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# NEWS SERVICE

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## USPS Task Force Agrees On Anthrax Protocols

**At the Friday, Nov. 2, meeting of the USPS Anthrax Task Force, tentative agreement was reached on interim protocols governing the Postal Service's unified response to the anthrax crisis around the country. It is anticipated that final agreement will be reached on these interim protocols on Monday, Nov. 5. (They will be posted on the APWU website once they are finalized.)**

The tentative, interim protocols cover the following areas:

- closure of post offices for safety;
- safe reopening of post offices;

- procedures governing environmental sampling and decontamination of facilities;
- medical protocols (governing situations where employees are to be tested and/or treated); and
- communication (improved communications from USPS headquarters to and throughout the field, especially concerning the closing and reopening of facilities).

The task force also has requested that the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) develop a standard prophylactic (preventative medicine) protocol to provide for uniform treatment of exposed postal workers throughout the country.

Passed by the APWU National Executive Board on Nov. 1, 2001

### NEB Resolution on Anthrax

**At the Nov. 1 special meeting of the APWU National Executive Board, the following resolution was passed concerning the ongoing anthrax crisis:**

**Be it resolved.** That the National Executive Board authorizes President-elect William Burrus of the American Postal Workers Union to take whatever

action he may deem necessary in this crisis regarding anthrax — and/or other bio-chemical threats in the mail — to ensure that the Postal Service lives up to its obligation and responsibility to provide safe working conditions for postal workers in postal facilities and to ensure the safety of the mail.

'Postal Employees Are Heroes Too!'

### Fallen Postal Workers Honored

During the week of Veterans Day, Nov. 12-16, the APWU will honor postal workers who have died as a result of the anthrax attack. Members are encouraged to wear the red, white and blue ribbon during the week, when our nation also honors its military heroes.

The poster enclosed with this News Service bulletin captures the theme of the week-long observance, "Postal Employees Are Heroes Too!" Local unions are urged to display the poster to let everyone know we're proud that our

members are "standing tall on the front lines for America."

Members can contribute to the APWU Heroes Fund to help the families of those who have been lost in our fight against terrorism by sending donations to:

**Postal Workers Front-Line Heroes Fund  
c/o American Postal Workers Union  
1300 L Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20005**

'Employer Has Legal and Moral Obligation'

## Burrus Takes Message of Pride and Concern to U.S. Congress

**Executive Vice President Bill Burrus testified before two congressional committees on Tuesday, Oct. 30, regarding ongoing problems posed by the introduction of anthrax into the U.S. Postal Service, and reminding members of Congress of the heroic service of APWU members throughout the country. During his testimony on behalf of APWU, Burrus honored the fallen postal employees in the Washington, DC, area — Thomas L. Morris Jr. and Joseph Curseen Jr. — who died as a result of this vicious terrorist assault on America.**

Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-CT), chairman of the Governmental Affairs Committee, said, "Our committee wants to find out whether adequate steps were taken to protect postal workers — and, for that matter, anyone who opens their mail — once it was known that the mails were being used to further terrorize the American people. We need to take stock of what we have learned from this experience and assess what needs to be done to properly protect those who work for the Postal Service and those who depend on its services."

Burrus told the senators, "The employer has a legal and a moral obligation to ensure its workers a safe and secure workplace. That obligation is most important when the issue is one of life or death. The APWU insists that postal facilities be made secure and that the mail be made safe through any necessary means."

"The dedication and commitment of postal workers who have continued to work under these conditions is heroic," Burrus said. "Notwithstanding the fact that we have assurances from the best experts on this subject, there can be no guarantee of safety under the circumstances. Postal workers in Morgan Station, and for that matter in every other postal facility in this country, are meeting the true definition of courage: Despite their fear and concern, they are performing their duties."

"The United States Postal Service accounts for approximately 8 percent of America's Gross Domestic Product, and it delivers messages and packages to every home in America. It is an institution that has enormous value to this country. That value is measured not only in economic terms, but in social terms. Despite the power and sophistication of the Internet, it is still only the United States Postal Service that

touches every life in America. As an article in the *Wall Street Journal* recently stated, 'even a temporary disruption in the distribution of letters and packages due to the anthrax scare could be yet another blow at a time when recession seems at hand.'

At the conclusion of the hearing, senators, led by Lieberman, paid tribute to the many years of service of outgoing President Moe Biller, who accompanied Executive Vice President Burrus to the hearings.

On Tuesday afternoon, in testimony before the House Committee on Government Reform, Burrus said, "The fact that these men and women [postal employees] have continued to work in the Post Office since anthrax was first discovered in the mail has been nothing short of heroic. I am proud, and humbled, to be representing them before you today. In the face of unknown and potentially deadly danger, they have been determined and steadfast in the performance of their duties."

"The September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were unspeakably horrible, and it has changed our country in ways that are very profound. The subsequent attack on our country by the use of anthrax — and that is what it is, an attack on our country — is also likely to have a profound effect on our country. Certainly, its effect on postal workers, the American Postal Workers Union, and the United States Postal Service, has already been profound. The deaths of two postal workers and the hospitalization of numbers of others have tested the commitment of postal workers to their work, and to the mission of the Postal Service. It also has tested the commitment of the Postal Service to the welfare of its workers."

Burrus made clear that the commitment of the Postal Service to its workers has been seriously called into question during arbitration hearings. While APWU members have been unwillingly advanced to the front line of the ongoing battle with terrorists, the USPS has moved to cut pay for postal workers for the next four years and, adding insult to injury, decrease its contribution to the employee's health benefits. While the safety and health of postal workers is put at higher risk, USPS fights behind the scene to cause even more hardship for postal workers and their families.



Executive Vice President Bill Burrus testifies Oct. 30 before the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee.