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NEWS SERVICE

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Union, Management Reach 'Fork in Road' on Anthrax Policy

The American Postal Workers Union and the U.S. Postal Service have come to a fork in the road regarding the appropriate response to the discovery of anthrax contamination at a postal facility, APWU President Bill Burrus declared last week.

It is the union's position that if anthrax — in any amount — is discovered at a postal facility, the facility must be cleaned, tested and declared decontaminated before APWU members can work there, he said.

Postal management does not agree, President Burrus noted. Postal management wishes to make decisions about contaminated facilities on a case-by-case basis and upon the advice of the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) and local health authorities.

If anthrax is found in your facility and you believe your safety is at risk, the union recommends that you notify management that you are leaving work, and request administrative leave, Burrus said. If the leave is disapproved, you should contest the leave approval upon your return, he said. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) and the Supreme Court have ruled that if employees believe working conditions in their workplace are abnormally dangerous, they may decline to work in them, he noted.

The USPS position on this most important issue is a total reversal of their earlier position, Burrus declared. A postal document dated Oct. 24, 2001, said, "If there's evidence of contamination at an individual postal facility, we're closing that place and handling the mail elsewhere . . . When we have evidence that a postal facility has been contaminated, we have closed it immediately."

Since the outbreak of the anthrax infection among postal employees, he has consciously refrained from stoking the fears of the American public and postal employees, Burrus said. "However, I cannot, in good

conscience, be party to any procedure that fails to uphold this basic principle: postal workers cannot work in contaminated buildings.

"Despite our commitment to serving the public, we will not put our lives at risk to continue the operation of a facility that is known to be contaminated." Medical professionals have informed the union that the use of the terms "trace contamination" and "minimal contamination" have no scientific meaning, he said. "A facility is either contaminated or it is not. Inhalation anthrax cannot be controlled by the walls and floors of a facility," he said.

U.S. senators and their staffs were not subjected to the possibility of anthrax exposure while their offices were decontaminated and tested, Burrus noted. The Supreme Court justices and their employees were not subjected to the possibility of anthrax exposure while the Supreme Court was being tested for contamination either, he said.

"Are the lives of postal workers less valuable than the lives of U.S. senators?" Burrus asked. "Are the lives of postal workers less valuable than the lives of Supreme Court justices? What value do our lives have?"

President Burrus urged local union presidents to obtain the telephone numbers of the governor, the mayor, city council, the local central labor body of the AFL-CIO, and the media so that they can be contacted immediately if a postal facility is contaminated and employees determine that the workplace is no longer safe.

Decision Expected During Week of Dec. 10, 2001

Contract Arbitration Concludes

Testimony in the arbitration regarding the APWU's Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Postal Service concluded on Nov. 17, 2001. The parties agreed to waive the filing of post-hearing briefs.

The neutral arbitrator is out of the country and will return on Dec. 10, 2001, when he will convene an executive session to conduct final deliberations. A decision is expected during the week of Dec. 10, 2001.

"I am extremely proud of the officers and staff of the union who, along with our attorneys, put forward a compelling case," APWU President Bill Burrus said.

The Postal Service's principal argument centered around the economy, the reduced volume as a result of the Sept. 11, 2001, attack, and the anthrax contamination, he noted.

"Our members deserve better. No matter the outcome of the arbitration, the struggle will continue."

Tell Congress: "Vote NO on Fast Track"

Key Vote in House Dec. 6

The U.S. House of Representatives will vote Dec. 6, 2001, on H.R. 3006, the Fast Track bill introduced by Rep. Bill Thomas (R-CA), chairman of the Ways and Means Committee.

APWU urges House members to reject this bill as a partisan, divisive bill. We believe it is counterproductive to schedule a vote on the bill at this time when our nation must be unified.

Contact your member of Congress and tell them that working families need fair and balanced trade. Call the AFL-CIO Congressional Hotline, toll-free, at 1-800-393-1082 to be connected directly to your representative's office.

Why Is Fast Track Flawed?

- This is not the time to ask the Congress to vote on a controversial, complicated, and important issue like trade negotiating authority. Rep. Thomas did not have the votes to pass fast track before Sept. 11, and he shouldn't take advantage of our national tragedy to press this narrow and divisive political agenda.

- Far from providing economic stimulus, this fast track bill will result in more flawed trade deals that cost us jobs and erode protections for the environment and public health.

- The last thing we need in this time of national crisis and economic insecurity is more flawed trade bills that will trade away our jobs.

- Rep. Thomas' bill offers no concrete protections for workers' rights or the environment, and does nothing to ensure that Congress will have a more meaningful role in crafting trade deals. All this bill does is ask our negotiators to seek provisions in trade agreements ensuring that other countries enforce their own labor and environmental laws.

The bill does not guarantee that these provisions will actually be included in any agreement, and it does not require that countries have decent labor laws in place. This falls far short of meaningful progress on these important issues.

APWU Health Plan 2002 Premiums and Prescription Drug Benefit

Correction

The November/December issue of *The American Postal Worker* gave some incorrect information about the APWU Health Plan premium payment periods and the prescription drug retail pharmacy benefit.

The correct payment periods for Active Members are **Bi-Weekly** for Self Only and Self and Family. Payment periods for Retirees are **Monthly** for Self

Only and Self and Family.

The prescription drug retail pharmacy benefit is: **In-network** — no deductible, members pay a \$7 co-pay for generic and 25 percent for brand name medications; **Out of network** — no deductible, members pay 45 percent.

The correct information is highlighted below.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS	In-Network (Medicare Same as Non-Medicare) You Pay	Out-of-Network (Medicare Same as Non-Medicare) You Pay
Home Delivery	No deductible, \$10 co-pay for generic/20% brand name	None
Retail Pharmacy	No deductible, \$7 co-pay for generic/ 25% brand name	No deductible, 45%

2002 Premiums

Active Members	Self Only Change (471)	Self & Family Change (472)
2002 Total Biweekly Premium	\$146.70	\$321.95
USPS Pays	\$115.52	\$263.75
You Pay Biweekly	\$ 31.18 +0.03	\$ 58.20 -3.32
Retirees	Self Only Change (471)	Self & Family Change (472)
2002 Total Monthly Premium	\$317.85	\$697.56
USPS Pays	\$212.03	\$484.06
You Pay Monthly	\$105.82 +4.46	\$213.50 +3.62

Only 'Select Plus' Affected

USPS Letter to APWU Health Plan Members

Recently, the U.S. Postal Service sent a letter to all APWU Health Plan members regarding the decision to discontinue the Select Plus Point of Service Plan previously offered in most of Texas and the

Minneapolis/ St. Paul area of Minnesota. The letter only affects Select Plus Point of Service Plan members. If you are not in the Select Plus Plan, please disregard the letter.