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# NEWS SERVICE

AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION, AFL-CIO Headquarters: 1300 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005

## Postal Workers — Front-line Heroes

### We Honor Our Fallen Brothers and We Fight for the Safety of Our Members and the Public

Following is a statement by APWU Executive Vice President and President-elect William Burrus:

**On behalf of the APWU National Executive Board, we extend our deepest sympathies to the families of the deceased postal employees who have been murdered by unknown persons. These acts of terrorism will be recorded among the darkest days of American history.**

**Funeral services were held for Thomas Morris Jr., on Friday, Oct. 26, and for Joseph Curseen Jr. on Saturday, Oct. 27. Both worked at the Brentwood, DC, facility and died from inhalation anthrax. I was deeply touched by the show of support from the hundreds of postal workers who joined us at their services.**

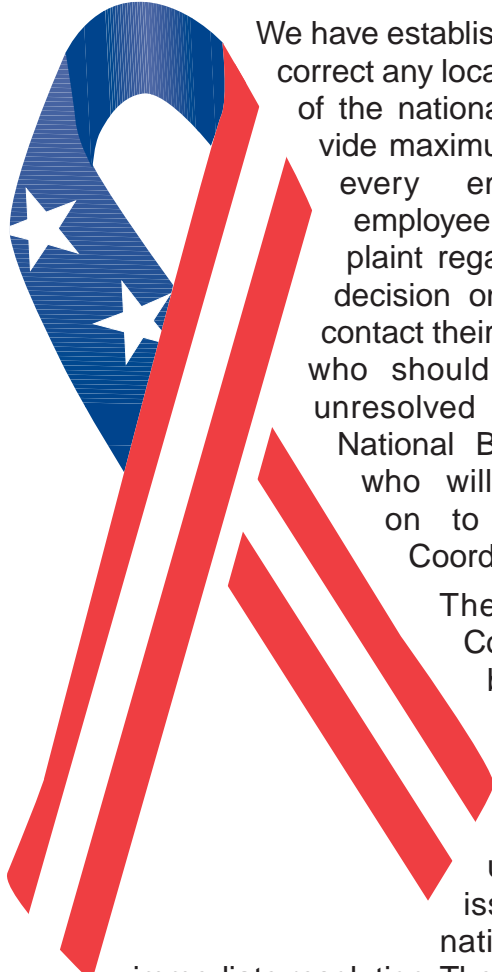
Also on Friday, President Bush, during a ceremony to sign anti-terrorism legislation, honored our lost members, saying that Brothers Curseen and Morris died in the line of duty in a two-front war against terrorists. These fallen brothers are examples of the thousands of dedicated postal employees who are committed to serving the United States. It is because of this that postal workers are heroes.

I understand, however, that despite your bravery in the line of duty, many of you are fearful and concerned. Please know that our No. 1 priority is the health and safety of our members and we are doing everything possible to ensure that your concerns are addressed.

I want our membership to be aware that, in an effort to show a united front among the postal community, I have elected to limit my availability to the media for comments. Every news organization in the country has contacted my office for an interview; and while I have consented to some, at this time of peril I believe it appropriate to have a single spokesman for the postal community. This does not mean that we are not continuing to pursue the union's agenda, but this fight is not one of APWU alone vs. the terrorists. It is a fight by every postal employee.

I meet each day at 10 a.m. with the postmaster general and his top staff, along with the presidents of the other unions and the management associations, to discuss how we can provide maximum safety to every postal employee. Much progress has been made, and the following procedures have been established:

- Employees who experience respiratory difficulties when wearing masks may elect to work without a mask or be reassigned to other tasks.
  - Employees may purchase different masks than those provided by the Postal Service.
  - Presently, the Postal Service is purchasing equipment that will irradiate all mail items prior to being introduced into the processing environment. This will provide absolute protection against this deadly disease. Four of the machines have already been purchased, and additional ones are on order for deployment throughout the postal system.
  - Employees should provide an updated address and telephone number to Personnel for use if a co-worker develops symptoms and immediate contact is required. Post Office boxes are not an expedited means of timely notice, and hours of delay can be critical in the treatment of this deadly disease.
  - Any employee experiencing flu-like symptoms should notify their supervisor for immediate testing for anthrax; and, if treated by their physician, they should identify themselves as postal employees so that medical personnel may provide proper medication.
  - The Postal Service will provide free flu shots, and it is recommended that all employees take the protective shot. The symptoms of flu and anthrax are very similar; and as we enter the flu season, we do not want any mis-diagnosis that may imperil the lives of employees.
- Testing will be performed (at no cost to the employee) on every employee who has possibly come in contact with anthrax.
  - Any work center or office found to be contaminated with anthrax will be closed until it has been cleaned and declared safe for human inhabitants.
  - Gloves will be provided to every requesting employee and may be worn on any assignment.
  - Mail-processing employees will be permitted to wash their hands no less than once every two hours.
  - Protective masks will be provided to every employee for use in mail processing or in any function that handles mail. Cartridge masks will be provided to Mail Processors and other employees engaged in the mail-processing areas. The wearing of masks or gloves is voluntary on the part of the employee, even though it is strongly recommended that both gloves and masks be worn.
  - Employees who have facial hair are advised that the masks will not provide total protection unless a tight seal can be maintained.



We have established a system to correct any local interpretations of the national policy to provide maximum protection to every employee. Any employee having a complaint regarding any local decision on safety should contact their local president, who should pass on any unresolved issue to the National Business Agent, who will then pass it on to the Regional Coordinator.

The Regional Coordinators have been provided E-Mail addresses and FAX numbers to forward every unresolved issue to the national level for immediate resolution. They are to be used only by the Regional Coordinators. The locals and members should not use these E-Mail addresses and FAX numbers.

The national union is planning to honor our deceased brothers during the week of November 12th through the 16th, the week of Veterans' Day, when our nation honors its military heroes. The theme will be "Postal Employees Are Heroes Too!" We will be requesting that every postal employee wear the red, white and blue ribbon in honor of the victims of this terrorist attack. We will also be requesting donations from our locals and our members for distribution to the affected families. Executive Vice President-elect Cliff Guffey will be providing additional information in the coming days.