time we attempt that fumigation that we absolutely with certainty can say that is it, we will just have to do it once. So the fact that we can begin it in weeks hopefully does not necessarily mean it is then finished very quickly.

Even when the fumigation is completed, it will then—let me go back a step because the intervening step between successful results from next week's test and beginning the fumigation process, again hopefully weeks, are two key issues.

One, we are committed to do a community meeting before we conduct a fumigation, to once and for all clearly outline the procedures in terms of any notification that would be required, what are the emergency procedures—make clear to the public and answer any final questions, and then as agreed, do the final 72-hour notice before the fumigation would begin. So those are other steps that would precede the actual fumigation. Then there is the treatment, or the testing that we would have to wait for results.

Finally, I would say in terms of when the building actually opens, when we reach that point in time, and I am being a bit optimistic, but if we get that done in September and we get the clean bill of health, say, by the end of September, early October, from the D.C. Department of Health, when we get that, that actually then begins the time clock to get the building ready to be occupied.

The fact that it is decontaminated of anthrax does not mean we just open the doors. Our plan is to do a full and complete renovation. We are going to refurbish offices, carpets, furniture, painting, cleanup, venting out the building. We want to do that so that when our employees come back to work, and we think that will take a couple of months to do it properly, we not only can tell you that the building is clean of anthrax and been safely decontaminated, but the building really provides the work environment that they deserve.

So even the effective cleanup, when certified by D.C. Department of Health officials, there will still be several months of renovation that we want to do to get that building in the best possible shape.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Day, while you have the mic, could I ask you where have all the workers gone? [Laughter.]

I would like to know where the workers—first of all, I would like to know the number of workers that were there. Where are they

now? Will all of them be coming back? Will you have difficulties attracting workers back? Have you been working with the union on a transition to get actual people back in that facility?

Mr. DAY. Let me take it in parts. Congresswoman, I can give you some very specific numbers and I do not know them off the top of my head. On rough order of magnitude, we are talking approximately 2,500 people. I can get you more specific numbers exactly. They are represented by different unions, so I could give you that breakdown as well.

In terms of where they are, they are working in both the stations and branches of the District itself, but the processing employees for the most part have gone out to other processing centers in the D.C. metropolitan area.

What we had to do when we shut down the Brentwood facility was to re-disperse all of that mail to other centers to process. And again, as I was thanking and praising employees, I think the amazing story to this is they have gone out, and that is obviously a great inconvenience, they have got to go to other facilities other than where they normally worked. They are working there. They are processing the mail. Quite honestly, the capital area was recognized as the best service performance in the country.

So our employees have done an amazing job in a very difficult environment. So they are spread around six other major processing centers, but again I can give you very specific numbers if you would like that.

Ms. NORTON. I wish you would, within 30 days, for the record.

Mr. DAY. We can followup.

Ms. NORTON. Is this the largest facility, I know in this region, but is it the largest facility in the country?

Mr. DAY. No, ma'am, it is not.

Ms. NORTON. It is not. All right.

Let me ask about this parameter. When you say things like 25 ppb and 15 ppb—these sound like enormous disparities, so that it is hard for the public to understand whether that is good or bad, frankly. I would like to know how you decided on what the parameter would be? What happens if some of the gas escapes? What effect do you think that would have, given the precautions that have been taken?

I am also interested in the cleaning of the machinery. Do you do that with gas or does somebody scrub down the machinery? Given the fact that these postal workers were exposed apparently from the machinery, the machinery turns out to be probably the culprit. I am very interested in that. I wish whoever feels best able would tackle those set of questions.

Mr. GORDON. Congresswoman Norton, the Department of Health, along with the Postal Service and EPA, conducted mathematical models on the Brentwood facility, taking into consideration the worst-case scenario of a major release of gas out of that building, and establishing the perimeter of .16 miles. Now, we have also taken into consideration——

Ms. NORTON. Excuse me, Dr. Gordon, have you recommended that this be done at a certain time of the day or evening?

Mr. GORDON. We would recommend it be started early in the morning throughout the entire day.

Ms. NORTON. On a weekday?

Mr. GORDON. Our preference would be on the weekend. That is a discussion point that we are having.

Ms. NORTON. Does it matter that there is a Home Depot and other facilities nearby?

Mr. GORDON. From a public health science standpoint, we do not think that the risk is that great. As in the situation with the Hart Building, we did not evacuate businesses. We did not evacuate residents.

Ms. NORTON. You did not. This is important to note, because if you want to find out how to do it, listen to what they did when senators were involved. [Laughter.]

Mr. GORDON. That is correct.

Ms. NORTON. Now, the testimony here is that businesses were not evacuated. Homes were not evacuated. Have there been any reports from businesses or homes or residents of any effects from the decontamination?

Mr. GORDON. None whatsoever.

Ms. NORTON. All right. So continue.

Mr. GORDON. We have established the same safety parameters that were established for the senators and Congressmen around the Hart Building. In consultation with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the District of Columbia and EPA set a base standard of 25 ppb. Now, let me tell you how that was arrived.

The Federal occupational safety and health standard for worker exposure to chlorine dioxide gas is 1,000 ppb over an 8-hour period of time, meaning that you would have to be exposed to concentrations of 1,000 ppb over 8 hours to exhibit clinical symptomology of ill-health effects.

Ms. NORTON. And that clinical symptomology would be what?

Mr. GORDON. Respiratory dysfunction, possible skin rash, eyes watering, difficulty breathing. Chlorine dioxide is a toxicant that is corrosive. Chlorine is corrosive. However, in setting a safety standard at 25 ppb, an analogy would be this first step in the ceiling, the ceiling being 1,000 parts and 25 being this step. At the time we did the Hart Building along with EPA, we used the TAGA bus and other air monitoring equipment that the Department of Health stationed around the Hart Building. We detected no levels of chlorine dioxide gas. In the event we would——

Ms. NORTON. Not a thing escaped?

Mr. GORDON. Not a thing was detected at 25 ppb. And if it was released at that level, you would not smell it. And if you do smell it, it is going to smell like chlorine out of your swimming pool. If you are in a swimming pool, that odor of chlorine from the pool is the odor that you would detect if there was a release. At 25 ppb, you cannot even detect it by the human nose.

We have set a standard I place. If the machinery goes off and we have two stationary air monitors on the roof, we have the TAGA bus that will be moving around and we have other air monitors around the perimeter of the building. In the event any of those go off, there will be an immediate shut-down of the operation, and to determine where and the location of any leak in the building. Therefore, we feel with that standard, that safety net, that the community is at very low risk.

Ms. NORTON. What time of the day did you do the—this is Mr. Voltaggio—what time of the day and what day of the week did you do the decontamination at Hart?

Mr. VOLTAGGIO. We started it at midnight, and we went through the next day, and it was a weekend—Saturday morning through the day Saturday is when we did the suite decontamination.

Ms. NORTON. I would only ask that you choose a time when there are the fewest people there. Dr. Gordon.

Mr. GORDON. I think the reason why the department——

Ms. NORTON. That is not because I fear, given the testimony here, that there would be a health problem. I think one of our problems, perhaps our major problems, is to contain fears and if having few people around contains fears then why not do it that way.

Mr. GORDON. The other reason why the Department of Health is encouraging the Postal Service to start early in the morning is that we also know based on the science that if there were to be a release of chlorine dioxide gas, if it is released during the daytime hours, exposed to the ultraviolet rays from the sun, it breaks down very rapidly and is rendered somewhat innocuous.

Ms. NORTON. So sunlight helps?

Mr. GORDON. Absolutely. Absolutely. And that is our recommendation on line 17, which we will start actually the process of preparation will be Sunday and we have a target period starting at 7 a.m., on Monday. Now, we also have a weather station that has been constructed and is on top of the building. The purpose of that weather station is also to determine directional flow of the wind. In the event there is a release, we want to know which way it is blowing and which way it is going to go, as an additional safety net.

We think that the necessary steps have been put in place to minimize the risk of any endangerment to this community. I must add, people need to understand, chlorine dioxide gas is not a gas that is flammable. It is not a gas that is going to explode like some other toxicants. And as my colleague Tom Voltaggio stated, it has been used over the years for decontamination of water and fruits and vegetables and foods, and we think it is a very acceptable means of sterilizing and decontaminating this facility and rendering the anthrax spores innocuous.

Ms. NORTON. Councilmember Orange, you have heard the testimony here concerning cautions that are being taken. I would like some sense of the gravamen of the concerns of the community. The community here, as I understand it, would involve people who live in the vicinity and people who use the post office. Like the employees, they are going to want to go back into that building the way they did before. What are the major concerns you are hearing from the community?

Mr. ORANGE. Well, I guess the major concern is really making sure that full disclosure and all the information is put on the table and that it is accurate information. There is some concern when you have a full-blown article within the Washington Post that has all this information and people digest that information and then the experts come back 30 days later and say that the information in their article was erroneous. Yet that information came from the experts and was reported through the Washington Post.

Ms. NORTON. Do you have any information of that kind that you——

Mr. ORANGE. Yes, for example, the 20,000 tons of chlorine dioxide gas that would be brought into the community, and now we are saying it is 2,000 pounds. And then when you look at the Hart Building and you look at the amount of chlorine dioxide gas that was used in the Hart Building, and you do the simple mathematics, it does not add up. It appears as though this should be more chlorine dioxide gas being utilized at the Brentwood facility than what is being put on the table. So the community just wants a clear analysis of what is exactly going to be put in the Brentwood facility.

When you look at it in terms of 17.5 million cubic feet versus 100,000 cubic feet for the Hart Building, then you would say, I mean clearly you would expect there to be more chlorine dioxide gas pumped into the Brentwood facility.

Now, when you talk about the perimeter, and I agree with Mr. Gordon and Mr. Day as it relates to the science and the health, .16 miles perimeter is probably a safe perimeter. But when you bring in the element of the community and then the public safety and, like you indicated yourself, containment of fears, then you probably would have to expand that perimeter a little bit to at least say during the 24 hours of operation that you need to shut down Brentwood Road; that you really should not have any traffic flowing on that street because that provides easy access to the facility.

What if someone decided that I am going to get a big truck that day and I am going to fill it with explosives and I am going to drive right into the Brentwood facility because the street is open and it is still easy flow. So that is a containment of fear.

We do not have any problems with the tests that are going to take place on Monday, and let me tell you why. Because the test itself, the gas is going to be pumped into an area that is contained by a tent, and the tent is contained within the facility itself, so you have an extra layer of containment.

But when the actual fumigation takes place, that tent will not be in place, and then you just have the entire facility, 17.5 million cubic feet. So I do think that we are getting close to all being on the same page. This clearly has been helpful, the town hall meeting that took place on June 27, and even the presentation that was made here today, and then the explanation that has been given by the other experts, but I do still believe that we should take the extra step of precaution and really discuss and talk about those contingency plans as well, so people will feel comfortable that there is in fact a contingency plan just in case something goes wrong.

Ms. NORTON. I am going to ask that there be meetings with the District on this matter, to do the kind of cost/benefit—obviously, this is bending over backward, but I think the councilmember has raised a scenario that deserves some consideration. Can we straighten out Councilmember Orange's point about the amount of——

Mr. VOLTAGGIO. Yes, I hope I can maybe clarify that some. Chlorine dioxide is not brought onto the site. We generate chlorine dioxide at the site. What we do bring—we will have 20,000 tons of ma-

terial brought on and waste made from the process. They will only generate 2,000 pounds of chlorine dioxide gas.

So I think the discrepancy about the poundage I think had to do with how much gas actually gets generated versus how much material you have to bring onto the site to generate the gas, because there is a chemical reaction that takes place in order to generate the chlorine dioxide from other materials, basically sodium bisufite, hydrochloric acid. We have bleach. We have a number of materials that are brought on in order to make it. But the chlorine dioxide itself is only 2,000 pounds.

Ms. NORTON. When you are going to wipe those machines—and those machines are what interests me, frankly, machines where we think the lethal contact occurred—is that going to be with pumping gas or are they going to be wiped down or what?

Mr. VOLTAGGIO. I would throw that to Mr. Day.

Ms. NORTON. Yes?

Mr. DAY. During the processing of the actual fumigation, the machines will be operational. They will be running. We want to make sure that every aspect of that machine is exposed to the gas for total disinfecting. So the equipment will be running full-speed, even line 17, the tenting operation we are going to do Monday, the equipment will be on and running. Nothing will be sitting stationary. Everything will be exposed.

Ms. NORTON. That is important.

Mr. DAY. Congressman, I would just further point out, the way our machine, it is automated distribution equipment, the way they are designed really for their normal use with maintenance, they have lids that open up so what you see is a contained machine, but fully capable of opening all those lids up so that all the interior portions of the machine will be fully exposed.

Ms. NORTON. So it is blowing out anything that is in there.

Mr. ORANGE. Congresswoman.

Ms. NORTON. Yes, councilmember.

Mr. ORANGE. We just received an answer that there would be 20,000 tons of chemicals or materials that would be brought to the site, and then that will actually be turned into 2,000 tons of chlorine dioxide gas. That is precisely the type of information that the community wants, because it was put in the paper that it was 20,000 tons of chlorine dioxide gas.

So we are not imagining this number of 20,000 tons, and today for the first time we got an explanation for what that 20,000 tons represents. That is what I am saying—we need a clear accurate description of what is on that site, the actual tonnage, the actual poundage, and the relationship——

Ms. NORTON. Councilmember, are you saying that there has been a problem in getting that kind of communication? Is it a problem with the technical terminology? Is it a problem with contact? Is it a problem with your office making sure that people are in contact with you and the relevant community members? Maybe there is a way we can straighten out some of that right here now.

Mr. ORANGE. I think what it is, is maybe we are talking past each other, as opposed to really listening to each other and trying to really dissect the information that is made available. As I indicated, I keep going back to that Post article that says 20,000 tons

of chlorine dioxide gas will be pumped into this building. And then the experts come back this week or a few weeks ago and say, no, it is 2,000 pounds.

Ms. NORTON. That might have been the Post's mistake.

Mr. ORANGE. Yes, and it could have been, but it has never been corrected. And I am just saying, let's correct that information and let's see exactly what chemicals are onsite, how those chemicals are brought into that facility and how they will exit that facility.

Ms. NORTON. Dr. Gordon.

Mr. GORDON. Yes, I need to, as the councilman has pointed out, I need to correct the record. I have been advised, I said 1,000 ppb was the OSHA standard. It is actually 100 ppb, and we have set the safety net at 25. So I want the record to reflect and correct my earlier statement.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you.

$22 billion, as I understand it—is that what this cleanup is supposed to cost?

Mr. DAY. No, Congresswoman—million.

Ms. NORTON. I am sorry—million, $22 million.

Mr. DAY. Yes.

Ms. NORTON. Do you have the cash on hand? [Laughter.]

Mr. DAY. Congresswoman, actually, through the good graces of Congress and the administration, we did get funds appropriated.

Ms. NORTON. I hate to ask this, but whenever government does anything, there are, "cost overruns." Suppose it costs more than $22 million.

Mr. DAY. Congresswoman, we were appropriated initially $175 million from the White House. Congress approved the White House, the president the ability to give funds to agencies. We had $175 million initially. Further, we were appropriated $500 million for emergency preparedness. Our very first——

Ms. NORTON. That is for the United States of America.

Mr. DAY. But what you need to understand, Congresswoman, is that our very first priority in the emergency preparedness plan, very clear in the plan, is decontamination and cleanup and reoccupation of Brentwood and Trenton.

Ms. NORTON. Whatever it costs.

Mr. DAY. Whatever it costs. So, we have other plans. We have fully documented how we would spend the $500 million. Our commitment is to get this done and do it right. So the funds are there.

Ms. NORTON. Dr. Gordon, perhaps you can tell me, is the District of Columbia being fully reimbursed for any costs it has incurred from this crisis at Brentwood in particular?

Mr. GORDON. We have not had any direct discussions with the Postal Service. However, the city administrator and the mayor have instructed us to maintain a catalogue of our time and cost, at which time we will request reimbursement from the Postal Service.

Ms. NORTON. Let me just ask the Postal Service right now. Are you prepared to reimburse the District of Columbia fully for any costs it incurs with respect to the Brentwood facility? [Laughter.]

Do not hesitate now, Mr. Day. I mean, you were real quick that whatever it costs. It is costing the District of Columbia. We did not have anything to do with Brentwood.

Mr. DAY. It is a topic that has not been discussed. We are certainly open to the discussion.

Ms. NORTON. Well, I am having that discussion with you right now.

[Applause.]

Ms. NORTON. You have really had the—the Post Office has had all of the services of our health department and of every other agency of the government that could be useful. The Congress, of course, gave you money to deal with whatever your expenses were. The expense that the District of Columbia has incurred is an expense.

You cannot assure me that you will reimburse the District? You are reimbursing the contractors. The District of Columbia is a contractor in this matter. I do not want to get down and dirty with money here, but I really am prepared and I would like an answer within 30 days as to whether or not you are prepared to reimburse the District of Columbia.

Mr. DAY. We certainly can provide the response for you. Congresswoman, my only reluctance is, I do not even know the scale. So we would just have to discuss it.

Ms. NORTON. You do not know the scale of what the cleanup will be either. None of us knows the scale, but you have just said you are going to do whatever it takes, and it seems to me that was a good answer. Whatever it takes includes whatever the District of Columbia has in fact done.

Mr. DAY. I think we can certainly reach an agreement that will be work for everyone.

Ms. NORTON. Look, they have to provide chits like everybody else.

Mr. DAY. Congresswoman, the money was appropriated to us from Congress. It was not derived from our revenues. We will work to fairly compensate those parties that are part of this. We will work it out. I do not see that as a problem.

Ms. NORTON. I am going to take that as a yes and go forward from here.

I must ask about future threats. People are going to walk in, and I think they should be reassured, because I know you are not going to let either your employees in or residents in until you have done all that you have described here.

Now, that being the case, the question becomes, is Brentwood prepared for in case there is a new bioterrorism event? Now just a moment—let's try to get an answer here. Let's ask. It is one thing to clean the place out. It is another thing to prepare for the unknown, and that is part of what it would be.

You of course have a greater sense of what might happen now. The Congress now has appropriated all kinds of money. I have just gotten for the Washington Hospital Center a promise with the first funds already there to build the first bioterrorism emergency room in the country. They are going to be prepared if we ever need it to hand 100-plus patients per hour in their emergency room.

I have just gotten $10 million for Children's Hospital to do the same with respect to children. So if something happens, we are getting the medical facilities in place. What we want to know is, what is the Postal Service going to do to prevent the necessity or using

any such medical facilities? How will we prevent a bioterrorist attack and how will we know if one is occurring in the Postal Service or in Brentwood?

Mr. DAY. Congresswoman, what we are dealing with in the Postal Service is how would we detect and contain, if there were another attack. We have two primary——

Ms. NORTON. Of any substance.

Mr. DAY. Biohazardous substance.

Ms. NORTON. Right.

Mr. DAY. We are also looking at other threats as well. We have two primary technologies that we are actively pursuing and testing right now that were a part of the appropriation that Congress provided. One is called a biological detection system. We have worked with various other Federal agencies to develop that.

It is being tested right now in Baltimore, Maryland. Our plan is to move forward on that, again assuming the test is validated and it is proven effective. Right now, I would tell you that will be the outcome. It does look like the results are excellent.

In terms of the ability to detect, it would have very low false positives; that it would truly tell you what happened, as well as a very low false negative. You do not want systems that alert you to something that really is not there. And we have put very tight parameters on that and the system looks to be very effective.

We would like to move forward on that, although I will throw a caveat into our ability to move forward as quickly as possible, and we are looking to even try to award the contract in September. Our plan on that is to deploy it nationwide.

Brentwood, being part of our network, would be there, and given the tragedy that they went through would be the very first facility, along with Hamilton Township, that we would want to put that kind of equipment. So as quickly as we can get it, it will be in place.

The second level of technology we call a vacuuming and filtration system. That is to put over our equipment that if the event takes place, the anthrax escapes from the mail, we detect it, the problem is—and let me just be clear on this—the only detection technology that is available you have to have an event. It has to escape to be detected. There is no way to peer inside mail to see if there is anthrax in there.

So you find that out very quickly and you contain it, but this vacuuming and filtration system covers our automated distribution equipment. Right now, the DBCS–17 that everyone has talked about is a very open piece of equipment.

Vacuuming and filtration would create a negative air-flow that if an event took place, it would draw those spores away, not just anthrax spores, but any hazard that might be placed in the mail. I would emphasize the biological detection system is done in a way that not only would detect anthrax, but we have built it in a way that gives it the ability to detect a range of biological hazards.

Ms. NORTON. That will be in place at the time that Brentwood is open?

Mr. DAY. No. Going back to the timeframes of when we think we can open it, the contractor's ability to get this equipment built and

functioning, there maybe somewhat of a delay there, but that is true nationwide. Right now, we do not have that in place.

Now, anything I can do to get it—again, our effort will be to get it in Brentwood and Hamilton first. Anything I can do to accelerate——

Ms. NORTON. And "first" would mean by approximately when?

Mr. DAY. We think that the equipment will be available late next spring.

Now, the caveat I was giving you, Congresswoman, is, working with these companies to build this technology, they have been very clear to us, and I know this has been debated in Congress, on the issue of indemnification. Because of the liabilities that are associated, the legal liabilities, they have made very clear to us unless the issue of indemnification is rectified, they will not sign a contract with us.

Ms. NORTON. Does the bill pending in the Senate now do that, in your judgment?

Mr. DAY. We believe that the legislation pending, I believe there are different versions in both House and Senate, we believe it will do it, and the vendors we are dealing with believe that also. Of course, we have to wait to see what the final legislation actually says.

Ms. NORTON. Is this irradiated mail that the Congress is now receiving considered safe, and is this the only method now available for use in mail coming to secure environments like the Congress?

Mr. DAY. Congresswoman, I was on the Hill yesterday with both House and Senate administrative staff, and there was a study completed—I may defer if Dr. Sokas would like to comment on it, to try to determine some of the effects that have been reported and whether or not it is related to irradiated mail. There is an ongoing effort.

My understanding is that link has not been shown, but again I will let Dr. Sokas comment on that. In terms of, is this the only way, we continue under guidelines we have had, conversations and ongoing dialog with office of homeland security, as well as advice in terms of threat from various Federal law enforcement agencies, that we need to continue the irradiation process.

It is the only effective way that we have found that can decontaminate a biological hazard in the mail. There is some discussion right now—I do not know how far you want to get into technology—about the effectiveness of electronic beam versus an X-ray version, but that is really kind of splitting the hairs. It is more of the sophistication of the technology, but it is still irradiation.

Ms. NORTON. Yes. Dr. Sokas, did you want to comment on that—irradiated mail?

Dr. SOKAS. Yes, we have conducted two different studies, one that looked at the postal workers themselves as they were opening large bags, and there was some concern identified by a Postal Service contractor about degradation of the plastic that could cause some carbon monoxide as the large bags were being opened—the plastic-covered palettes were being opened. I believe that has been taken care of by different work practices that would reduce that.

Ms. NORTON. That is not opened. That mail is not opened at Brentwood, is it?

Mr. DAY. No, and we have eliminated the use of that plastic.

Dr. SOKAS. Right. But the second issue is, as you receive mail in office buildings specifically, the people on the Hill had a number of complaints. We had industrial hygienists who went and sampled the air, as well as the materials, and we had physicians who did interview the individuals.

Our conclusions were that the traces and particles that were present were far below those of recognized standards for workplace settings, and we did not feel that they were causing some of the dry eyes and cough. The concern we mentioned at the time in the Capitol was—this was conducted in January, of course the humidity was quite low.

There is some clear differences in terms of the paper dust and that sort of thing that happens. We thought that was more of a comfort issue that could be rectified, but that was not a hazard due to the irradiated mail.

Ms. NORTON. Let me ask one final question. I have had some complaints from my constituents. I do not now if Councilmember Orange has had such complaints as well. I do not know if they continued, but they have to do with delays in the mail in this area, with people who have had to pay late fees because they did not get their mail on time. Is this still happening? And have you taken steps, now that this mail is dispersed throughout the region, to avoid the problem of late delivery of mail in this area?

Mr. DAY. Congresswoman, there certainly were delays when we shut down the facility. There was a backlog of actually contaminated mail that needed to be treated. That backlog took us quite a bit of time to decontaminate.

Ms. NORTON. Yes, we are still getting some from that, I am here to testify.

Mr. DAY. I can't answer to what you are seeing, but let me just tell you how long it took and where we got the backlog cleaned up. We have continued to irradiate the destination mail to the Federal agencies in the District, and it is the zip codes 202 through 205 that we continue to irradiate. That backlog for letter and oversize mail pieces was cleaned up back in the February-March timeframe.

What was severely backlogged because we were awaiting X-ray technology to be activated in New Jersey at the facility we used, were packages, and we cleared the backlog of packages back in June. We have been in a stable environment in which we prepare, mail on the day it arrives here in this area, ship it to New Jersey, treat it, turn it around in 24 hours, bring it back into the D.C. area, open it, vent it so that any odor or any other issues are——

Ms. NORTON. That is congressional mail. What about the mail of the average person?

Mr. DAY. The average person——

Ms. NORTON. Whose mail went through Brentwood.

Mr. DAY. So the average person in the 200 zip code range, that mail has been redistributed through the area. We use a system of external measurement, and as I indicated earlier, this area had the highest service numbers in the country, and the 200 zip code range being included.

Ms. NORTON. So you believe there is no delay at this time resulting from the dispersal of the employees around the region?

Mr. DAY. Nothing related to the dispersal of the employees, nothing related to irradiation. Certainly anecdotally, anyone might have a story of a delayed mail piece, but our service measures tell us that we are providing as good a service in this area as we did before the unfortunate incident in October.

Ms. NORTON. I want to thank this panel of witnesses. I have held you longer because you had more of the answers I think that the community and that the Congress needed than perhaps others. We very much appreciate your testimony.

We would now like to call John Hegarty, national president of the National Postal Mail Handlers; Alan Ferranto, director of safety and health, National Association of Letter Carriers; Roy Braunstein, legislative director, American Postal Workers Union; also Corey Thompson, APWU safety and health specialist.

If you would stand and please raise your right hands so that you may take the oath.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much. Please be seated. We are pleased to receive your testimony.

Mr. Hegarty.

STATEMENTS OF JOHN F. HEGARTY, NATIONAL PRESIDENT, NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION; ALAN C. FERRANTO, DIRECTOR OF SAFETY AND HEALTH, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS; AND ROY BRAUNSTEIN, LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR, AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION

Mr. HEGARTY. Good morning, Congresswoman Norton. My name is John Hegarty. I am the president of the National Postal Mail Handlers Union. I have with me today in reference to Brentwood, Cynthia Vines, who is the branch president for the National Postal Mail Handlers Union at the Brentwood facility, and Richard Collins, who is on the mail security task force for the National Postal Mail Handlers Union.

On behalf of 50,000 union mail handlers employed by the U.S. Postal Service, including approximately 500 mail handlers who work at the Brentwood Processing and Distribution Center, I appreciate the opportunity to testify about the challenges currently facing the Postal Service and all postal employees at Brentwood.

As you probably know, the employees represented by the Mail Handlers Union are an essential part of the mail processing and distribution network utilized by the Postal Service to move more than 200 billion pieces of mail each year.

Mail handlers work in all of the Nation's large postal plants and are responsible for loading and unloading trucks, transporting mail within the facility, preparing mail for distribution and delivery, operating a host of machinery and automated equipment, and containerizing mail for subsequent delivery. Our members are generally the first and the last to handle the mail as it comes into and leaves the postal plants.

Although I am relatively new to Washington, DC, and this is my first visit to the area surrounding Brentwood, I have been personally involved in the issues arising from last year's anthrax attacks. Indeed, after attending a labor-management grievance meeting last

October at the Hamilton Township postal facility in Trenton, New Jersey, I was one of the thousands of postal employees who had to take several months of antibiotics in order to ensure my own immunity from anthrax contamination. In some small respects, therefore, I know first-hand the fear and anxiety that now affects many postal employees.

My personal experience with the terror of anthrax adds personal meaning to what has been and what must continue to be our guiding principle, that our paramount concern must be the safety and well-being of postal employees, including all mail handlers.

This includes not only ensuring that the Brentwood facility is free of anthrax, but also making sure that the employees are emotionally ready, willing and able to move back into the facility. To this end, the mail handlers union has been an active participant in the mail security task force established by postal management and including representatives of all unions and employee associations, which has been meeting since last year to ensure that all reasonable measures are being taken to prevent any further infection from anthrax or other biological agents.

We have also been active supporters of the efforts to obtain sufficient congressional funding for the cleanup effort both here at Brentwood, and at other postal facilities along the eastern seaboard. We particularly appreciate the efforts made by members of this subcommittee and fervently hope that the Congress will continue to provide complete funding for the costs imposed on the Postal Service because of the anthrax attacks and their aftermath.

Turning to the present situation at Brentwood, again our primary concern must be the health and welfare of the 2,000 postal employees who work at Brentwood and who, for the past 9 months, have been scattered around in neighboring postal facilities.

To meet these concerns, the employees at Brentwood must know, first, that all levels of government and postal management are doing everything possible, using the best available science and technology, to ensure that the Brentwood facility is fully decontaminated before any worker is asked to return; second, that they are being kept fully informed about the latest developments, including information about the actual cleanup so that there is no misinformation disseminated and so that the rumor mill can be put to rest; third, that they have a real choice on whether to return, so that employees who are experiencing particular fear or anxiety can freely choose not to return to Brentwood without any loss of pay or benefits; four, that if they return to Brentwood, the employees will be carefully monitored for any illnesses or other adverse side effects, whether physical or emotional, especially during the first few days and weeks after Brentwood is reopened; fifth, that the reopening of Brentwood is not the end of our concerns, but rather the starting point from which the Postal Service will take whatever steps are necessary and use whatever technologies are available to ensure that postal employees and the mail that they process is safe; sixth, that the elected representatives of these employees, meaning the union representatives at the local level, are allowed to participate in the planning and implementation for each and every step of the project that needs to be accomplished at the Brentwood facility.

If these general guidelines are followed, I believe that the reopening of Brentwood can be accomplished smoothly and successfully. But it is easier to state these guidelines than to follow them. For example, Congress not only needs to continue its oversight of this cleanup, but Congress also has to continue full funding for the cleanup and for all of the followup work that must be completed after the facility is reopened. Postal management also has to do a better job of making sure that complete and accurate information is being disseminated to its employees and that questions are answered before the rumors start flying.

The examples could continue, but there is no reason to belabor the point. All of the participants must work together to ensure the safety and the well-being of the employees at Brentwood. Anything less would increase the fear and anxiety of these postal employees who have already suffered too much.

Thank you for your time, and I would be glad to answer any questions you might have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hegarty follows:]

National Postal Mail Handlers Union

John F. Hegarty
National President

Mark A. Gardner
Secretary-Treasurer

Hardy Williams
Vice President
Central Region

Samuel C. D'Ambrosio
Vice President
Eastern Region

Arthur S. Vallone
Vice President
Northeastern Region

James C. Terrell
Vice President
Southern Region

Efraim Daniel
Vice President
Western Region

TESTIMONY OF

JOHN F. HEGARTY

NATIONAL PRESIDENT

NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION

before the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

of the

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

CLEAN-UP OF THE U.S. POSTAL SERVICE'S

BRENTWOOD PROCESSING & DISTRIBUTION CENTER

JULY 26, 2002

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Madame Chairwoman and Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. I am John Hegarty, the National President of the National Postal Mail Handlers Union. On behalf of 50,000 union mail handlers employed by the U.S. Postal Service, including approximately 500 mail handlers who work at the Brentwood Processing & Distribution Center, I appreciate the opportunity to testify about the challenges currently facing the Postal Service and all postal employees at Brentwood.

As you probably know, the employees represented by the Mail Handlers Union are an essential part of the mail processing and distribution network utilized by the Postal Service to move more than 200 billion pieces of mail each year. Mail handlers work in all of the nation's large postal plants, and are responsible for loading and unloading trucks, transporting mail within the facility, preparing the mail for distribution and delivery, operating a host of machinery and automated equipment, and containerizing mail for subsequent delivery. Our members are generally the first and the last employees to handle the mail as it comes to, goes through, and leaves most postal plants.

Although I am relatively new to Washington, DC, and this is my first visit to the area surrounding Brentwood, I have been personally involved in the issues arising from last year's anthrax attacks. Indeed, after attending a labor-management grievance meeting last October at the Hamilton Township postal facility in Trenton, New Jersey, I was one of the thousands of postal employees who had to take several months of Cipro in order to ensure my own immunity

from anthrax contamination. In some small respects, therefore, I know first-hand the fear and anxiety that now affect many postal employees.

My personal experience with the terror of anthrax adds personal meaning to what has been, and what must continue to be, our guiding principle: **that our paramount concern must be the safety and well-being of postal employees, including all mail handlers**. This includes not only ensuring that the Brentwood facility is free of anthrax, but also making sure that the employees are emotionally ready, willing, and able to move back into the facility.

To this end, the Mail Handlers Union has been an active participant in the Mail Security Task Force – established by postal management and including representatives of all unions and employee associations – which has been meeting since last year to ensure that all reasonable measures are being taken to prevent any further infection from anthrax or other biological agents. We also have been active supporters of the efforts to obtain sufficient Congressional funding for the clean-up efforts, both here at Brentwood and at other postal facilities along the Eastern seaboard. We particularly appreciate the efforts made by the Members of this Subcommittee, and fervently hope that the Congress will continue to provide complete funding for the costs imposed on the Postal Service because of the anthrax attacks and their aftermath.

Turning to the present situation at Brentwood, again our primary concern must be the health and welfare of the two thousand postal employees who work at Brentwood, and who for the past nine months have been scattered

around in neighboring postal facilities. To meet these concerns, the employees at Brentwood must know:

First, that all levels of government and postal management are doing everything possible, using the best available science and technology, to ensure that the Brentwood facility is fully decontaminated before any worker is asked to return.

Second, that they are being kept fully informed about the latest developments, including information about the actual clean-up, so that there is no misinformation disseminated, and so that the rumor mill can be put to rest.

Third, that they have a real choice on whether to return, so that employees who are experiencing particular fear or anxiety can freely choose not to return to Brentwood, without any loss of pay or benefits.

Fourth, that, if they return to Brentwood, the employees will be carefully monitored for any illnesses or other adverse side effects – whether physical or emotional – especially during the first few days and weeks after Brentwood is reopened.

Fifth, that the reopening of Brentwood is not the end of our concerns, but rather another starting point, from which the Postal Service will take whatever steps are necessary and use whatever technologies are available to ensure that postal employees, and the mail that they process, remain safe.

Sixth, that the elected representatives of these employees, meaning the union representatives at the local level, are allowed to participate in the

planning and implementation for each and every step of the project that needs to be accomplished at the Brentwood facility.

If these general guidelines are followed, I believe that the reopening of Brentwood can be accomplished smoothly and successfully. But it is easier to state these guidelines than to follow them. For example, Congress not only needs to continue its oversight of this clean-up, but Congress also has to continue full funding for the clean-up, and for all of the follow-up work that must be completed after the facility is reopened. Postal management also has to do a better job of making sure that complete and accurate information is being disseminated to its employees, and that questions are answered before the rumors start flying.

The examples could continue, but there is no reason to belabor the point. All of the participants must work together to ensure the safety, and the well-being, of the employees at Brentwood. Anything less would increase the fear and anxiety of these postal employees, who already have suffered too much.

Thank you, and I will be glad to answer any questions you may have.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Hegarty.

Mr. Ferranto.

Mr. FERRANTO. Thank you, Congresswoman. I would like to thank you for a request for a CDC study that will assure our members that they are safe, and not only from anthrax, but from the decontamination process as well. We do appreciate that. I would like to begin my testimony at this present time.

Thank you, Chairman Morella and Ranking Member Norton for the opportunity to testify on this important subject. My name is Al Ferranto and I am director of safety and health of the National Association of Letter Carriers. Since September 11th of last year, this has been a trying time for all Americans.

For those of us in the postal community, we have also been personally confronted with challenges previously considered unimaginable. I am happy to report that the 350,000 members of the National Association of Letter Carriers have shown remarkable strength in bouncing back from these attacks. We know that there are few uniquely American experiences like the daily ritual of reaching into the mailbox to get the mail. That is why we went to such great lengths to be out on the streets and serving the public last fall.

As you well know, Madam Chair, the initial response to the anthrax attacks was chaotic, whether it was in New York, Florida, Capitol Hill or the post office. That was due in large part to the unprecedented nature of the circumstances. However, within the Postal Service, unprecedented circumstances gave rise to unprecedented levels of cooperation. The Postal Service established a line of communication with all the employee organizations, initially meeting on a daily basis to deal with events as they occurred.

The Mail Security Task Force Working Group, as it has come to be known, was formed by representatives from all of the employee organizations and all relevant departments within the Postal Service. At any given time, agencies with expertise in a particular area have briefed the group. Once the immediate anthrax threat subsided, that structure remained in place. While we no longer meet on a daily basis, we get together frequently to discuss the latest developments. For the last several months, cleanup of the Brentwood facility has been the dominant topic in those meetings.

The NALC recognizes the extraordinary challenges associated with decontaminating the Brentwood facility. Whereas the Hart Building cleanup dealt with 100,000 square feet, the Brentwood Processing and Distribution Center requires covering 17 million square feet of space. The good news is that the Hart Building gave us a good road map to what to expect during the cleanup.

We are satisfied that the Postal Service is exercising the right level of caution in moving forward, and are encouraged that it has not sought to impose artificial or arbitrary deadlines, which could lead to irresponsible actions being taken. Using the same contractors and the same chlorine dioxide approach also provides letter carriers, other postal employees and postal customers with the confidence that the cleanup of Brentwood will be as good or better than the cleanup of the Hart Building.

As you know, at the initial stages of the anthrax situation, some of our members did not feel they received equal treatment to other

government employees. We will not allow that to happen again. We will not let our members return to work at Brentwood until we are fully satisfied that it is safe for them to do so. For that reason, there has been a high premium placed on communications.

Our local leadership is actively involved in the process. These are the people who have the most day to day interaction with our rank and file members. NALC Branch 142, under the leadership of President Joe Henry, who is here with me at this hearing, organized a meeting of our members, as well as members of the National Postal Mail Handlers Union at the NALC Branch 142 union hall.

They also cosponsored a meeting at the Israeli Baptist Church along with the mail handlers and the NAACP, which was attended by more than 300 people. President Henry also serves on both the Brentwood Reentry Committee and the Scientific Review Committee. The Brentwood Reentry Committee includes representatives from the other postal unions and various departments within the Postal Service itself. The Scientific Review Committee is comprised of the D.C. Department of Public Health, NIOSH, OSHA and the cleaning team, among others.

At the headquarters level, sitting on the Mail Security Task Force Working Group has allowed us to hear about what the Postal Service plans to say to our members so that we can be sure they are being provided with the best possible information.

Over the years, the NALC and its members have not been shy about letting our voices be heard when we do not like what the Postal Service is doing. However, at this point we are satisfied that the Postal Service is doing all that it can to assure the safety of our members to provide information about how the cleanup will take place and to answer any lingering questions that our members may still have.

On March 27, there was a town meeting that a number of postal employees attended. Since that meeting, the Postal Service has stepped up its efforts at providing information to its employees. After the contract was awarded for the cleanup of Brentwood site, there were five employee town hall meetings conducted on May 16 and May 22. Employees were actually provided pay for the time needed to attend them. Our members were notified of the meetings through stand up talks on the workroom floor and through mailings to their home. Our local union leadership also attended the meetings.

As new information has become available, postal supervisors have delivered stand up talks to our members to keep them up to date. In addition, a system has been set up that our members can ask any questions or raise concerns. There are question forms, a toll-free number, communication facilitators at any facility where Brentwood employees are located, Brentwood update bulletin boards, mailings to homes, town hall meetings, and the USPS Web site. Many of the questions gathered through these channels are answered in writing and distributed on a regular basis.

Our understanding is that the final step in the process will be a review by the Environmental Clearance Committee comprised of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Center for Disease Con-

trol and Prevention, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and the Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute.

We look forward to hearing from this committee about the effectiveness of the Brentwood cleanup so that we can be confident that our members and the public we serve are protected prior to the facility being reopened.

At the time of the attack, there were 242 letter carriers working out of the Brentwood facility. We expect that all of them, with the possible exception of some of those responsible for handling government mail, will go back to work at that location. Given the nature of the circumstances, it is understandable that some of our members have some anxiety about going back to work at Brentwood.

The Postal Service needs to do its part to make sure that our members have every confidence that they are returning to a safe and healthy workplace. So far, the Postal Service is making that effort. Of course, until the process is completed, we will continue to communicate regularly with our membership and with the Postal Service.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony, and I will answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ferranto follows:]

Testimony of Alan C. Ferranto
Director of Safety and Health
National Association of Letter Carriers
Before the House of Representatives
Subcommittee on the District of Columbia
July 26, 2002

Thank you Chairwoman Morella and ranking member Norton for the opportunity to testify on this important subject. Since September 11 of last year, this has been a trying time for all Americans. For those of us in the postal community, we have also been personally confronted with challenges previously considered unimaginable. I'm happy to report that the 315,000 members of the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) have shown remarkable strength in bouncing back from these attacks. We know that there are few uniquely American experiences like the daily ritual of reaching into the mailbox to get the mail. That is why we went to such great lengths to be out on the streets and serving the public last fall.

As you well know, Madam Chair, the initial response to the anthrax attacks was chaotic, whether it was in New York, Florida, Capitol Hill or the post office. That was due in large part to the unprecedented nature of the circumstances. However, within the Postal Service, unprecedented circumstances gave rise to unprecedented levels of cooperation. The Postal Service established a line of communication with all of the employee organizations, initially meeting on a daily basis to deal with events as they occur. The Mail Security Taskforce Working Group as it has come to be known was formed with representatives from all of the employee organizations and all relevant departments within the Postal Service. At any given time, agencies with expertise in a particular area have briefed the group. Once the immediate anthrax threat subsided, that structure remained in place. While we no longer meet on a daily basis, we get together frequently to discuss the latest developments. For the last several months, clean up of the Brentwood facility has been the dominant topic in those meetings.

The NALC recognizes the extraordinary challenges associated with decontaminating the Brentwood facility. Whereas Hart building cleanup dealt with 100,000 square feet, the Brentwood Processing and Distribution Center requires covering 17 million square feet of space. The good news is that the Hart building gave us a good road map of what to expect during the cleanup. We are satisfied that the Postal Service is exercising the right level of caution in moving forward and are encouraged that it has not sought to impose artificial or arbitrary deadlines which could lead to irresponsible actions being taken. Using the same contractors and the same Chlorine Dioxide approach also provides letter carriers, other postal employees and postal customers with the confidence that the cleanup of Brentwood will be as good or better than the clean up of the Hart building. As you know, at the initial stages of the anthrax situation, some of our members did not feel confident that they were receiving such equal treatment. Given that unfortunate situation, there has been a high premium placed on communication.

Our local leadership is actively involved in the process. These are the people who have the most day-to-day interaction with our rank and file members. NALC Branch 142, under the leadership of president Joe Henry, organized a meeting of our members as well as members of the National Postal Mail Handlers Union at the NALC Branch 142 union hall. They also cosponsored a

meeting at the Israel Baptist Church along with the Mail Handlers and the NAACP, which was attended by more than 300 people.

President Henry also serves on both the Brentwood Reentry Committee and the Scientific Review Committee. The Brentwood Reentry Committee includes representatives from the other postal unions and various departments within the Postal Service Itself. The Scientific Review Committee is comprised of the DC Department of Public Health, NIOSH, OSHA and the cleaning team, among others.

At the headquarters level, Sitting on the Mail Security Taskforce Working Group has allowed us to hear about what the Postal Service plans to say to our members so that we can be sure they are being provided with the best possible information.

Over the years, the NALC and its members have not been shy about letting our voices be heard when we don't like what the Postal Service is doing. However, at this point we are satisfied that the Postal Service is doing all that it can to ensure the safety of our members, to provide information about how the clean up will take place and answer any lingering questions that our members may still have.

On March 27 there was a town meeting that a number of postal employees attended. Since that meeting, the Postal Service has stepped up its efforts at providing information to its employees. After the contract was awarded for the cleanup of the Brentwood sight, there were five employee town hall meetings conducted on May 16 and May 22. Employees were actually provided pay for the time needed to attend them. Our members were notified of the meetings through stand up talks on the workroom floor and through mailings to their home. Our local union leadership also attended the meetings.

As new information has become available, postal supervisors have delivered stand up talks to our members to keep them up to date. In addition, a system has been set up so that our members can ask any questions or raise concerns. There are question forms, a toll-free number, communication facilitators at any facility where Brentwood employees are located, Brentwood Update Bulletin Boards, mailings to homes, town hall meetings and the USPS website. Many of the questions gathered through these channels are answered in writing and distributed on a regular basis.

Our understanding is that he final step in the process will be a review by the Environmental Clearance Committee comprised of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute. We look forward to hearing from this committee about the effectiveness of the Brentwood cleanup so that we can be confident that our members, and the public we serve are protected prior to the facility being reopened.

At the time of the attack, there were 242 letter carriers working out of the Brentwood facility. We expect that all of them (with the possible exception of some of those responsible for handling government mail) will go back to work at that location.

Given the nature of the circumstances, it is understandable that some of our members have some anxiety about going back to work at Brentwood. The Postal Service needs to do its part to make sure that our members have every confidence that they are returning to a safe and healthy workplace. So far, the Postal Service is making that effort. Of course, until the process is completed, we will continue to communicate regularly with our membership and with the Postal Service.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Ferranto.

Mr. Braunstein.

Mr. BRAUNSTEIN. Thank you, Congresswoman Norton. Before I begin, I just also want to concur with NALC's statement this morning thanking you for requesting CDC to do the study. We feel it is essentially important to our membership as well.

My name is Roy Braunstein. I am the legislative director of the American Postal Workers Union. I am presenting APWU's testimony on behalf of President William Burrus, who is unable to attend personally today.

Thank you for inviting APWU to testify before this committee on the cleanup of the U.S. Postal Service Brentwood and Hamilton, New Jersey facilities. On behalf of the 330,000 APWU-represented employees, I wish to express our deep gratitude for your concern.

The events of September and October 2001 will be eternally etched in the history of our country as times of sacrifice and courage. The lives of postal heroes Joseph P. Curseen Jr. and Thomas L. Morris Jr. were taken by the terrorist act of depositing anthrax into the mail stream.

They are deserving of honor and remembrance. Representative Albert Wynn introduced legislation, H.R. 3287, in November to rename the Brentwood postal facility in honor of Mr. Curseen and Mr. Morris. We believe expeditious passage of the bill would be a fitting memorial to them.

Three other members of our bargaining unit were seriously infected by inhalation anthrax and continue their rehabilitation 8 months later. More have suffered the debilitating effects of cutaneous anthrax with unexpected lingering effects. Conducting this hearing demonstrates that we remember the heroic sacrifices of all these postal workers.

Immediately following the discovery that postal employees had been exposed to a deadly agent, the postal community rallied as one to assure employees and the public that mail service would continue and that we would do our very best to ensure the safety of the mail. Never in President William Burrus' 44 years of postal service had he experienced the level of cooperation between management and the employees that was exhibited in the aftermath of the anthrax attack. Each course of action was discussed and decided on a consensus basis, with the overriding goal of safety and security.

While the loss of our coworkers was fresh in our minds, our union refrained from engaging in any finger pointing, except at the despicable individual or individuals who used the mails as a means of distributing poison. We explained to our members that CDC, Centers for Disease Control, the public health agencies and postal management acted reasonably given the information available at the time.

Regrettably, the acts of cooperation that marked the immediate aftermath of the anthrax attacks have now been replaced with bureaucratic posturing and no place for employee input. As the level of cooperation gradually diminished, we find ourselves on this date in less than a cooperative mode on the subject of cleanup, health monitoring and employee dislocation. The unions and employees continue to receive regular briefings, but decisions have become

unilateral, with employee concerns subjugated to concerns about cost. Although specific plans for cleaning up Brentwood have been completed, they have yet to be shared in depth with the union or the employees.

This is unacceptable. The cleanup of the Brentwood-Hamilton facilities has been delayed unnecessarily by legal wrangling and indecision. Because the employees have not been regularly briefed about the process, progress and procedures, they are less than confident of the results. I am certain you can appreciate the apprehension the employees feel at the prospect of returning to the buildings where their coworkers died and suffered life-threatening illnesses.

Early on, we anticipated that every reasonable effort would be undertaken to continually express to affected employees the appreciation they are entitled to. Yet a series of decisions have been made that convey the message that the danger is passed and now it is back to business as usual.

Lingering issues remain over compensation to employees for the loss of personal items that were in their lockers when the facilities were closed. Reimbursement for computers and union-owned items that were located in the facilities has not been resolved. The responsibility and cost of transportation from Brentwood and Hamilton to the facilities where the employees now work has been shifted to the employees.

Even payment to private medical facilities in Hamilton for the treatment of postal employees has been unnecessarily delayed. Under normal circumstances, these might be considered trivial issues. Under these unique circumstances, the employees view them as acts of betrayal.

From the initial distribution of medication to protect against anthrax infection, the APWU has insisted that caution be exercised and a comprehensive medical monitoring program be put in place. Instead, the employees have faced the blanket denial of any lingering medical effect, as they watch more and more coworkers expire from mysterious diseases.

Strong athletic postal workers have been struck down. The only message that their coworkers have received have been denial. To make matters worse, this message of denial has been received via the news media instead of in-plant official communications. Yet day after day, these employees continue to move America's mail because that is their oath and their commitment.

To date, the promised detection equipment remains just that—a promise. In the initial months following the attack, the Postal Service was deluged with offers of detection equipment, much of which was found lacking in effectiveness. Eight months later, the employees have lost confidence they will ever be protected from a future attack.

The decisions to close government buildings while postal facilities remained open were explainable given the information available at the time of exposure. However, the decision to continue to irradiate mail destined for government offices after postal employees have been exposed to the mail in its original form clearly reveals a two-tier system. Should postal employees believe they are expendable, while political representatives demand protection?

Although knowledge of the health effects of exposure to irradiated mail is a work in progress, postal employees labor on serving their community and their country. How many more employees must suffer unexplainable illnesses with no alternative but filing workers compensation claims with the inevitable bureaucratic denials?

The employees I am privileged to represent have suffered greatly and they deserve better. They are entitled to work in facilities that are safe. They are entitled to recognition for the sacrifices they have made. The opening of Brentwood and Hamilton cleared of all contamination is a reasonable expectation. Until the opening, the recognition of a job well done would be appreciated.

There is still a considerable amount to be accomplished before the Brentwood facility should be opened. We continue to seek involvement at every level to ensure a complete understanding of all aspects of the cleanup that would allow the APWU to better inform our members who have risked their lives and continue to do so in the performance of their jobs.

In closing, I again want to thank the committee for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the members of the American Postal Workers Union, and I am willing to address any questions the committee may have.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Braunstein follows:]

ROY BRAUNSTEIN, LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR
AMERICAN POSTAL WORKER UNION

TESTIFYING FOR

WILLIAM BURRUS, PRESIDENT
AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION, AFL-CIO
ON
"CLEANUP OF THE U.S. POSTAL SERVICE'S
BRENTWOOD PROCESSING AND DISTRIBUTION CENTER"

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 26, 2002

Good morning. Chairwoman Morella and Members of the Committee: My name is Roy Braunstein, and I am the Legislative Director of the American Postal Workers Union and I am presenting APWU's testimony on behalf of President William Burrus, who is unable to attend personally today. Thank you for inviting APWU to testify before this committee on the clean up of the United States Postal Service Brentwood and Hamilton, NJ, facilities. On behalf of the 330,000 APWU-represented employees, I wish to express our deep gratitude for your concern.

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The cleanup of the Brentwood and Hamilton facilities has been delayed unnecessarily by legal wrangling and indecision. Because the employees have not been regularly briefed about the progress and procedures, they are less than confident of the results. I am certain that you can appreciate the apprehension the employees feel at the prospect of returning to the buildings where their co-workers died and others suffered life-threatening illnesses.

Early on we anticipated that every reasonable effort would be undertaken to continually express to the affected employees the appreciation they are entitled to. Yet, a series of decisions have been made that convey the message that the danger has passed and it is now back to "business as usual."

Lingering issues remain over compensation to employees for the loss of personal items that were in their lockers when the facilities were closed. Reimbursement for computers and other union-owned items that were located in the facilities has not been resolved. The responsibility and cost of transportation from Brentwood and Hamilton to the facilities where the employees now work has been shifted to the employees. Even payment to private medical facilities in Hamilton for the treatment of postal employees has been unnecessarily delayed. Under normal circumstances these might be considered trivial issues; under these unique circumstances, the employees view them as acts of betrayal.

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they are expendable while political representatives demand protection? Although knowledge of the health effects of exposure to irradiated mail is a work in progress, postal employees labor on, serving their country. How many more employees must suffer unexplainable illness with no alternative but filing workers' compensation claims with the inevitable bureaucratic denials?

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In closing, I again wish to thank the committee for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the members of the American Postal Workers Union. I am willing to address any questions that the Committee may have.

Thank you.

Ms. NORTON. I appreciate the testimony. We cannot have any understanding of what has happened and what will happen without hearing from those who represent the employees at Brentwood. In fact, your testimony is a testament to why unions are in the public interest. Imagine if there had been no collective bargaining at Brentwood when this happened.

Imagine if the employees were not organized, and the Postal Service, who obviously is management and is blamed for the matter, in so much as blame can be ascribed to anybody, would have been left to somehow deal with its own employees.

That would have been a completely unachievable goal. So I think that—I hope the country is cognizant as it as of the importance of having organized employees at the twin towers. It was so important—I think even more important to have organized employees at Brentwood.

Now, you have testified—the three of you have testified of some degree of labor-management cooperation that one would expect in a tragedy of this kind. The unions are to be congratulated for being very watchful, without exploiting a tragedy. It seems to me you are a case study in how to handle a major tragedy.

At the same time, I would like to have some greater sense of what the post office additionally needs to do as we approach this critical time. For example, I was surprised to hear Mr. Braunstein say that the plans henceforth for the coming period, presumably the decontamination and thereafter, have not been shared.

I do not understand that testimony. If you have been having regular meetings, is it that they do not know yet what the final plans are? Or is there some other reason why there would be this lapse on this important issue?

Mr. BRAUNSTEIN. Well, if I could, Congresswoman Norton, and ask Corey Thompson from APWU to join me here. APWU is not on the scientific review committee, and therefore there is more than healthy degree of skepticism in terms of what is going on.

Ms. NORTON. On the Scientific Review Committee are others who are not scientists?

Mr. BRAUNSTEIN. That is correct—other unions apparently have been invited.

Ms. NORTON. How many workers are represented by whom here? How many workers do you represent? How many workers do you represent, Mr. Ferranto? How many workers do you represent, Mr. Hegarty? And are any of you on the scientific panel?

Mr. HEGARTY. We represent 500 mail handlers at Brentwood and 50,000 mail handlers nationwide.

Ms. NORTON. OK. That is 500—there are about 2,500 there, I understand. Mr. Ferranto?

Mr. FERRANTO. We represent approximately 242 letter carriers at Brentwood.

Ms. NORTON. OK—500, 200. And you, Mr. Braunstein?

Mr. BRAUNSTEIN. We represent in excess of 1,500.

Ms. NORTON. All right. None of you, or no representatives from your unions are on the scientific panel?

Mr. FERRANTO. Branch 142, President Joe Henry serves on the scientific panel.

Ms. NORTON. How are those choices made? I mean, I should not think that there would be any competition among unions on that. I mean, how are those choices made?

Mr. FERRANTO. It is my understanding that he was invited to be on the committee.

Ms. NORTON. That is all you know?

Mr. FERRANTO. That is my understanding.

Ms. NORTON. Does he share his information with the other representatives, other unions?

Mr. FERRANTO. I believe, from talking with Joe Henry, that he is—the mail handlers also have a representative on that committee.

Ms. NORTON. Are you satisfied with the scientific panel—with what the scientific—I mean, Mr. Braunstein, who represents the most workers, does not have any sense of what the plans are so he cannot reassure the 1,500 workers he represents. How are we to get around that problem as we approach this—the same for Mr. Hegarty, I guess—as we approach this critical juncture?

Mr. HEGARTY. My understanding is that we also have a representative on this scientific committee and also that the Postal Service is having meetings every Friday with the unions to discuss what is going on at Brentwood, etc. Now, I am not sure why the APWU is not on the committee. I think that is something that postal management would need to deal with with the APWU.

Ms. NORTON. Well, maybe we can have—Mr. Braunstein said he would be joined by a colleague.

Mr. BRAUNSTEIN. Mr. Corey Thompson.

Ms. NORTON. Yes.

Mr. THOMPSON. The issue of committees—I was quite surprised as I sat there and listened to testimony of I believe it was Dr. Gordon, as he mentioned all these plans that had been reviewed, none of which we have had the opportunity to see.

Ms. NORTON. Have your representatives had the opportunity to see these plans? Mr. Braunstein has not. Mr. Braunstein's union, the APWU, has not. You are not on the committee.

Mr. THOMPSON. That is correct.

Ms. NORTON. Why are you not on the committee and the other two are on the committee?

Mr. BRAUNSTEIN. That is one of the questions we are trying to ascertain today.

Ms. NORTON. We have got to clear this up. Go ahead.

Mr. HEGARTY. Madam Congresswoman, this is Cynthia Vines. Ms. Vines is the branch president for the mail handlers union at the Brentwood facility and she does serve on the scientific committee. I would like to ask her to please address this issue briefly.

Ms. VINES. Good morning. Myself and Mr. Henry were invited to sit on the Scientific Review Committee, and we are basically observers.

Ms. NORTON. You know you are under oath, even though I have not—everyone who comes to the table now is under oath. Go ahead.

Ms. VINES. Yes, we basically sit in on the committee as observers to go back and inform the members.

Ms. NORTON. I am trying to find out why two out of three of the unions—do you have some information on why—you have defini-

tively? Yes. You are definitively telling me that two out of three of the unions are on the scientific committee. We have had a normally cooperative arrangement with management. Why is your union not on the committee? Have you asked to be on the committee?

Mr. THOMPSON. We are just finding out about a number of these committees, and about a number of the plans that are currently available. The process at Brentwood is an evolving process which, as we get closer to the level of decontaminating the facility, then it gives time for the plans to be completed, and the written scientific plans to be completed, so the committees are being done.

Ms. NORTON. How long has there been a scientific committee?

Mr. HENRY. Congressman Norton, it has been in place now for about 3 months, 4 months.

Ms. NORTON. That is a long time. Is there any representative of the Postal Service still here? Would you step to the table please? At this point, I think I am going to have to ask the people who have stepped to the table to stand so I can swear you all in. We need to understand this. Would all of you stand up—the three people who have come. First, let me ask them to stand.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Ms. NORTON. Thank you. Please sit. Would the three of you please identify yourselves for the record? We will get you a seat right away. Sorry. Yes, sir.

Mr. HENRY. Joseph Henry, president of NALC Branch 142.

Ms. VINES. Cynthia Vines, branch president for Washington, DC.

Mr. KING. Mitch King, government relations with the Postal Service.

Ms. NORTON. Perhaps you can clear this up for us, Mr. King. Why are two out of three of the unions represented on the science panel?

Mr. KING. I am afraid that I cannot clear it up for you. It is not a Postal Service committee. I understand it was organized by the D.C. government.

Ms. NORTON. Is anybody from D.C. government here?

Mr. KING. And other agencies working on the cleanup, and it is independent of us, to provide an independent review of what is going on.

Ms. NORTON. All right. If the Postal Service is not responsible for this, and you say the scientific panel was organized by the D.C. government.

Mr. KING. And the other agencies involved working with them—but I would be happy to bring this to their attention to the extent that I can.

Ms. NORTON. I wish you would. We will, of course, bring it to their attention. It seems to me not in the spirit that at least from the beginning the Postal Service certainly has operated. And I have absolutely no understanding of why the union that represents the largest number of employees would not be on the scientific community.

What concerns me most, of course, is what I indicated from the beginning, and that is that we need to calm fears before fears arrive. Is there any chance that the local president of the APWU is on the committee and is not here perhaps?

Mr. BRAUNSTEIN. Not that we are aware of, no.

Ms. NORTON. There was some suggestion that perhaps—so you should be aware if in fact somebody from your union had been invited. We will just straighten that out right away. I mean, this is the kind of thing we need—an all-inclusive understanding of everything that is happening. The other unions do not have anything to do with this. The Postal Service does not have anything to do with this, and I cannot imagine why this has happened. We are going to find out why and try to straighten that out.

Mr. BRAUNSTEIN. Thank you.

Ms. NORTON. Of course, I notice that those who have been included seem to be less concerned and not to have the same issues that you who have not been included——

Mr. BRAUNSTEIN. There is a direct correlation.

Ms. NORTON. Direct correlation—that is exactly what we want to avoid. If everybody is in on the deal, then it is going to go smoothly, otherwise it certainly is not, and I appreciate that this has been raised.

I want to ask whether or not the three union representatives here have seen any effects—psychological or mental health effects. What I am anticipating is that given the long closure of Brentwood, there may be some reluctance of people to go back. I do not know. I thought Mr. Hegarty testified. I thought that people might have some say on whether they go back. I am not sure about that.

I mean, this is a big facility and I am sure that could involve us in some controversy if whole crews of people decide, a whole lot of people decide they do not want to go back. So first, I suppose I should clear that up first. Is there an obligation as far as you know, of workers who were assigned there at Brentwood in the first place, to go back once the all-clear sign is up?

Mr. HEGARTY. Yes, Madam Congresswoman, I believe there would be an obligation under the collective bargaining agreement for the employees to return. What I was referring to is if there were a limited number of employees who legitimately were fearful for their lives and would not be able to return to that facility for psychological reasons, that some accommodations could be made within the confines of the collective bargaining agreement for them to be transferred to other postal facilities.

Ms. NORTON. Do you anticipate from what you understand from your own members that there will be reluctance to go back to Brentwood?

Mr. FERRANTO. Congresswoman, speaking for the National Association of Letter Carriers and speaking for Joe Henry, and we are also representing the letter carriers up in New Jersey that have the same feelings, there is some apprehension with some of our members of not returning to Brentwood. When that day comes and the opportunity when they reopen Brentwood, we will be in discussions with the Postal Service and with our members that have those apprehensions and we will try to work all those issues out at that time.

Ms. NORTON. Is there counseling or any other mental health service now available to help prepare employees to go back to work?

Mr. FERRANTO. We have in our collective bargaining agreements an employee assistance program, and that is accessible to the employees.

Ms. NORTON. Yes, Mr. Hegarty, did you have a comment on that?

Mr. HEGARTY. Yes, Ms. Vines informs me that we are in the process of trying to set up some type of counseling outside of the EAP where employees would be able to attend counseling and receive pay—you know, be on the clock in other words—that they would not have to seek counseling on their own time, and possibly get some of these issues put to rest. Again, we are hoping that with the increase in communication, as I said in my testimony, we want to eliminate any rumors that if the cleanup is done properly, if all of the appropriate government and health agencies along with the Postal Service are satisfied that the building is safe, I think that we may alleviate some of the fears.

In my earlier testimony, what I was referring to is if there is still a limited number of employees who absolutely will not enter that building, I think we should try to find some accommodation for them.

Ms. NORTON. This is an issue of transition that I think is very important for labor and management to meet head-on very early. Anybody can anticipate that the long closure of this facility will lead to some concerns. I have virtually testified that I do not have the slightest concern, but I cannot blame people for wanting some, as I said, nobody died either where I work.

And again, I believe that most of these fears are imaginary, but I can understand why they would be imagined. So I think that this notion of counseling has to be proactively marketed to people because they have to understand if you are telling me that under the collective bargaining agreement they cannot choose where they work, and of course one can understand that.

Then, of course, people have to be prepared well in advance so that they will not be in jeopardy of their jobs or in jeopardy of some sanction if in fact they simply believe they cannot go there. They have got to get help concerning how to go there, and I know the union would make every attempt to do so.

And if there is anything this committee can do to facilitate those services, I wish you would let us know. I consider that part and parcel of what the Congress appropriated the money for, to make sure that not only the building got clean, but that people felt they could go back into the building.

Mr. Braunstein, did you have something?

Mr. BRAUNSTEIN. Yes, Congresswoman Norton, in the middle of this crisis not only in Brentwood, but in Hamilton Township in New Jersey, and also in Wallingford, the general facility in Connecticut, the Postal Service has been less than candid in certain aspects. You asked the question earlier today to Mr. Day whether or not the facility when it would be reopened, whether the employees would be relocated back to the facility—that part of the question remained unanswered when the testimony of the panel was concluded.

I spent all day yesterday with the New Jersey delegation with folks from Hamilton Township, from Trenton, who have just been informed that 66 of their members will not have to worry about re-

turning to Hamilton Township because the Postal Service is taking advantage of the situation of further victimizing the victims by permanently reassigning them away from the facility when it is reopened.

Ms. NORTON. What would be the reason for that, Mr. Braunstein?

Mr. BRAUNSTEIN. They claim, at this point, it was an unanswered question, again, with Senator Torricelli yesterday that they could provide cost savings and they had not committed to reopening the facility with the outgoing function in Hamilton Township.

Ms. NORTON. Also, they may close the facility altogether.

Mr. BRAUNSTEIN. No, they intend to reopen it, but the outgoing mail, the originating mail from that area, from the Trenton facility and from Trenton city and suburbs may be relocated to Kilmer.

Ms. NORTON. Do you anticipate that the full complement of workers may not be called back to Brentwood?

Mr. BRAUNSTEIN. They have officially notified the union, both the Mail Handlers Union and APWU of 66 positions to be relocated. That is one problem.

Ms. NORTON. And what would be the reason for that, Mr. Braunstein?

Mr. BRAUNSTEIN. Because of cost savings, and the employees——

Ms. NORTON. But the employees would not lose their job, and they save costs by putting them elsewhere?

Mr. BRAUNSTEIN. By canvassing all the mail in one centralized location, yes—part of the transformation plan the Postal Service has put forward. But for them to be pushing a transformation plan on a set of employees who are currently victimized by being out of their facility since the same timeframe as Brentwood is just irresponsible on the part of the Postal Service.

Ms. NORTON. Do you think there might be employees who might voluntarily want to be relocated?

Mr. BRAUNSTEIN. There may be some that would voluntarily want to leave, but obviously the Postal Service has taken the position that they will take the junior regular employees and excess them out. So that is a major concern for our union in terms of——

Ms. NORTON. Is that bargainable?

Mr. BRAUNSTEIN. Yes.

Ms. NORTON. Obviously, there are some communications problems that need—if they arose in Trenton, and we do not need to have them in this large-scale here.

Mr. BRAUNSTEIN. And you have a problem in Wallingford, where the employees were told for months there were trace amounts of anthrax, and months later it was revealed that the trace amounts they had been working on were 3 million spores, which then were cleaned up. But the employees were given false information by the Postal Service for a long period of time.

So the attitude of the employees in Wallingford, the attitude of the employees in Brentwood, and the attitude of the employees in Hamilton Township are somewhat similar. They are not necessarily being given all the information at the proper time.

Ms. NORTON. But for those who have been involved, that has not necessarily been the case here at Brentwood.

Mr. BRAUNSTEIN. But if I may interrupt, the selective elimination of APWU from begin on committees of concern so we can inform our employees just feeds into this same situation.

Ms. NORTON. It is stupid and we are going to find out why that has happened.

[Applause.]

Ms. NORTON. I know that there have really been concerns about this irradiated mail from employees, and as a result I suppose of the intervention of the unions and the discussions with management, we understand that an additional ventilation step was added. I would like to know if since that step was added, there have been fewer complaints from employees concerning the irradiated mail or not.

Mr. THOMPSON. I could address that issue. In fact, I was over at the V Street facilities just the other day which handles a lot of this, and there were a couple of different things that occurred at the time after the V Street employees were exposed to extremely high levels of carbon monoxide in the original process. That is when they learned to ventilate the mail, and that is when they also learned to ventilate the work area at that time.

Since then, they have also learned that the level of irradiation that the post office contractors were using was not necessary, so they reduced that level also. And yes, the complaints on adverse effects and the severity of the adverse effects has gone down. But I do draw to your attention that there are still adverse effects.

There have been studies done—NIOSH has done some. There has been a review by the Office of Compliance. Each of them has not stated that there are no adverse effects. What they basically have stated is that whatever they tested for and whatever they looked for as a potential cause, they have not been able to identify as being a cause.

I spoke with the people out at the V Street facility—our members, a large number of them over different buildings—and asked the very question, are you still experiencing adverse effects. And they are. Now, we can go back and say that it was the dry air in January. Well, we do not have dry air in July in the facilities, and we are still seeing the same effects.

So we have been very diligent and wanting to find out more on, is irradiated mail actually causing adverse effects. APWU members and many postal workers handle this mail before it is irradiated also. So any hazards that are there, they handle this mail for prepping it for radiation prior to that, so they have that exposure also.

Ms. NORTON. The people who drive the trucks—is it Mail Handlers that represents them?

Mr. BRAUNSTEIN. No. APWU does. Yes.

Ms. NORTON. What about the people who drive the trucks with this irradiated——

Mr. THOMPSON. At the V Street facility, there were a couple of the truck drivers who have said that they had the same issues.

Ms. NORTON. I know whereof you speak because employees on the Hill who obviously do not have the same direct exposure as your people are having these complaints. We see how much all of this is a work in progress, and why we have to demand the highest

standards—standards beyond anything anybody would imagine because we just do not know what we are doing.

We have heard complaints about the distribution of masks and of gloves and of gloves in the right sizes. Is that still a problem?

Mr. THOMPSON. We still do hear from——

[Applause.]

Ms. NORTON. Let your union testify for you. [Laughter.]

Mr. THOMPSON. We still do hear complaints regarding masks and gloves, both on sizes and types. Some people do not fit well with one particular type of glove, or the glove that they are provided rips as they are trying to put it on. So there are still issues there. That is currently a line of defense for employees. There is nothing else that is out there to protect employees from an exposure.

Ms. NORTON. Well, I can tell you this, Congress surely meant the gloves and the masks to be freely available, and that part of that money was clearly meant for that. People have been very concerned that their own staffs are feeling this, and they are several degrees away from this contamination.

Mr. THOMPSON. One of the things that we have noticed that is difficult with gloves and masks also is people can be handed them and provided limited instruction on what their purpose is and how to wear them and how they should fit properly, but if they are not taught, really taught, what the purpose of those protective measures are, they either do not use them or they use them improperly, and that has not been good.

Ms. NORTON. Who would do that teaching?

Mr. THOMPSON. That is a Postal Service responsibility to do that.

Ms. NORTON. Supervisors?

Mr. THOMPSON. It would be down to the supervisors.

Ms. NORTON. And you do not think that is being done?

Mr. THOMPSON. Well, I think there are still some issues out there that it is not being done properly. It is not being certified as being done. I hear it all the time. I get calls from the locals all the time that they are not trained. I ask people when I go out, have you received the training. And as much as we get response back that yes, we have trained everybody, when you go out and you ask the people, they have not.

Ms. NORTON. Well, the Postal Service is in the room. I am simply going to ask that those matters be brought to the attention of management. I am also going to ask that the notion of these gloves, it is not a lot of money, these gloves and masks be brought to the special attention of management.

Mr. KING. I will do that. It is my understanding we have millions of gloves. There is no problem with supply of gloves. I am hearing today, and I am sorry I do not work in the capital district, I work at headquarters, but I will make sure that the capital district has a sufficient supply.

Ms. NORTON. This may be a question of sizes, and it sounds to me only as an issue that requires some attention, not as something that the Postal Service would have any problem with.

My final question would be, now that employees are scattered by necessity, how have people adjusted to their current assignments? Do you feel that they are ready for transition back in? I would like

to know about the adjustment process, which obviously has to do with the transition process back to Brentwood.

Mr. HEGARTY. With Brentwood and with Trenton, thus far some employees are happy because they are working in a facility closer to their home. Other employees are very disadvantaged in that they have to drive an additional 30 or 40 miles in addition to a commute that they already had.

Ms. NORTON. Thirty or 40 miles?

Mr. HEGARTY. Yes, yes. Gaithersburg. In New Jersey, they have to drive up to South River, Kilmer, etc.

Ms. NORTON. Was there any attempt to help locate people a little closer to home, or was that just done——

Mr. HEGARTY. I am not sure what attempts were made. I do know that in most instances, the employees allegedly were told that they had to follow the mail.

So in other words if a great deal of the mail that used to be processed is now going to be processed in Gaithersburg, then ostensibly a commensurate number of employees would travel to Gaithersburg to process that mail. The problem that we have had is that there have been some breakdowns in transportation.

Initially, the Postal Service was providing bus transportation and also compensating the employees. In other words, when they arrived at their old facility, they clocked on. They hit the time clock or they were put on a time clock and they were on the clock. They would then be transported to the alternate facility, perform their work there, be transported back, and then clock out again.

My understanding, and I have the representatives here from the facilities, is that is no longer the case. In some instances, the Postal Service is not even providing the transportation anymore. So the employees are being told that you will have to find your own way from Washington, DC, to Gaithersburg and you will not be on the clock until you get to the facility.

Ms. NORTON. Do you have any information on that?

Mr. KING. I am sorry. I do not have specific information, but we would be happy to try to respond for the record.

Ms. NORTON. Would you respond to the record within 30 days on that specific question? If transportation was provided before, why would transportation not be provided now, particularly given the long distances apparently some employees have to travel.

Did you have some further testimony?

Mr. FERRANTO. Yes, Congresswoman. Initially, letter carriers were housed in tents in the parking lots when this first happened, and then they were relocated to facilities here in Washington. So all of our members are currently working in Washington, DC. To further answer your question, President Joe Henry here has day-to-day interaction with our members and he can further answer your question.

Mr. HENRY. I believe your question, Congresswoman Norton, is are they ready to make the transition back if that time comes. Our employees are no different than Mail Handlers and APWU employees. You have some who probably would welcome Brentwood opening back up and are ready to go back. You have others who certainly are anxious about whether or not it will ever be safe.

As you said when I heard you talk earlier, some people will never believe that it is going to be safe to go back in. And so you have, but the majority of them are very practical and if it opens and if—one of the things I was gratified by today was the fact that when you came to our food drive breakfast, you said you were going to have these hearings, and indeed they have transpired; that the scope of these hearings certainly should help to alleviate many of the fears, if indeed everything that you are asking to be done here is done.

Until today, I am sure after this takes place and if everything transpires that you asked, there will be a lot less people who will have a lot less fears than they have at the present time. So yes, you have some people ready to go back, and others who are not.

Mr. FERRANTO. Just as a further comment, hopefully there will be some hearings before we reenter Brentwood to make sure that all the——

Ms. NORTON. Count on it. [Laughter.]

Mr. FERRANTO. OK. And then we will have an opportunity to come back together and be together on this.

Ms. NORTON. I think you deserve at least that.

Mr. FERRANTO. That is right. We appreciate that.

Ms. NORTON. Nobody is perfect here, but we have got to strive for perfection.

Mr. FERRANTO. And I would just like to add that these have been unprecedented times for us, and these are impressive events, and we are doing our best to work through them, and together we will get there.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Braunstein.

Mr. BRAUNSTEIN. I also would mirror the previous comments. Some employees would welcome the return; others would probably prefer not to. But it is really going to come down to a question of now much information that the union has also provided, both at the national and local level, that will increase the level of satisfaction and comfort that the members will need to feel for them to make an intelligent and proper determination.

Ms. NORTON. Well, Mr. Braunstein, all men and women are created equal. When it comes to Brentwood, all unions are going to be created equal and we are going to see that you are included.

Mr. BRAUNSTEIN. Thank you very much.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much to all of these witnesses—very helpful testimony.

Could I ask the final panel to come forward, and I apologize that there has been this delay, but I hope you understand that this has been a matter of some concern to the community and to the employees, and we want to get it all out on the table.

Louise Martin, president, Brentwood Civic Association; James McGee, president, National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees. Is Mr. McGee here? Is Ms. Martin here?

Would you stand and raise your right hands?

[Witnesses sworn.]

Ms. NORTON. Let the record reflect that each witness answered the question in the affirmative. You may be seated.

Ms. Martin, the president of the Brentwood Civic Association, I am glad to receive your testimony.

STATEMENTS OF LOUISE MARTIN, PRESIDENT, BRENTWOOD CIVIC ASSOCIATION; AND JAMES M. MCGEE, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF POSTAL AND FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

Ms. MARTIN. Good morning, Congresswoman Norton and other members of the committee. My name is Louise B. Martin. I am a resident of the Brentwood Community Association; also a resident of—I lost my place. My name is Louise B. Martin. I did not forget that. [Laughter.]

I am a resident of the Brentwood community. My address is 1340 Downing Street, NE, since 1954, and a Washington resident since 1952. I am president of the Brentwood Community Association.

In reference to the cleanup of the postal facility, my concern as is most of the neighborhood is the protection of the residents—businesses and workers in the post office. I have attended every meeting held in reference to and regarding to the decontamination of the Brentwood postal facility, after which we have discussed this in our own groups as far as our knowledge of the process would allow. Still, there remain questions about the safety set-up around the perimeter of the building during and after fumigation.

We know the smell of chlorine in the event that some of it escapes. However, what about the other three gases being mixed with the chlorine? After having read the above, there was less concern among some residents that read about and listened to the facts about the cleanup of the Hart Building. We are aware that the Brentwood facility is much larger, therefore creating a larger use of chemicals. That is our concern. Our concern is if some of these gases escape, how are they going to contain it.

Since I have been here, I have heard the answers to some of the questions. But the sampling is going to be inside. What about when they do the full decontamination? I will stop right here to answer that.

Ms. NORTON. What about when they do the——

Ms. MARTIN. Yes. When they are going to do a sampling on Monday, and the gases and whatever they are going to put into the building is going to be contained inside. Am I right?

Ms. NORTON. The whole point is to always have the gases contained inside, even when they do the whole building.

Ms. MARTIN. No, but I mean, pumping it in—from where would they pump it in?

Ms. NORTON. Your question, Ms. Martin, simply raises the notion that your councilmember did—that there are still questions that the community feels it does not have adequate answers to. So not to worry, we are going to make sure that you get very specific answers to those questions.

Do you want to continue with your testimony?

Ms. MARTIN. No, that is my testimony.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Martin follows:]

Testimony
Before the Subcommittee on the District of Columbia
Committee on Government Reform
United States House of Representatives

"Clean up of the U.S. Postal Service's Brentwood Processing and Distribution Center"

Statement of
Louise B. Martin
President, Brentwood Civic Association

Good morning Chairwoman Morella, Congresswoman Norton and other members of the Subcommittee. My name is Louise B. Martin. I am a resident of the Brentwood Community – 1340 Downing St., NE since 1954 and a Washington resident since 1952.

In reference to the clean up of the Postal Facility: My concern, as is most of the neighborhood, is the protection of the residents, businesses and workers in the post office.

I've attended every meeting held in reference to and regarding the decontamination of the Brentwood Postal Facility. After which we've discussed this in our own groups as far as our knowledge of the process would allow. Still there remain questions about the safety set up around the perimeter of the building – during and after fumigation.

We know the smell of chlorine. However, what about the other three gases being mixed with the chlorine? After having read the above, there is less concern among some residents that read about and listened to facts about the clean up of the Hart Building. We are aware that the Brentwood Facility is much larger, therefore, creating a larger use of chemicals.

Ms. NORTON. That is your testimony.

Ms. MARTIN. That is our concern.

Ms. NORTON. And your concern about the three gases—the other gases?

Ms. MARTIN. They are supposed to be mixed to make it, right?

Ms. NORTON. Yes.

Ms. MARTIN. That is what we are concerned about—if it escapes and no one knows even when they smell it they do not know what they are smelling. Is this coming from the post office? If in the event, and we hope that does not happen, they would not know. They would not know what it would smell like. I am not sure that anybody can answer it.

Can they answer, because I have heard a lot of unanswered questions since I have been sitting here, but I will bet there are a lot of questions that I can go back and tell some of the people that I did learn today. I have attended all of the meetings and read all of the literature, but I did hear some things today that they have discussed, and that is whether the gases are going to be—because we were under the illusion that these gases were going to be missed outside in a tank—you know, like in a tank on a trailer and then pumped into the building.

But today, I am hearing something different about the sampling. So I assume that the sampling is going to be contained inside, and they would do all the rest of it inside. That is our concern.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much, Ms. Martin.

Mr. McGee.

Mr. MCGEE. Thank you.

Good afternoon, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, members of the committee. I am James McGee, national president of the National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees. I welcome the opportunity to present the views of the NAPFE on the unprecedented effort to decontaminate and reenter a facility the size of Brentwood Processing Center of the widespread anthrax contamination.

NAPFE is the Nation's oldest and largest independent black-led labor union. We represent thousands of postal workers nationwide. Here in the District, we represent hundreds of workers at the Brentwood facility and I might add that number is some 700 members across all crafts—mail handlers, clerks and carriers.

Throughout its 89-year history, NAPFE has worked to ensure the rights of postal and Federal workers to work free from discrimination in a safe and secure environment. The challenge of the Brentwood cleanup is to ensure a safe environment at a time when the Federal and medical authorities know very little about the threat involved and are learning as they go along.

When staffers in Senator Daschle's office opened a letter containing anthrax spores on October 15, 2001, the prevailing medical wisdom at the time was that postal workers who handled the letter were not at risk. This proved to be a tragic error for which postal workers Thomas Morris Jr. and Joseph Curseen paid with their lives.

Others experienced the serious illness of anthrax inhalation and still countless others have suffered and continue to suffer from symptoms that while not recognized as being directly related to an-

thrax, developed after exposure. In addition, there have been negative side effects from the powerful antibiotics used to protect them from this deadly illness.

Now, at a time when the Postal Service and Federal agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control, are suffering from a crisis of trust and confidence, the Postal Service undertakes the unprecedented cleanup of anthrax contamination in a facility the size of Brentwood.

I thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee for convening this hearing at this time to hear from the experts planning and implementing the cleanup, and those of us who represent workers at Brentwood. It is extremely important that postal workers and the public and their representatives learn as much as possible about the cleanup effort and be able to give their views on the process.

I commend Councilman Vincent Orange for organizing, and the Postal Service for holding meetings to inform the public about the procedures. I commend the Postal Service for establishing a community information line and for its own line, Brentwood Update. The Postal Service and the various health agencies got off to a slow start in protecting postal workers from this threat, unaware of the dangers involved, but have since worked diligently to meet the threats posed by this unprecedented danger. I thank them for that.

However, since the Brentwood cleanup is an experiment, one that is not occurring in a vacuum and is putting at risk hundreds of lives, the Postal Service and Federal and local health authorities have an affirmative duty to reach out to postal workers and the public as often as it is necessary to address understandable feelings of apprehension at the process. While chlorine dioxide was successfully used to decontaminate the Hart Senate Building, its efficacy is unproven for the cleanup of a building the size of the Brentwood facility and with the type of equipment installed there.

Postal workers are not only distressed that public health authorities failed to recognize the risk of anthrax exposure to their lives in a timely manner, they are also disheartened at the lack of adequate followup after being given cipro and doxycycline. Workers were given written advisories at the time they received treatment, but feel that little has been done since to address their concerns or to track the effects of the medications given.

I urge the Postal Service and the health agencies to establish a systematic process where these concerns can be addressed. Given the complexity of the cleanup at hand, the onus should be on those agencies to actively seek out and reassure workers and to actively address complaints and concerns. Based on discussions we have had with Brentwood employees, it appears the current system that the Postal Service and the CDC have in place is inadequate to monitor the current health status of employees exposed to anthrax.

Therefore, we recommend that the Postal Service set up a formal ongoing monitoring system of both the immediate and long-term consequences of the decontamination of the building and health status of employees for as long as it takes for workers and the public to feel safe. Understandably, given the mistakes of the past, postal workers must feel assured that this cleanup will be subject

to the same standards used at the Hart Building. I am heartened that the Postal Service is pursuing a zero-spore standard.

This process requires teamwork, not only for the Postal Service, but with agencies such as EPA and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, but between the Postal Service, its workers and their representatives. The events surrounding the anthrax exposure at Brentwood highlighted how little health officials knew about how to protect postal workers from such a bioterror threat.

The cleanup of the facility is one of the confidence-building measures that the Postal Service and health agencies must perform. We are confident that the Postal Service would not knowingly put its workers at risk and applaud it for the actions it has taken thus far. The Postal Service should not miss the opportunity to learn from past mistakes. We urge them to set up a formal system of responding to employee concerns for all of the circumstances surrounding the anthrax exposure, not only for the cleanup.

We thank you for your attention, and look forward to working with all involved on this vital process.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. McGee follows:]

Statement for the Subcommittee on the District of Columbia
Committee on Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
on
Cleanup of the U.S. Postal Service's Brentwood Processing and Distribution Center
by
James M. McGee
President
National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees
July 26, 2002

Madame Chair, members of the committee, I am James McGee, President of the National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees ("NAPFE").

I welcome the opportunity to present the views of the NAPFE on the unprecedented effort to decontaminate and reenter a facility the size of the Brentwood Processing Center after widespread anthrax contamination.

NAPFE is the nation's oldest and largest independent black-led labor union. We represent thousands of postal workers nationwide. Here in the District, we represent hundreds of workers at the Brentwood facility. Throughout its 89-year history, NAPFE has worked to ensure the rights of postal and federal workers to work, free from discrimination, in a safe and secure environment. The challenge of the Brentwood cleanup is to ensure a safe environment at a time when federal and medical authorities know very little about the threat involved and are learning as they go along.

When staffers in Senator Daschle's office opened a letter containing anthrax spores on October 15, 2001, the prevailing medical wisdom, at the time, was that the postal workers who handled the letter were not at risk. This proved to be a tragic error for which postal workers Thomas Morris, Jr. and Joseph Curseen paid with their lives. Others experienced the serious illness of anthrax inhalation

and still countless others have suffered and continue to suffer from symptoms that while not recognized as being directly related to anthrax developed after being exposure. In addition, there have been negative side effects from the powerful antibiotics used to protect them from deadly illness.

Now, at a time when the Postal Service and federal agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control are suffering from a crisis of trust and confidence, the Postal Service undertakes the unprecedented cleanup of anthrax contamination in a facility the size of Brentwood. I thank you, Madam Chair and members of the Committee for convening this hearing at this time to hear from the experts planning and implementing the cleanup and those of us who represent workers at Brentwood. It is extremely important that postal workers and the public and their representatives learn as much as possible about the cleanup effort and be able to give their views on the process.

I commend Councilman Vincent Orange for organizing and the Postal Service for holding meetings to inform the public about the procedures. I commend the Postal Service for establishing a community information line and for its online Brentwood Update. The Postal Service and the various health agencies got off to a slow start in protecting postal workers from this threat, unaware of the dangers involved, but have since worked diligently to meet the threats posed by this unprecedented danger. I thank them for that.

However, since the Brentwood cleanup is an experiment, one that is not occurring in a vacuum and is putting at risk hundreds of lives, the Postal Service and federal and local health authorities have an affirmative duty to reach out to postal workers and the public -- as often as is necessary -- to address understandable feelings of apprehension at the process. While chlorine dioxide was successfully

used to decontaminate the Hart Senate Building, its efficacy is unproven for the cleanup of a building the size of Brentwood facility and one with the type of equipment installed there.

Postal workers are not only distressed that public health authorities failed to recognize the risk of anthrax exposure to their lives in a timely manner; they are also disheartened at the lack of adequate follow up after being given Cipro and Doxycycline. Workers were given written advisories at the time they received treatment, but feel that little has been done since to address their concerns or to track the effects of the medications given. I urge the Postal Service and the health agencies to establish a systematic process where concerns can be addressed. Given the complexity of the cleanup at hand, the onus should be on these agencies to actively seek out and reassure workers and to actively address complaints and concerns.

Based on discussions we've had with Brentwood employees, it appears the current system that the Postal Service and the CDC have in place is inadequate to monitor the current health status of employees exposed to anthrax. Therefore, we recommend that the Postal Service set up a formal ongoing monitoring system of both the immediate and long term consequences of the decontamination of the building and health status of employees for as long as it takes for workers and the public to feel safe.

Understandably, given the mistakes of the past, postal workers must feel assured that this cleanup will be subject to the same standards used at the Hart Senate Building. I am heartened that the Postal Service is pursuing a zero-spore standard.

This process requires teamwork, not only of the Postal Service with agencies such as the EPA and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, but between the Postal Service, its workers and their representatives.

The events surrounding the anthrax exposure at Brentwood highlighted how little health officials knew about how to protect postal workers from such a bioterror threat. The cleanup of the facility is one of the confidence building measures that the Postal Service and health agencies must perform. We are confident that the Postal Service would not knowingly put its workers at risk and applaud it for the actions it has taken thus far. The Postal Service should not miss the opportunity to learn from past mistakes. We urge them to set up a formal system of responding to employee concerns, for all of the circumstances surrounding the anthrax exposure -- not only for the cleanup.

We thank you for your attention and look forward to working with all involved on this vital process.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much, Mr. McGee.

Let me ask both of you whether you are satisfied with the level of communication that you have had from the Postal Service.

Ms. MARTIN. Well, I think the communication that we have had has been through the meetings that were called by the councilmember.

Ms. NORTON. Has the Postal Service had meetings themselves?

Ms. MARTIN. The Postal Service at that time passed out question and answers and an explanation of what was going on that was very informative to all the people who got them at those meetings. These were the meetings that were called by the councilperson. Also, I think the post office had a meeting, and some of these forms were passed out at their meeting. Those were the things that we had discussed.

There is no answer. I am confident that I do not think they have the answer. I do not think they have the answer. They are trying to get it. And so, we have to think about what may happen, not what they think is going to happen. Like, how are they going to let us know when they are going to start, how long it is going to take, and will they notify us?

Ms. NORTON. Were you pleased that these door-to-door meetings, or this door-to-door—we are told that people will be going from door to door during this test. Do you think that is the appropriate——

Ms. MARTIN. To pass our information to let us know when they are going to start?

Ms. NORTON. Apparently. And here, I do not have the full details, but they have mentioned that they will be going from door to door during the test as a way to communicate to the people in the immediate area concerning what is going on. Is that an appropriate way to behave?

Ms. MARTIN. I think that would be one way—through the media, through the papers. Everybody does not listen to television, but I think more people listen to television than read the papers, so that they will know. But I have heard on several of the channels that they were going from door to door prior to this preview.

Ms. NORTON. Test, yes.

Ms. MARTIN. Yes—that they are having—sampling test. Supposedly, I do not know what it is going to be tomorrow or Sunday because someone here from that health group said that it would be done Monday. So are they going out Saturday? Are they going out Sunday?

Ms. NORTON. Mr. McGee.

Mr. MCGEE. Well, Congresswoman Norton, we are not satisfied. We are not included. We have asked to be included so that we could provide definitive answers to our members. We have not been included in updates and what have you.

Ms. NORTON. You have a different status, I take it.

Mr. MCGEE. We are not exclusive. We are not exclusive, and we understand that. But now we are talking about the health and safety of people's lives, and I think that supersedes being a part of the collective bargaining. We are recognized by the one agency that we should be as a labor union in this country, and that is the U.S. Government. We have to report just like everybody else.

Ms. NORTON. You are not a part of any collective bargaining agreement.

Mr. MCGEE. No, not in the Postal Service.

Ms. NORTON. In the Postal Service.

Mr. MCGEE. In the Postal Service. However, we do have an exclusive at the one agency responsible for the public health, and that is the Centers for Disease Control.

Ms. NORTON. Well, I want to thank both of you for this important testimony. We have tried during this hearing to make sure we spanned the entire array, yes, including your union, Mr. McGee——

Mr. MCGEE. Thank you.

Ms. NORTON [continuing]. Of those who have any involvement in Brentwood, and your testimony has been valuable to us. As we hear it, we communicate these matters back to the post office to get answers concerning them.

I want to thank not only these last two witnesses for remaining so long and being so patient, but to thank the many members of the audience who came, including many employees, many residents who are trying to find out for themselves so that they can make an independent judgment.

We think that is the intelligent and careful way to try to evaluate what is happening. I appreciate their interest. I appreciate the willingness of Gallaudet University and the Kellogg Center to donate this facility so that we could have a field hearing on this important matter.

I want to indicate to those who did not testify that the record will be open for five legislative days, so that is more than 5 days, in order to receive the testimony of anybody else who would like to testify. I would like to particularly thank our sign language interpreters. This is a hard and important job that they do—Pamela Harrison and Tyrone Harper, who assisted us during this hearing.

I would also like to thank our staff without whom this hearing simply would be impossible, who do all of the grunt work in preparation for hearings like this—Jean Gosa, Denise Wilson, Jon Bouker, Cheryl Williams, Doxie McCoy from my staff; from the staff of Congresswoman Morella, Russell Smith, Matthew Batt, Shalley Kim, Robert White, Heea Vazirani-Fales—all of whom contributed to this hearing.

And let me finally offer the apologies of the good chair of the committee who wanted very strongly to be here, and had congressional business that made it absolutely impossible for her to attend because she had amendments of her own on the floor, so that she had absolutely no choice. She does want me to indicate that she will look at the record and will work closely with me in followup to this hearing. We do not have hearings as 1-day shows. We have hearings in order to learn what the Congress should do.

I want to thank those who provided security and who took the record for this hearing, and I want to indicate, as I thank everyone who attended once again, that this hearing on Brentwood past and future is now concluded.

[Whereupon, at 1:18 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

[The prepared statement of Hon. Constance A. Morella and additional information submitted for the hearing record follow:]

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

CHAIRWOMAN CONNIE MORELLA
HOUSE GOVERNMENT REFORM SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
FIELD HEARING AT GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY

"CLEAN UP OF THE U.S. POSTAL SERVICE'S
BRENTWOOD PROCESSING AND DISTRIBUTION CENTER"
JULY 26, 2002
OPENING STATEMENT

The months of September and October of 2001 were unlike anything we have experienced in the United States.

First, a tranquil September morning erupted into one of the deadliest days in American history, with more than 3,000 people killed in coordinated terrorist attacks along the Eastern Seaboard. A few weeks later, with Americans still jittery, envelopes containing spores of the deadly anthrax bacteria began coursing through the U.S. mail system, en route to members of Congress and members of the media.

Our airplanes and our mailboxes had been turned into tools of terror.

Before the threat was contained, five people had died from inhalation anthrax, including two men who worked at the Brentwood Road Processing and Distribution Center in Northeast D.C. Hundreds of others, in Washington, D.C., New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Florida, were forced to take precautionary antibiotic medicines for months. Office buildings, including those on Capitol Hill, were temporarily closed. And two major postal facilities – Brentwood and a similar facility in Hamilton Township, New Jersey – shut down in October and are yet to re-open.

The focus of this hearing is solely on the decontamination and re-opening of the Brentwood Postal Facility. But, at the same time, there is a larger issue at play: Restoring trust. The deaths of Thomas Morris Jr. and Joseph Curseen Jr. were tragic and deeply regrettable. Postal workers are rightly angry at the loss of their co-workers, as well as the fact that their place of work remained open for several days even after the office buildings on Capitol Hill were shut down.

I want to express my heartfelt sympathy, and also those of this Subcommittee, to the families of Mr. Curseen and Mr. Morris, and to their friends and colleagues at the Brentwood Center. You have all suffered a great deal of trauma and hardship during the past 9 months, and I want you to know your suffering has not gone unnoticed.

As you probably know, the entire Maryland congressional delegation, along with Congresswoman Norton, has signed onto a piece of legislation, H.R. 3287, that would re-name the Brentwood Road facility after Mr. Curseen and Mr. Morris. I am pleased to announce today that I have secured a promise from the full Government Reform Committee that the Committee will report the bill to the House floor "promptly" upon Congress's return from recess in September.

I know this is a small symbol, but it is an important – and appropriate – one, nonetheless. Renaming the Brentwood Center for its two fallen workers will serve as a permanent reminder of their dedicated service and their untimely deaths.

These are important times in America. We are at war against terrorism, Congress is in the middle of creating a new Homeland Security Department, and federal investigators are still hunting down the source of the anthrax letters. Times like these demand cooperation and communication between the federal government and the public. We are here today at Gallaudet University, instead of on Capitol Hill, in an effort to bridge the gap between official Washington and the local Brentwood community.

As we move forward, I hope this hearing will give the members of the Brentwood community, the postal employees and the public at large a great level of comfort that the fumigation of the Brentwood Processing Center will result in an exceedingly safe facility – safe for the workers to return, and safe for mail to be sorted through. Chlorine dioxide is a common chemical compound, but that does not mean it is devoid of danger. This clean up must proceed in a professional, efficient and safe manner, posing no risk to the surrounding community.

In many ways, the Brentwood clean up will benefit from the experience in decontaminating the Hart Senate Office Building. The lessons learned in the Hart clean up – specifically, about the necessity of keeping the building's temperature and humidity constant – will make this a better process. However, the Hart Building is just 100,000 cubic feet. Brentwood measures 17.5 million cubic feet, or 175 times larger. That presents some unique challenges for the Postal Service and its contractors, and I'm sure we will get into detail about those challenges when we hear from our first panel.

In addition, I would like to know how quickly the Postal Service is moving to install detection equipment that will be able to identify potential biological agents in letters or packages that come into its facilities. Such equipment could prevent contamination of the mail and of postal facilities, improving the safety for both postal employees and postal customers. And safety is our ultimate goal.

# # # # #

DEBORAH K. WILLHITE
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND PUBLIC POLICY

AUG 26 2002

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

August 23, 2002

The Honorable Constance A. Morella
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on the District of Columbia
Committee on Government Reform
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2008

Dear Congresswoman Morella:

On July 26 the House Government Reform Subcommittee on the District of Columbia held a field hearing on the decontamination of the Brentwood Processing and Distribution Center. This letter transmits a response to one of Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton's requests for information from Postal Service witnesses concerning the decontamination of that facility. The responses to the remaining requests for information will follow in a separate document.

Delegate Norton asked Tom Day, Postal Service Vice President, Engineering, if the Postal Service would be reimbursing the government of the District of Columbia for emergency services expenses and other expenses related to the decontamination of the Brentwood facility.

Public Law 107-117 appropriated emergency funds to the Postal Service to be used "to protect postal employees and postal customers from exposure to biohazardous material, to sanitize and screen the mail, and to replace or repair Postal Service facilities destroyed or damaged in New York City." The Act also required that the Postal Service submit "to the Committees on Appropriations, the House Committee on Government Reform, and the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs an emergency preparedness plan to combat the threat of biological and chemical substances in the mail, including a plan for expenditure of funds in support of the emergency preparedness plan."

On March 6, 2002, the Postal Service submitted its *Emergency Preparedness Plan*. As you will note in the tables from the Executive Summary of that Plan, which is attached, the Postal Service has allocated its emergency appropriations to fund those activities designed to protect postal employees and postal customers. No funds were authorized to reimburse the government of any municipality affected by the terrorist attacks. We understand that communities affected by the attacks, including the District of Columbia, were appropriated separate emergency funds to help them recover from the consequences of the attacks.

If I may be of further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Deborah Willhite

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U. S. Postal Service

Emergency Preparedness Plan

for

Protecting Postal Employees and Postal Customers

From Exposure to Biohazardous Material

and for

Ensuring Mail Security

Against

Bioterror Attacks

Emergency Preparedness Plan
Date of Report: March 6, 2002

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Executive Summary

Introduction

On September 11, 2001, the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York damaged two postal facilities. In October 2001, some individual or group of individuals used the U.S. Mail to send anthrax to organizations and individuals in the United States, harming both employees and customers—5 people died, and 18 became ill. Two postal facilities have been temporarily closed (Brentwood Facility in Washington, D.C., and Hamilton Township Facility in New Jersey). Numerous facilities had to be tested for the presence of anthrax, and many had to be cleaned. Hundreds of postal employees were tested for exposure to anthrax, and many more were put on a regimen of antibiotics for prophylactic purposes.

Unlike the large-scale biological attack predicted by experts that could kill thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, this attack was small and carefully targeted. Biological weapons of mass destruction were feared as part of an "asymmetric strategy" on the part of less powerful state or non-state actors.[1] This attack has demonstrated the asymmetric value of introducing a biological agent into a nationwide distribution network. Not only is the relative power of the attacker small, it also means that a small-scale, carefully targeted attack can cause reactions far beyond the actual threat.

It was correctly predicted that "an NBC [Nuclear, Biological, or Chemical] attack against a civilian population would, in all likelihood, trigger a panic far in excess of the real effects of the weapons."[2] This panic was magnified by the use of the nation's most extensive logistics network—the U.S. Mail. The U.S. Postal Service delivers 680 million pieces of mail per day to virtually every household and business in the United States. Compromising this system has the potential to adversely impact the entire nation with a simple terrorist act.

The Postal Inspection Service has provided the Postal Service a threat assessment, which serves as a basis for this plan. The Postal Inspection Service maintains a continuous liaison with all appropriate federal law enforcement agencies and monitors threats to the nation and its mail. (The threat assessment is not a public document, due to security concerns.) The threat assessment states, in part, "the sheer size and presence of the Postal Service makes it vulnerable to be a target of terrorism or to be used as a vehicle to carryout terrorist activities. The Postal Service is not immune to the possibility of being a terrorism target again and we believe the threat level increased with the media publicity surrounding the delivery of the anthrax laden letters to the Senate." The threat assessment concludes, "Accordingly, the Postal Service believes, and is acting on the assumption that the threat for the inappropriate use of the mails continues."

"The greatest opportunities to limit the damage of covert NBC attacks, or prevent them entirely, exist during the first phases of the incident."[3] This report emphasizes just such an approach. It places a premium on threat identification combined with protection to both employees and customers of the Postal Service at the earliest feasible point in our distribution system.

"There is an unavoidable tradeoff between maintaining the values and strengths of a free nation and taking certain steps that could significantly increase the odds of gaining advance detection of a terrorist or covert NBC attack."[4] We have considered several different process and technology changes to reduce the volume of high-risk mail from anonymous senders. However, a cornerstone of the service we provide our nation is an open and accessible system. While we can take steps to

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[1] Richard A. Falkenrath, Robert D. Newman, and Bradley A. Thayer, America's Achilles Heel; The MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 2001, pg. 12
[2] Ibid, pg. 6
[3] Ibid, pg. 303
[4] Ibid, pg 280

reduce the volume of high-risk mail from anonymous senders, we cannot eliminate it. A closed and restricted system for the acceptance of all mail is inconsistent with a viable U.S. Postal Service.

The safety of our employees and customers, the security of the mail, and the confidence of the American public in the Postal Service were challenged by the events of last fall. Day-to-day postal operations were disrupted, and the negative financial impact on the Postal Service and on our nation's economic activity was significant. We cannot assume these attacks were isolated and will never be repeated. Rather, we must assume our vulnerability is known and we must take the appropriate steps to reduce risk.

Overview

The Postal Service looked at a variety of process changes and technology initiatives that could be applied to the threat of biohazards in the mail. Careful review and consideration was given to all processes and technologies in this report. The paramount conclusion is that no single solution exists to solve the problem of using the mail as a tool of bioterrorism. Further, no solution or even series of solutions can totally eliminate the threat.

The conclusions, and the implementation plan in this report, reflect the need to put in place process changes and technology applications that can reasonably reduce risk. The objective is to reduce risk for both employees and customers of the Postal Service while at the same time maintaining current service levels.

The viability of the Postal Service, and its value to the American people, is dependent upon an open and accessible system. Extreme procedural changes could reduce threats, but would significantly damage the financial position of the Postal Service. The procedural changes included in this report reflect the balance between enhanced security and the continued ability of customers to do business with the Postal Service.

The technology assessment in this report considered several risk factors. First, at what state of development is the technology? In many cases, there are very interesting developments underway but remain several years from full production capability. Second, to what extent can the technology be integrated into the Postal Service operating system? Heavy emphasis was placed on the ability to maintain current service levels. Third, what is the cost of the technology? There are several approaches that simply do not provide a sufficient level of risk reduction to justify their cost. Finally, what are the levels of risk reduction? Proposals vary as to the level of protection provided and the point at which they should be deployed in our system.

We concluded that there was a need to focus our efforts on a combination of procedural changes and technologies that are at or near production. However, while we continue to evaluate these system-wide applications, our first priority will be the cleaning, decontamination and reopening of both the Brentwood and Trenton facilities. This work was begun as part of our initial response and will continue during the next phase.

System-wide detection technology is focused on the initial operation in processing facilities for mail picked up at collection boxes, residences, and small businesses -- mail with the greatest risk. This technology, combined with enhanced security procedures for our bulk quantity mailers, provides significant risk reduction as mail enters our distribution system.

In order to provide another layer of protection, we will install a vacuuming and filtration system on many of our automated sorting machines. In controlled laboratory tests we were able to replicate the anthrax dispersion events that took place in Trenton and Brentwood. We have a clear understanding of how a powderized biohazard escapes from the mail.

Based upon this knowledge we worked with the manufacturers of our processing equipment to design and build the vacuum/filtration systems. These systems are capable of capturing and trapping most of the biohazardous material as it escapes from the mail. The result is reduced risk to the postal employees operating this equipment and in turn reduction in cross-contamination that can affect our customers.

We will continue to work with the manufacturers of irradiation technology. This technology remains the only scientifically accepted means to decontaminate mail exposed to biohazards. The electronic beam (e-beam) systems we purchased will be deployed in a configuration optimized for mail. This limited deployment will allow us to accurately evaluate the operational impacts, costs and effects on mail and its contents. The results of this evaluation, combined with the effectiveness of the technologies described above, will dictate the appropriate next steps for irradiation technology. In addition, we will continue to work with manufacturers of alternative technologies to determine whether these technologies could be used to decontaminate mail.

Beyond these first steps, we will continue to work with the manufacturers of several different technologies. Additional testing and prototyping is necessary to fully determine their viability. Key areas of focus are (1) redesign of collection box for both risk reduction and detection, (2) technology and procedures to reduce the volume of "anonymous" mail, (3) further deployment of vacuum/filtration technology on automated sorting equipment, (4) use of mass spectrometry for detection, and (5) a variety of technology to aid investigators in finding whoever committed this act, and deterring further attempts at placing biohazards in the mail.

This plan is dynamic. We will work with the Inspection Service to periodically update the threat assessment. At the same time, we will continue to evaluate a variety of technologies as they reach maturity. We also are committed to exploring research and development efforts to identify new approaches to solve this problem.

Format of the Report

The report is presented in six parts. It begins with an introduction that provides background information and a summary of the initial responses to anthrax contamination.

The second section outlines the assumptions, methodologies and framework for analysis used throughout the report.

The third section provides a structure for grouping the various categories of both process change and technology. It includes a short-listing of the technologies and process changes that were proposed and initially evaluated.

The fourth section provides the detailed analysis of the most promising technologies or process changes that were considered. For each item there is a brief description, technical risk assessment, operational risk assessment, cost risk assessment and finally a bottom-line viability assessment.

The fifth section draws upon the analysis portion of the report and provides the conclusion as to the combination of technology and process change that should be adopted.

The sixth, and final, section provides a plan as to how these technologies and process changes should be implemented. It places these items in a near-term (current fiscal year), intermediate-term (2-3 years), and long-term (4-5 years) format. It also addresses issues for future consideration.

Goals

This Emergency Preparedness Plan addresses the requirements of P.L. 107-117 and its goals of protecting postal employees and postal customers from exposure to biohazardous material and safeguarding the mail system from future bioterror attacks while maintaining current service levels to the American public.

To achieve this goal, four strategic objectives are being pursued:

- Detect biohazardous materials introduced into the mail stream as soon as possible
- Contain biohazardous materials identified in the mail stream as soon as possible
- Neutralize biohazardous materials found in the mail stream
- Deter against the use of the mail as a tool for bioterrorist acts

This will be accomplished by taking action along six core technology-based and process-based initiatives:

Prevention – Reduce the risk that someone would use the mail as a tool of terror.

Protection and Health-Risk Reduction – Reduce risk of exposure to biohazards, and prevent cross-contamination of mail if biohazards should be introduced into the mail system.

Detection and Identification – Detect and identify potential hazardous materials as early as possible in the mail stream.

Intervention – As a precaution, neutralize potential contaminants in the mail.

Decontamination – Eliminate known contaminants, both in the mail and in equipment and facilities.

Investigation – Enhance criminal investigative infrastructure to enable more effective forensic analysis.

Conclusions

The conclusions that follow are drawn from the qualitative analysis of technologies and processes. The viability of the various technologies and processes has been categorized as immediate, near-term (current fiscal year), intermediate-term (2-3 years), and long-term (4-5 years). The overall availability and state of maturity of technologies in these areas, and their adequacy to accomplish the objectives of each core initiative are also considered. This section is organized by core initiatives, to facilitate reference to the analysis.

Prevention

The application of detection, containment, and decontamination technologies at the collection box cannot be immediately implemented. The fact that the Postal Service has approximately 350,000 collection boxes, and the current state of detection technology make immediate introduction of these technologies impractical at this time. Several technologies are being conceptually evaluated and will be tested and prototyped in the intermediate term, where appropriate.

The use of intelligent mail (each piece of mail having a unique identity) is an effort that predates the current problem with biohazards. The Postal Service has already invested in the infrastructure to support this effort. The basis for this investment has been for business reasons -- both revenue generation and cost reduction -- and was not motivated by security reasons. The effort will continue and assist the Postal Service with its security needs.

The Postal Service currently has a program that video records retail transactions. The system is not fully implemented at all postal facilities. In addition there are available image recording systems that would need to be integrated with our information systems to allow us to fully benefit from this technology. Prototyping this system will be necessary to better understand system requirements and cost.

Security control for large mailers is viable in the near to intermediate term. This will help ensure that mail from identified sources is secure.

Access security control can be accomplished by borrowing heavily from technologies already in place in other areas of the government.

In summary, prevention involves a large spectrum of efforts to incorporate technologies at several different levels of maturity. Significant progress is expected in the intermediate term.

Protection and Health Risk Reduction

The objective of this initiative is to reduce the risk of exposure to biohazards, and prevent cross-contamination of mail, if biohazards should be introduced into the system. Mature and available technologies exist to support this initiative. The protection of employees from air-borne biohazards will be accomplished by the implementation of two mature technologies and by the conduct of a feasibility study in a third conceptual area.

The use of high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA)-filtered vacuum cleaners for equipment cleaning, as a replacement for compressed air blowing is a mature and available technology that can be implemented immediately with low risk.

The retrofitting of custom-designed filtration vacuum systems on each type of mail-processing equipment involves applying the mature technologies of vacuum systems and multi-stage HEPA filtering in a custom design that can be prototyped and implemented on a large scale in the near to intermediate term with low risk.

The installation of enhanced filtration or other means of trapping or killing of bacteria or other bioagents in the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system is a concept that involves the potential application of a variety of technologies. A preliminary feasibility study is required to define the technical and operational risk of this approach in the context of the implementation of the above two mature technologies, and to identify the technologies that should be evaluated more rigorously for potential insertion into the HVAC.

Implementation of the two mature technologies will reduce the health risks to our employees and protect our customers. If the modification of HVAC appears feasible it will provide a further means to reduce health risk.

Detection and Identification

The objective of this initiative is to detect and identify potential hazardous materials as early as possible in the mail stream. Technologies for detection and identification of threats are not at a stage of development that allows immediate implementation. However, promising cutting-edge technologies exist to effectively accomplish this initiative in the intermediate term, after appropriate testing and pilot studies have been done.

Triggering technologies are not at the stage of maturity where commercial off-the-shelf equipment will provide continuous, unattended monitoring and reporting of the existence of a potential threat. These technologies require intermediate-term testing to determine further viability.

Confirmation technology requires specific and reliable identification of a biohazard with a validated technique. For this purpose, polymerase chain reaction (PCR) as a means of detecting the presence of specific biohazard signatures is a technology that merits near-term prototyping with potential near- to intermediate-term implementation.

Mass spectrometry as a confirmation technology is of moderate to high technical risk due to questions about the specificity of the method and its ability to function in the high-particulate environment of mail processing. If technical risk related to specificity of this technique could be overcome, this combination could also provide acceptable confirmation of a threat.

In summary, while detection cannot be accomplished by immediate implementation of an off-the-shelf technology, near-term prototyping of intermittent air sampling, and automated presentation of samples to analysis by PCR shows the best promise for effective detection.

Intervention

The objective of intervention is to neutralize potential contaminants in the mail. This is a precautionary measure. A mature technology—e-beam—has been identified and implemented for the irradiation of selected mail. The two facilities presently in use were not specifically designed for mail; therefore, the configuration is not optimal.

Plans are moving forward for the deployment of e-beam technology in at least one, and potentially two facilities specifically designed for mail processing. Only targeted mail would be irradiated at this facility. This optimal configuration will allow for a better evaluation of the costs, operational impacts, and effects on the mail and its contents. Results of this deployment will largely determine the viability of a large-scale use of irradiation technology.

Decontamination – Mail

The objective of decontamination is to eliminate known contaminants in the mail. Decontamination of mail involves the sterilization of selected items of mail, which have been identified as being contaminated. It is essentially the same process as intervention, except that it would be applied selectively to mail that is pre-identified as contaminated.

Irradiation remains as the only scientifically accepted method for decontaminating mail once it is exposed to a biohazard. No other technology has yet proven the ability to effectively penetrate and clean a non-homogenous product such as mail.

Decontamination – Facilities and Equipment

Gaseous treatment technologies were found to be the most viable for facility decontamination because of their uniform permeation throughout the facility and exposure to all surfaces accessible to contamination. Of the gaseous treatment technologies, chlorine dioxide is the most viable because of the precedent for its use as a building decontaminant. Spot decontamination can be effectively accomplished with the direct application of anti-microbial agents.

Investigation

The objective of investigation is to enhance the criminal investigative infrastructure to enable more effective forensic analysis. The technologies under evaluation and development for this initiative are image capture and analysis, wide field of view cameras, and mailpiece tracking.

Image capture and analysis is based on real-time analysis of images that are presently captured. This is an ongoing Postal Service project with three distinct phases. The first two phases that include the capability to perform automated, real-time analysis of scanned images have intermediate-term viability. Phase III, which includes handwriting comparison, is somewhat less mature.

The use of the full mailpiece image utilizing a Wide Field of View (WFOV) camera is a critical component to this effort. This camera upgrade was previously funded and approved by the Postal Service as part of its normal investment projects. Full deployment of the WFOV will be completed in the next two years. Full image capture is already available on Postal Service automated flats distribution equipment.

Plan

Initial Response

Ongoing activities resulting from this initial response include the purchase of approximately 16,000 HEPA-filtered vacuums for cleaning equipment and building surfaces within postal facilities of 5000 square feet or larger, the provision of gloves and masks to all employees, the use of e-beam technology for mail sanitization, and decontamination of equipment and facilities. (Reference Table 1)

Table 1 Usage of Initial Appropriations

	Appropriation	Activities to Date (as of 2/28/02)
Irradiation Equipment and Services	$ 100.0	$ 53.0
Other Activities and Services		
Employee Personal Protection		$ 29.0
On-Site First Response Environmental Testing		$ 24.0
Nationwide Mailing and Communications		$ 15.0
Site Clean-Up		$ 45.0
Medical Costs		$ 9.0
Sum of Other Activities and Services	$ 75.0	$ 122.0
Total	$ 175.0	$ 175.0

Near-Term Strategy

The Postal Service's near-term strategy is based on using available production (or near-production) technologies and processes to provide initial security capabilities. The Postal Service's implementation of these capabilities over the next year is intended to provide a level of protection and adequate time to allow subsequent investigation and validation of emerging technologies.

The first priority of our near-term activity is the continuation of equipment and facility decontamination at the Brentwood and Trenton facilities, and repair of the postal facilities damaged in New York City.

Our next priority is detection technologies, principally based on PCR technology, which will be used in conjunction with air sampling. Further operational testing of PCR equipment for use in postal environments will occur before full deployment in processing and distribution centers.

Protective and health-risk reduction technologies include the design and installation of filtration vacuum systems on processing equipment at 292 locations for initial induction operations. The first priority is the loose mail culling "010" systems, the Advanced Facer Canceler Systems (AFCS), followed by the outgoing Delivery Bar Code Sorters (DBCS) and the Automated Flats Sorting Machines (AFSM 100). This will provide for significant risk reduction to postal employees and greatly limit cross-contamination should a biohazard event occur in the future.

Intervention, in the form of e-beam irradiation, will continue for all mail being delivered to government offices within the 202 to 205 ZIP codes. In addition, construction will begin on at least one, and potentially two facilities to house the eight e-beam accelerators purchased as one of the initial response actions. Once construction of these facilities is complete and the e-beam equipment is installed it will be available for continued intervention activities as well as decontamination of mail, should future bioterrorism attacks occur against the Postal Service.

Finally, research and development activities, pilot testing, and emergency response planning and training will continue.

The estimated cost for near-term activities is $587 million. (Reference Table 2)

Intermediate-Term Strategy

The Postal Service has identified an initial set of technologies that it will evaluate during the next 24 to 36 months. These technologies are intended to build on the baseline of technologies selected for near-term implementation. The Postal Service will both evaluate these intermediate-term technologies and pursue new technologies that have potential benefits. The Postal Service will establish an on-going team that will be specifically tasked with identifying, evaluating, and developing technologies during this time period.

Technology-based activities under prevention will be focused on minimizing the "anonymous mailer" threat at collection boxes and retail outlets. Manufactured mail security and vehicle access control will be strengthened.

Protection and health-risk reduction activities will continue efforts to install vacuum filtration systems on mail-processing equipment, including the remaining DBCS and Carrier Sequence Bar Code Sorters (CSBCS). It will also investigate the feasibility of adding high-efficiency filtration and sanitization technologies to postal facility HVAC systems.

Under Detection, the use of mass spectrometry as both a triggering and confirmation technology for biohazards will be explored with the expectation that it could complement PCR.

Investigation will deal with a series of process-based activities aimed at both deterring and identifying terrorists.

The estimated cost for intermediate-term activities is at $1.7 billion ($800 million in FY-03, $897.5 million in FY-04), as shown in Table 2.

Long-Term Strategy

The Postal Service's long-term strategy is focused on technology deployment and process changes based on the research and development activities and pilot tests conducted during both near-term and intermediate-term phases. This continued development activity could result in further maturing technologies that could be deployed in the 4 to 5 year time frame.

The long-term strategy must reflect the dynamic nature of this plan. Updates will include an ongoing evaluation of threats. Threat assessment must consider an ever-changing array of

biohazards that may be placed in a form suitable to pose a threat in the mail. In addition, assessment must evaluate the threat of explosives, chemical agents and radioactive material.

Periodic updates will reflect the further maturation of a variety of technologies under consideration. It will also be necessary to continue to investigate new technologies that may offer viable solutions. Reference Table 2 for long-term cost estimates for planning purposes.

Table 2 Ongoing and Proposed Initiatives Costs

	Costs (in $M)			
	Near-Term	Intermediate-Term		Long-Term
	Current Year (Thru 9/02)	Year 2 (FY-03)	Year 3 (FY-04	Year 4-5 (FY-05 / 06)
Current On-Going Activities				
Decontamination				
Building Decontamination	$ 35.0			
Intervention and Sanitization				
Mail Irradiation Facilities #				1 - 2.25 B
Current On-Going Activities Total	$ 35.0			1 - 2.25 B
Proposed Initiatives				
Detection and Identification				
Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) ##	$ 200.0			
Protection and Health Risk Reduction				
Filtration on 010	$ 60.0			
Filtration on AFCS	$ 55.0			
Filtration on AFSM 100	$ 50.0			
Filtration on DBCS (Out-Going) ***	$ 80.0			
R&D / Pilot	$ 9.0			
Emergency Response Plan	$ 0.5			
Facility Repair				
Repair	$ 10.5			
Current On-Going & Proposed Initiatives Sub-Total	$ 500.0		$ -	
Supplemental Funding Requirements				
Filtration on DBCS (Outgoing)***	$ 11.0			
Prototype and Testing	$ 10.0			
Detection and Identification				
Triggers ##		$ 60.0	$ 40.0	
Facility Air Monitoring ##		$ 120.0	$ 80.0	
Protection and Health Risk Reduction				
Filtration on DBCS	$ 50.0	$ 120.0		
Filtration on CSBCS		$ 44.8	$ 30.0	
HVAC *	$ 8.0	$ 120.0		
Prevention				
Collection Box & Drop Slots **	$ 10.0	$ 50.0	$ 292.0	
Retail Outlet **		$ 150.0	$ 100.0	
Manufactured Mail Security			**	
Vehicle Access Control Security		$ 135.0		
Investigation				
Image Capture			$ 20	
Image Profiling			$ 56	
Handwriting Analysis			$ 56	
Wide Field of View Image Camera			$ 4	
Mail-Piece Tracking and Tracing			$ 210	
Positive Product Tracking			$ 9.5	$ 111.0
Proposed Initiatives Total	$ 587.0	$ 799.8	$ 897.5	1 - 2.4 B

* Funding for study, further funding is dependent on outcome of the study.

** Options and costs pending further analysis.

*** Limited quantity without Supplemental Funding

Potential costs if intervention systems deployed nationwide.

Either PCR and triggers, or Mass Spectrometer will be pursued. (Note, only one of the potential triggers will be used in fielded systems.)

Note: These estimates are for planning purposes only. Funding will be prioritized to account for any necessary changes.

Summary

We are proceeding on the basis of the Inspection Service assessment that the inappropriate use of the mails is a continuing threat. Potentially, the mail can be used to transmit a variety of threatening materials, including biohazards.

This plan provides for the process changes and technology applications necessary to ensure the enhanced safety of both postal employees and postal customers. The emphasis is placed upon prevention, detection, and risk reduction at the earliest point feasible in our distribution network.

The applications utilized in both prevention and detection rely upon mature or near-mature technology. In the case of PCR, piloting and testing is moving forward at a pace that will allow for its near-term deployment. The use of this type of proven technology provides for a systems approach with effective and reliable results.

This plan makes optimal use of the appropriated funds. The combination of process change and an array of technology applications across prevention, detection, and risk reduction provide maximum protection for employees and customers.

DEBORAH K. WILLHITE
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND PUBLIC POLICY

August 30, 2002

The Honorable Constance A. Morella
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on the District of Columbia
Committee on Government Reform
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2008

Dear Congresswoman Morella:

On July 26 the House Government Reform Subcommittee on the District of Columbia held a field hearing on the decontamination of the Brentwood Processing and Distribution Center. This letter responds to a request for information during the hearing, concerning transportation provided for postal employees following the shut down of operations at Brentwood.

As you are aware, following the closing of the Brentwood Processing and Distribution Center, employees were reassigned to several locations within our Capital District operations. The primary sites included our Southern Maryland Processing and Distribution Center in Capital Heights, which is approximately 10 miles away, the relocated government mails operation on nearby V Street NE, and our Suburban Maryland Processing and Distribution Center located in Gaithersburg, which is about 30 miles away. At the outset of what was considered a dynamic situation, employees assigned to the more distant Gaithersburg facility were provided bus transportation from and to the Brentwood facility on a daily basis. This transportation was provided for all three tours of the 24-hour operations, and employee work hour compensation included the travel time from and to the Brentwood site, or approximately 25 percent of the employee's pay.

Once it became clear that these temporary reassignments would continue for a number of months, District postal officials reviewed the transportation requirements and determined that the appropriate course of action would be to alter the transportation arrangements to coincide with national postal policies. On January 14, 2002, Brentwood employees were advised that the bus transportation and work hour compensation for travel would cease on January 21, 2002. Consistent with our national policies, which have been determined through the collective bargaining process, employees assigned to the Suburban Maryland Processing and Distribution Center were also advised that they would be eligible for reimbursement of expenditures for the additional round trip mileage from home to work (compared to the Brentwood facility). Currently all claims submitted with appropriate documentation by employees are being paid promptly. Additionally, individual employee scheduling has been adjusted to permit use of Metro, and the Postal Service is providing free round trip shuttle bus service from the Shady Grove Metro stop to the Gaithersburg facility for all three tours.

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The impact of the insidious anthrax attack on the postal system coupled with the continuing impact of the September 11, 2001, attack has required the Postal Service to make many changes in the way we operate. We have attempted to implement those changes with the interest of our employees and customers in mind, while we address the business needs of the system. As we continue to make further changes to adjust to new realities, the support of our customers, employees, and elected leaders will be necessary if we are to succeed in continuing to provide the American people quality mail service at affordable rates.

I appreciate your support of the Postal Service and your interest in this issue. Please let me know if I may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Deborah Willhite

Bcc: Tim Haney
Capital District Manager
900 Brentwood Road, NE
Washington, DC 20066-7000

Jerry Lane
Manager, Capital Metro Operations
900 Brentwood Road, NE
Washington, DC 20068-7000

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