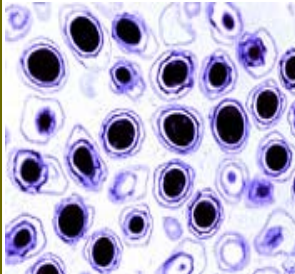


"Anthrax" Incidents in The National Capital Region

State and Local Government
After Action Review



April 8, 2005



SYSTEM PLANNING CORPORATION

TRIDATA DIVISION



“Anthrax” Incidents in The National Capital Region

**State and Local Government
After Action Review**

Prepared for the

**Commonwealth of Virginia
District of Columbia
State of Maryland**

Prepared by

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April 8, 2005



SYSTEM PLANNING CORPORATION

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**“Anthrax” Incidents
in the National Capital Region**

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Virginia**

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- John Snider, Fire Captain, Deputy Coordinator – Arlington County Fire Department, Office of Emergency Management *
- Carl Lindgren, Fire/EMS Captain, Deputy Coordinator – Office of Emergency Management*
- Jeffrey Stern – Arlington County Fire Department, Office of Emergency Management *
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- Mary Ellen McKenzie, Emergency Management*
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- Honorable John Marshall, Secretary of Public Safety – Office of the Governor*
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- Harry Colestock, Operations Director – Virginia Department of Emergency Management*

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- Lieutenant Colonel John Scott, Deputy Superintendent – Virginia State Police*
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- Edward D. Reiskin, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety & Justice*
- Barbara Childs-Pair, Director – Emergency Management Agency*
- Dr. Gregg Pane, Director – Department of Public Health

State of Maryland

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- Dr. Julie Casani – Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Community Health Administration*

**National Capital
Region Communities**

CITY OF ALEXANDRIA

- Jim Hartmann, City Manager*
- Charles McCory, Deputy Emergency Coordinator*
- Mark Penn, Emergency Coordinator*
- Battalion Chief John North, Chief of Special Operations*

CITY OF FAIRFAX

- Bob Sisson, City Manager*
- Tom Owens, Emergency Manager*
- Major William F. Klugh Jr., Deputy Chief of Police*

CITY OF FALLS CHURCH

- Dan McKeever, City Manager
- Robert Murray, Emergency Manager and Police Chief*

CITY OF MANASSAS

- Lawrence Hughes, City Manager
- Don McKinnon, Emergency Manager
- Lt. Tim Cutlowski, Deputy Coordinator of Emergency Management*

CITY OF MANASSAS PARK

- Todd Lupon, Emergency Manager/Fire Chief*

PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY

- Patrick Collins, Emergency Management Coordinator*

**Other Maryland
Communities**

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

- Fire Battalion Chief Brian Geraci – Fire/Rescue Service, Office of Homeland Security*

PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY

- Major Robert McCoy, Jr., Executive Officer to the Fire Chief – Fire/EMS Department, Office of the Fire Chief*

**TriData/System
Planning Corporation
Project Team**

The TriData division of System Planning Corporation project team for this study was comprised of senior managers and researchers, many of whom had experience at the local level in emergency management, fire operations, or emergency medical services. The team members are listed below, along with their principal assignments in parenthesis.

- Charles L. Cragin, Senior Vice President, National Intelligence, Security and Response (Corporate Oversight)
- Philip Schaenman, President, TriData (Project Manager)
- Hollis Stambaugh, Director, Center for Public Protection (Deputy Project Manager – Commonwealth of Virginia agencies and Northern Virginia communities)
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Two near-simultaneous incidents involving suspected anthrax contaminations, one at the Pentagon in Arlington County and the other at Skyline Towers in Fairfax County, Virginia, on March 14, 2005, tested the readiness of the emergency systems in the National Capital Region (NCR) local governments and two states for a biological attack, and the approaches for disseminating information at local, state, and federal agencies and to the public.

Key local and state officials voiced concerns about the timeliness and accuracy of the information during the incidents. They decided to charter a quick-response, after-action review of local and state actions in parallel with a planned Department of Homeland Security study of federal agency actions and timelines.

The TriData division of System Planning Corporation (SPC) was tasked to undertake the state and local government study. The contract was treated as an emergency procurement. TriData/SPC’s selection was a result of its previous performance for the Governor of Virginia on preparing an after-action report on the events following Hurricane Isabel, in addition to its long experience working with about 150 local and state governments on evaluation of public safety services, special research studies, and technical assistance.

The basic objectives of this study were to determine when and how various entities of state and local government learned about the incidents and how information then flowed between federal, state, and local levels. The goals were to determine how well the information exchange worked and how it could be improved in the future. A draft report was required 1 week following program startup.

The report presents the timeline of events as reported by the jurisdictions involved, and includes issues, observations, and recommendations from their perspective. The following summarizes the TriData/SPC project team’s key findings.

Virginia Jurisdictions

POSITIVES

Overall Excellent Response in Jurisdictions Where the Incidents Occurred – Arlington County and Fairfax County governments are battle-hardened in homeland security and performed extremely well both on the ground and with information flow. The communications and support between the two counties were excellent. There were no false moves or lack of action taken as a result of communications over which they had internal control, with perhaps one exception, dealing with press releases (discussed below).

There are always lessons learned, but Arlington and Fairfax Counties were ready for this type of emergency event. Alexandria assisted both jurisdictions with mutual aid on-scene.

Overall Good Regional Performance – The NCR region, too, has “war” experience because of the September 11 attack on the Pentagon and the anthrax attacks on the Congress and post office. Many veterans of those attacks are in key positions today. In general, the entire emergency management complex at the state and local levels acted professionally. Overall, the state and local interagency cooperation and communications within the NCR were good. Emergency responses were good—and much better than they would have been even 5 years ago. Many aspects of communications could improve, but most of the essentials were in place.

Virginia State Agencies Mobilized Well – The state agencies in Virginia were mobilized and ready to support the local governments. These agencies did their utmost to keep informed and be supportive as needed.

More Lessons Learned – The two incidents served as an excellent regional bioterror exercise, and the lessons learned will improve homeland security.

CONCERNS

While the big picture was good there were a number of communications issues that need to be resolved.

Was it really anthrax? – The major information flow and operational problems centered on the lack of clarity as to whether anthrax was or was not present. That muddied the communications. The problem was compounded by not adequately communicating the level of uncertainty about the status of the anthrax tests at various points in time during the incident. Also, the state and local governments were not sure if they were getting the latest and best information from DoD, or whether DoD itself was having problems getting clear test information, or both.

Over-communicating? – Too many individuals were receiving and passing on information from multiple sources without knowing whether it was the latest information in a continually changing biological testing situation. The large numbers of people and agencies who were sending and receiving information made it difficult at times for the key participants and decisionmakers to exchange information on the test findings. The pendulum seems to have swung from having “guarded” information to “tell all.” So many were agencies were involved in communication flow so quickly and often that the few key individuals who had to make the decisions had some difficulty communicating in a timely matter.

Early DHS Involvement – State and local governments criticized the fact that the Department of Homeland Security was not involved earlier and that the state and local governments were not contacted by the Pentagon earlier, though the Pentagon has testified that they were not informed about the tests until early Monday morning. Several state and local agencies opined that the Department of Homeland Security/National Capital Region should have been the prime agency to spread the word earlier to the region.

Causing Unnecessary Alarm Versus Giving Early Warning – There needs to be a balance between spreading an alert about an incident too soon, before the problem is confirmed, and informing all relevant parties immediately in case the incident is indeed real so that preparations can be put in place and political embarrassment (for not knowing) is avoided. The chief executives (governors, mayors, and county and city managers) need to decide where the line should be drawn for alerts on different types of incidents to avoid receiving too much or too little information. In this incident, good judgment was generally exercised by state and local governments on passing along information, but with much uncertainty as to whether the right thing was being done (e.g., when to establish emergency operations centers, inform chief executives, and issue press releases).

Determining Significance of an Incident – Some steps in information flow plans depend on the jurisdiction of origin deciding on whether it is a “significant” incident, but “significant” is not defined, even qualitatively, and needs to be.

How should information flow beyond the jurisdiction of origin? – When a local government has an incident, who should they inform external to themselves and how should they pass on the information? Local to state to NCR? Local to NCR to state to all locals? Should flow go from an office of emergency management (OEM) to OEM and then to each network coordinated by each OEM? Or should information flow be by discipline (e.g., health department to health department, police to police, fire to fire)? Essentially, all of these paths were used in just a 2-day period. A regionwide protocol needs to be established to ensure timely information flow and reduce redundancy. State and local laws regarding emergency information need to be considered in developing the protocols (e.g., state requirements regarding immediate alert).

Clarity of Communication – There needs to be greater care in the use of the English language and acronyms in emergency communications. The problem of interoperability of communications hardware is being worked, but there also is an interoperability problem on the human side of communication that needs to be addressed. For example, some communications referred to “automatic alarms” when there was none. There also was misunderstanding about whether a test was positive for

the presence of anthrax spores or their viability. There were acronyms used that were misheard by medical scientists to mean a definitive test when others intended to communicate it as a different, less definitive test. Many emergency management leaders are not expert in bio-terminology, and even the experts need to know clearly what is the test is being run, and what are the time and date of test results, as well as any information that can assist in their interpretation.

Mode of Communication – The initial communication regarding a possible event at the Pentagon was via telephone. This was followed by more telephone calls plus pages and e-mails. The Regional Incident Communications and Coordination System (RICCS) was not used to its fullest advantage during this period. RICCS was designed to be the primary emergency notification system for the Washington Metropolitan Area during a “significant” regional crisis, but the system is thought by at least some Northern Virginia local governments to have inadequate quality assurance of the information transmitted. An information management protocol needs to be adopted.

Regional Watch Desk – Arlington County officials suggested creating a watch desk at the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM), Region 7, for the purpose of monitoring all NCR emergency incidents and observing the broad, regional picture. This would help identify important incidents at the earliest, put them in the context of what else was happening in the region (e.g., multiple similar incidents), and ensure that information flowed smoothly and to the right constituencies.

Public Health Decisionmaking – Fairfax County, Arlington County, and Commonwealth health officials felt that public health coordination with DoD health officials was not adequate, specifically regarding the order to prescribe prophylactic drugs to those who might have been exposed before the presence of anthrax was definitively confirmed. Localities want to be involved in medical decisions affecting their constituents.

Large-Scale Conference Calls Need To Have More Structure And Order – Many participants commented on the unwieldy conference calls that consisted of 80 persons or more. Almost everyone interviewed considered such calls disorderly because no one seemed to be in charge. The calls often did not lead to decisions or clarify what actions individuals or agencies should perform following the call. One individual needs to manage the call, limit participants, make announcements, and then poll specific agencies. Call participants should not be allowed to speak free-lance.

Timing of Public Information Releases – The coordination, timeliness, and content of public information releases were not totally adequate. Public information officials were concerned about prematurely releasing

information about a muddy picture. While it was often unknown as to what was confirmed or not, that much could have been explained to the public. Reliable internet sources for the media and public were not adequately established. The Joint Information Center (JIC) might have been established earlier and maintained longer. The question arose in Arlington County: If a federal agency is not adequately communicating to the citizens on what is going on, should the community defer to the agency and delay its own news release? This issue also arose with respect to the timing of a Virginia Department of Public Health public information release and Fairfax County’s initial press release on the Skyline Towers incident relative to nightly news broadcasts. At least general information on the unconfirmed possibility of an anthrax situation needed to be released as soon as possible. One can tell the public what one knows (or does not know) at the moment and that the situation may change as more information comes in. The test process also could have been discussed early on.

DoD Updates – Perhaps the greatest information concerns of state and local governments involved the adequacy of updates from DoD on the testing of suspect samples (e.g., where testing was done, had testing shown positive or negative results, were tests complete or, if not, when were they expected). This project did not pursue the federal side of the events, which is being covered by a parallel DHS study. However, we can say that at least some of the above concerns were based on the erroneous assumption that DoD knew about the anthrax test results prior to March 14. DoD testified before Congress that they were not aware before Monday, March 14.

**District of Columbia
& State of Maryland**

The District of Columbia, State of Maryland, and Maryland NCR jurisdictions tracked the anthrax incidents, and the U.S. Postal Service starting treating employees of a V Street mail handling facility upstream of the Pentagon mail in the District of Columbia.

POSITIVES

The State of Maryland and District of Columbia mobilized quickly and adequately monitored the developing situation. They used good judgment in how far to go in the light of uncertainty and the potential impacts of the incident.

CONCERNS

The concerns of District of Columbia and Maryland emergency management officials were similar to each other and to the Virginia jurisdictions. Their comments primarily focused on information flow from the federal agencies.

Sources of Regional Information – Maryland and the District of Columbia felt that federal agencies should use the appropriate, federally

promulgated, alerting systems for notifying the region about disasters. They felt the Pentagon should have notified the DHS Homeland Security Operating Center (HSOC) in a timely manner. The HSOC then could have quickly gathered preliminary information and alerted the appropriate state and local authorities. In the future, the alert information should consist of an incident summary, potential threat, and an initial recommendation for action. Receiving an alert via a prearranged route from a federal authority makes it clearer to state and local officials that it is real and not a rumor.

Time to Validate Information – Information accuracy is crucial to state and local agencies charged with emergency management. In this instance, several days elapsed before emergency management leaders received enough information about the true nature of the incidents, types of tests used, detection systems, and other key data.

Teleconferences – Teleconferences should be structured. Conference sponsors need to set an agenda and determine who needs to participate and who to exclude. Participant organizations can determine the information needed and the communications mode for local agencies notification.

Consistency with NIMS – The federal government should assure that incident operations are in line with the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

Public Health Coordinator – Public health leaders must have early involvement in notification and decisionmaking on medical issues. When antibiotic prophylaxis decisions are made, local public health agencies must be able to assess the threat; perform epidemiological assessments; ready patient assessment and care personnel, tools, and facilities; and be able to offer other organizations access to resources.

Identifying Employees At Risk – Federal agencies must ensure that notification procedures are in place so that private or contracted agencies can identify employees at risk.

1 INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Two near-simultaneous incidents involving suspected anthrax contaminations, one at the Pentagon in Arlington County and the other at Skyline Towers in Fairfax County, Virginia, on March 14, 2005, tested the readiness of the emergency systems in the National Capital Region (NCR) local governments and two states for a biological attack, and the approaches for disseminating information at local, state, and federal agencies and to the public.

Key local and state officials voiced concerns about information flow during the incidents. It was decided to charter a rapid after-action review of local and state actions by an outside third party in parallel with a planned Department of Homeland Security (DHS) study of federal agency actions and timelines. The goal of both Governors and Mayor of the District of Columbia is to ensure, with key local leaders, facts are collected and assessed and relevant lessons from this event are incorporated into NCR readiness.

Study Initiation

The TriData division of System Planning Corporation (SPC) was selected to undertake the state and local government study. It was treated as an emergency procurement, with the initial draft report due 1 week after startup. TriData/SPC had conducted a previous after-action review for the Governor of Virginia on Hurricane Isabel, and has worked with about 150 local and state governments on evaluation of public safety services, special research studies, and technical assistance. TriData/SPC has also undertaken over 100 after-action reviews on major fires and other emergency incidents, including the World Trade Center, Columbine High School shooting, and Baltimore Harbor Tunnel hazmat incident and fire.

The project was coordinated and funded through the Commonwealth of Virginia’s Commonwealth Preparedness Office. George W. Foresman, Assistant to the Governor, was the project coordinator, ensuring coordination with the state and local governments involved.

Scope of Work

The basic objectives of this study were to determine when and how various entities of state and local government learned about the incidents and how information then flowed between federal, state, and local levels. The goals were to determine how well the information exchange worked and how it could be improved in the future.

The specific scope of work was delineated in the contract:

- Perform on-site interviews with relevant officials of the Commonwealth of Virginia, State of Maryland, and District of Columbia as well as Fairfax and Arlington Counties in Virginia to document state/local timelines and facts of federal–state–local notifications of the event; key decisions relating to public health, safety and information; identification of successes and problems with policies and processes; and generally prepare an "After-Action Review" (AAR) to guide enhancements to the NCR preparedness and security.
- Perform phone interviews with relevant other NCR local officials as directed by the homeland security advisors of the Commonwealth of Virginia, State of Maryland, and District of Columbia. Though these other jurisdictions in the NCR were not directly impacted by the events, their perspectives will inform the overall state/local perspective as part of the larger region. Efforts should document their perspectives on state/local timelines and facts of federal–state–local notifications of the event; key decisions relating to public health, safety, and information; identification of successes and problems with policies and processes; and generally prepare an AAR to guide enhancements to the National Capital Region preparedness and security.
- The United States DHS is leading a parallel and complementary federal interagency effort whose (initial) report was to be produced Friday, March 25, 2005. SPC's responsibilities are limited to state/local NCR communities and data collected under this contract will be merged with federal findings to produce a comprehensive NCR AAR in the near term. Verification of federal actions will be accomplished during this merger process.
- SPC will deliver to the Commonwealth, on behalf of the state/local NCR communities by Friday, March 25, 2005, a reasonable timeline of state and local actions surrounding the events and initial findings of successes and areas requiring attention. This will be in Executive Summary form with corresponding timelines aggregated in a manner of SPC's choosing. A detailed written AAR, inclusive of timelines, facts, and general assessments, shall be prepared and forwarded to the Commonwealth by April 1, 2005.

**Research
Methodology**

The approach taken in this review was generally that outlined in the scope of work, with several refinements. The project was initiated on a Friday, March 18, with results due the following Friday, March 25. TriData/SPC mobilized a team of 12 senior personnel plus support staff. Two-person interview teams were assigned to interview each of four groupings:

- Arlington County agencies (site of the Pentagon incident)
- Fairfax County agencies (site of the Skyline Towers incident)
- Commonwealth of Virginia agencies
- State of Maryland agencies and District of Columbia

Another two-person team helped initiate the project by reviewing media articles (newspapers, TV, radio) and the information given to the public. It then analyzed the public information flow as could be deduced from a review of the websites and press releases of the major agencies involved, plus radio, television, and newspaper clippings as available through Internet searches.

Telephone interviews were conducted with all other Northern Virginia governments in the National Capital Region (except Loudoun County, whose pertinent officials were not available during the research period), and with Prince George’s County and Montgomery County in Maryland.

Early in the project week (Monday), a briefing and training session was held for the interviewers. TriData/SPC developed a short interview format and protocol as a guide (see Appendices A and B). After spending Monday organizing and briefing the project team and then arranging meetings and contacts, in-person and telephone interviews were conducted mostly on Tuesday and Wednesday. The draft report was written and assembled on Thursday and Friday, and delivered on Friday.

In each of the principal entities involved, information was sought from:

- Office of Chief Executive
- Public Health
- Fire
- Police
- Public Information
- Emergency Management
- Homeland Security

In some places, all agencies met together with the project team. In others, the project team met separately with key agencies or groups of agencies.

The NCR locations in Northern Virginia and Maryland that did not have the incidents were interviewed mainly with respect to how well they were informed. Many people from the potentially affected sites live in these communities and would have dispersed to their homes. Likewise, the mail handling chains run through a surprising number of localities.

While interviewing Virginia representatives in Richmond, the project team learned of a meeting of the Commonwealth’s local public health officials taking place in Williamsburg. The two-person project team split

to send one person there, since the health officials were planning to discuss the incidents from the health official’s viewpoint.

Contact was maintained throughout this project between the project coordinator (George Foresman) and the TriData/SPC project manager several times each day to track progress, identify new leads to pursue and people to contact, and exchange information. The project coordinator sent e-mails on behalf of the two governors and the District of Columbia mayor to ensure cooperation and availability of the many highly busy emergency management officials and agency heads. To a large extent, this interaction was successful, and the project team was able to meet with all but one of the agencies and most of the key contacts desired.

The draft report was distributed to the major participating communities to review for accuracy before being finalized. They also provided some additional documentation on timelines that they had either assembled for themselves or this study.

The complete list of people interviewed is given in the Acknowledgments.

2 OVERVIEW OF INCIDENTS

Between March 10 and March 14, 2005, two incidents occurred in Northern Virginia that initially seemed to be anthrax attacks at facilities that handle federal mail.

This chapter provides highlights of the combined timeline of both incidents from local and state perspectives, to give the reader a general impression of the information flow. Subsequent chapters provide more detailed timelines from the perspective of each of the major participating jurisdictions, and a summary of the events from the perspective of other regional jurisdictions.

The federal perspective of the incidents, including the testing for anthrax, are to be described in a separate federal after-action review (AAR), and the results of the studies synthesized.

Caveat: The timeline here should not be considered a legal record; it was developed mainly from interviews and some communications logs, and may have errors or omissions. The timeline represents what could be assembled in one week. It does not record every call, e-mail, etc. We relied on the senior people interviewed to identify key information. The timeline was reviewed by each jurisdiction, but they, too, had only a short time to do so. Notwithstanding these limitations, the timeline should provide a reasonably accurate overview of the events.

Pentagon/Arlington County Incident Starts

**Thursday, March 11
through
Sunday, March 13**

At the Pentagon mail handling facility in Arlington County, Virginia—which is physically separate from the Pentagon building itself—one of several routine samples taken on Thursday, March 10, is initially determined to be positive for anthrax. The follow-up verification processing continues over the weekend. These results are reported to the Pentagon the following Monday, March 14, 2005. Shortly afterward, a hazardous materials incident was declared by the Pentagon Force Protection Agency (PFPA).

The sample testing is a second line of defense; Postal Service-delivered mail is irradiated before getting to this mailroom, but mail from other federal sites and private carriers is not. Still, there was concern.

Monday, March 14 10:48 A.M.

Arlington County personnel embedded in the PFPA call Arlington County Emergency Communication Center (ECC) to give them a heads up on a

possible incident at the Pentagon mail handling facility; no information on the type of incident is given.

10:58 A.M.

Arlington County ECC receives the “official” call for a hazmat incident at the remote delivery facility (mail handling facility) at the Pentagon. They were still not told it was a possible anthrax incident at this time.

Arlington County Fire Department sends a full hazmat response. They start arriving on the scene within 3 minutes.

11:02 A.M.

Once on-scene the Arlington County Fire Department units are informed about the anthrax possibility. They immediately report this to the Arlington County ECC, which in turn sends a page to the Arlington County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) that there is a possible anthrax problem.

One member of the Arlington County OEM who received the page, Captain Carl Lindgren, was serendipitously at a meeting of Northern Virginia (Region 7) emergency managers being held to discuss emergency management training. He stops the meeting to inform the group that a potential anthrax incident has occurred. Included are emergency management managers from the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM), Fairfax County, Fairfax City, Alexandria, Falls Church, Loudoun County, Herndon, and Prince William County. *Thus the state VDEM representative and most Northern Virginia jurisdictions knew of the incident just a few minutes after Arlington County did.* Captain Lindgren then e-mailed details to Alexandria’s Emergency Management Manager and the VDEM Region 7 Coordinator, Cindi Causey.

The page from the ECC is also received by the Arlington County OEM director, who is at the regular Monday morning Arlington department head meeting. He immediately informs the Arlington county manager and other county department heads. *Thus Arlington County leadership knew of the incident very quickly.*

11:10 A.M.–12:45 P.M.

Meetings are held at the Pentagon between PFFA and Arlington County OEM, fire, and police officials to discuss the situation and testing.

11:17 A.M.

VDEM receives a call from its Region 7 coordinator on the potential anthrax incident at the Pentagon mail handling facility. *Thus the information gets to Richmond quickly.*

12:00 P.M.

DCEMA makes the first regional notification, using the Washington Area Warning Alert System (WAWAS). DCEMA had been informed by the PFPA, also using WAWAS.¹

12:10 P.M.

Maryland EOC receives National Warning System (NAWAS) report that the Pentagon police have announced a possible hazmat situation at the remote delivery facility on the north side of the Pentagon.

12:28 P.M.

Arlington County Public Health is first notified of the Pentagon incident by Arlington County OEM (Deputy Chief of Police Stephen Holl).

12:45 P.M.

Arlington County OEM informs Arlington County Public Health on information available to date, and that Public Health is requested to respond to the Pentagon.

1:00 P.M.

Arlington County Public Health at Pentagon hears that there had been a lab test taken on Thursday at the remote mail distribution facility that was returned positive (polymerase chain reaction (PCR) for anthrax) on Monday.

1:00 P.M.–2:00 P.M.

Arlington County OEM Director Bob Griffin notifies his counterparts in Alexandria (Mark Penn) and Fairfax County (Doug Bass) about the incident at the Pentagon. Bob Griffin also contacts Tom Lockwood, director, Office of National Capital Region Coordination, DHS.

1:30 AND FOLLOWING

Dr. James Pearson, Director, Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS), Virginia Department of General Services, is contacted by a federal emergency operations center (EOC) in the District of Columbia, probably the NCR EOC. (Lack of certainty about who is calling is itself a communications problem). He is asked about the Virginia laboratory results. He told the caller DCLS had not received samples from an event in Northern Virginia. Subsequent discussion with DCLS staff indicated CBI was doing contract work for the federal government and

¹ WAWAS is a telephone line that is bridged to all the communications centers in the area, with outlets in many federal agencies. WAWAS is not directed to a “target” audience, whereas the RICCS is. RICCS is a universal communication platform that delivers text to any type of cell phone, pager, or other wireless device to instantly alert a preselected set or several sets of leaders and to convene conference calls to organize a regional response.

might be the lab in question. Dr. Pearson contacts the FBI for clarification on the reason for the call.

1:30 P.M.–2:00 P.M.

Inside the Pentagon, Arlington County Public Health officials (Ms. Peters and Ms. Laitin) and Arlington County Public Affairs (Charles Taylor) are escorted to a hallway outside of the office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, Dr. William Winkenwerter. While waiting for the meeting, they met with David Smith, head of Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear (CRBN) Lab , and Colonel Mandy Lopez from the Pentagon lab. A decision had already been made by Department of Defense (DoD) to do nasal swabs and provide antibiotics (Cipro) for the RDF employees without consultation with Arlington County Public Health. Arlington County Public Health officials express concerns about the appropriateness of this action, concerns about the upstream and downstream postal facilities, the impact on Arlington, and the needs of the RDF employees sequestered at the Child Development Center on Pentagon grounds.

Dr. Winkenwerter requests assistance from Arlington County Public Health with nasal swabbing, who tell him that they do not have an inventory of swabs, but that Walter Reed Medical Center does and that Arlington County can assist in other ways. (Arlington County is not approached for assistance again.)

2:00 P.M. (APPROXIMATELY)

Prior to the Skyline Towers incident, Dr. Gloria Addo-Ayensu, Fairfax County Health director, is notified of the situation at Arlington. Since Arlington’s health director position is vacant, Dr. Addo-Ayensu provides coverage for them as needed—an excellent intercounty cooperative arrangement.

Skyline Towers/Fairfax County Incident Starts

2:09 P.M.

Fairfax County Fire Department receives call for a “bio-agent alarm” in the mailroom at 5111 Leesburg Pike (Skyline Towers), which serves federal and non-federal offices there. Fire units are dispatched.

2:10 P.M.–2:30 P.M.

VDEM (Cindi Causey) learns of the Fairfax County incident from Fairfax County OEM. About this time, Arlington County OEM (Deputy Chief of Police Stephen Holl) also learns of the Fairfax County alarm. He immediately calls the Arlington County ECC and asks that Fairfax County be notified of the Pentagon anthrax incident. (This was an excellent initiative and a fail-safe action, though Fairfax County OEM

already had received information at the earlier meeting with Arlington County OEM, at about 11:00 a.m.)

2:15 P.M.

Ms. Poppell, Communicable Disease Bureau Chief for Arlington County Public Health, notifies the Commonwealth’s regional public health office of the current situation in Arlington County.

2:30 P.M.

VDEM pages Commonwealth of Virginia hazmat unit about the Fairfax County incident.

2:56 P.M.

A Fairfax County Fire Department chief officer calls the Arlington County OEM duty officer at the Pentagon to relate the events that Fairfax County is dealing with, and to hear updates on what was known at the Pentagon mail handling facility.

3:00 P.M.

Fairfax County OEM Emergency Management Coordinator Douglas Bass informs the Fairfax County Executive, Health Department, Office of Public Affairs, and Chairman of the Board of Supervisors about the Skyline Towers and Pentagon incidents.

3:00 P.M.–4:00 P.M.

First broad-based multiagency conference call is held. It includes DHS/NCR Lockwood, VDEM, Arlington county manager, police, fire, public health, emergency management, and Fairfax County to discuss “What do we have?”

4:00 P.M.

Arlington County Public Health and Public Affairs staff returns to the Pentagon Consequence Management Center, but are still not consulted or invited to participate in discussions. They are aware of an internal conference call that is to begin.

4:30 P.M.

Arlington County EOC notifies District of Columbia Emergency Management Agency about the two anthrax incidents.

Office of Commonwealth Preparedness Assistant to the Governor, George Foresman, receives first call about incidents from VDEM.

5:00 P.M.

Fairfax County holds conference call with Arlington County and key Fairfax County departments (police, fire and rescue, OEM, county executive, health department, public affairs, and Commonwealth representatives).

5:10 P.M.

Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department is informed that Pentagon employees are being started on antibiotics.

5:50 P.M.

Maryland Homeland Security Office first hears of the incidents from the Maryland Department of Health and from Tom Lockwood/NCR (who was the former Maryland Homeland Security Advisor).

6:00 P.M.

VDEM receives a call from the Department of Homeland Security’s Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regarding the Fairfax County incident.

Unified Command (UC) is established at Skyline Towers. Three buildings remain shut, holding potentially exposed employees.

6:30 P.M.

Second broad-based multiagency conference call is held. NCR Coordinator Lockwood asks Arlington County if they need any help.

7:00 P.M.

The virtual Joint Information Center (JIC) is activated. (It is a website where information can be shared with others who are allowed access to it. Participants include all regional members of Council of Governments (COG).)

7:30 P.M.

Maryland Homeland Security Office informs the deputy chief of staff to the governor of the incidents. They did not want to raise the alarm higher at this time because of uncertainty as to the nature and severity of the problem. The Homeland Security Office decides to let the Maryland Department of Health monitor and determine the scope of the problem.

8:00 P.M.

Maryland Homeland Security Office calls the Governor’s press secretary to inform the Governor of the potential problem for Maryland.

Arlington County/Fairfax County conference call is held to inform all that the people being held at Skyline Towers had been given a briefing by the Fairfax County Health Department, and are being systematically released after proper authorities gather contact information from them and they are given a flyer regarding personal decontamination and showering.

Another DHS-sponsored conference call. DCEMA learns that prophylactic antibiotic treatment has been prescribed for certain Pentagon mail employees. Based on this information, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) and

District of Columbia Department of Health (DOH) start planning for the administration of antibiotics as prophylaxis to V Street postal workers.

10:00 P.M.

Lisa Webber, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), receives call from a Fairfax paramedic requesting treatment options for 2,000 potentially exposed people at the Skyline Towers site.

UC at Fairfax County incident decides to keep buildings at Skyline Towers closed for business on March 15.

Fairfax County Public Affairs updates the DC Mayor’s office.

10:20 P.M.

Arlington County Public Health sends “blast” fax to local doctors and hospitals informing them of the situation and providing information on anthrax.

10:30 P.M.

Arlington County EOC closes, to reconvene at 7:00 a.m. on Tuesday.

10:30 P.M.–10:45 P.M.

Fairfax County issues final news release of the day on the incident.

11:00 P.M.

Fairfax County conference call with County Executive and agency heads. Fairfax County Health Department is assigned to be the lead agency in the UC.

Conference call reports that 40 people underwent decontamination process at Skyline Towers.

Tuesday, March 15

4:00 A.M.

Fort Detrick communicates to local governments that their PCR test result was positive for anthrax at the Pentagon. The PCR test at Skyline Towers is reported as negative.

6:27 A.M.

E-mail from Lockwood/NCR reports that no calls occurred during the night and that not much more was forthcoming by 8:00 a.m. (though Fort Detrick had sent notification that there had been more positive tests at Pentagon).

7:20 A.M.

Deputy Mayor of DC calls Maryland Homeland Security Office to say that the anthrax incident might be serious. Maryland Homeland Security Office passes on the concern to Maryland Department of Health.

7:30 A.M.

Incident command system is established in the Arlington County EOC. In addition, Arlington County Public Health formally establishes its own incident command system, which is linked to and supported by the EOC.

Dr. David Wilder from regional office of Virginia Department of Health reports that the last samples from both Skyline Towers and the Pentagon RDF were negative for PCR and 12-hour culture as of 7:00 a.m.

The FBI has closed their investigations at both sites.

8:00 A.M.

Public health officials conference call is facilitated by Fairfax County. Participants include local and state officials only. They are told that the U.S. Postal Service has decided that its staff at the V Street (District of Columbia) postal facility would receive prophylaxis and nasal swabs because of concern that they were upstream from the Pentagon.

80-person conference call is held with DHS, DoD, NCR, State of Maryland, Commonwealth of Virginia, local agencies, and other federal agencies. (Call was thought to be unwieldy by many participants.)

VDEM goes to augmented staff.

10:13 A.M.

First “official” notification from Fairfax County to VDEM about the Skyline Towers incident, though VDEM knew about it already from conference calls and informal communications held the previous day.

10:00 A.M.–11:00 A.M.

U.S. Postal Service orders the V Street postal facility to close, and its office workers to receive a 3-day course of antibiotics.

11:02 A.M.

Update on anthrax tests sent by John Snarr COG to the Regional Emergency Support Functions (R-ESF) 14 Media Relations (using cell phones, pagers, e-mail accounts, other devices) through the COG Regional Incident Communication and Coordination System (RICCS) Roam Secure Alert Network. (This was from region to NCR jurisdictions.)

11:30 A.M.

Public information release is crafted jointly by the public affairs staff of Arlington County, Fairfax County, Virginia Department of Health, and DoD using the virtual JIC.

11:53 A.M.

Arlington County EOC learns that all facilities in Arlington County that had mail delivered from the Pentagon batch in question have been tested with negative results.

**“Anthrax” Incidents
in the National Capital Region**

2. Overview of Incidents

1:00 P.M.

Conference call from federal agency (not sure which) to local NCR governments describes in detail the positive test results for anthrax spore viability.

1:47 P.M.

Virginia Department of Health ECC is activated.

4:00 P.M.

The JIC is established physically in Fairfax County’s AEOC. Arlington County and Fairfax County representatives participate. V Street test results are not yet available; District of Columbia is still concerned.

5:00 P.M.

Conference calls with many agencies discuss possible cross-contamination of sample taken from Pentagon, which lowers concern somewhat.

7:20 P.M.

Virginia Department of Health, Statewide Planning Coordinator Bob Mauskapf requests CDC to be prepared to deploy antibiotics for 2,000 people at Skyline Towers for 30-day regime. While other agencies start to wind down, the Virginia Department of Health is still concerned.

8:00 P.M.–9:00 P.M.

Incidents de-escalate.

Wednesday, March 16

Public information continues. Fact finding on events continue.

8:00 A.M.

Arlington County EOC opens, but is closed down shortly at 8:27 a.m.

12:00 P.M.

U.S. Postal Services reopens V Street post office in District of Columbia.

Thursday, March 17

Decision made by state and local governments to charter their own after-action review (this study).

3 ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA – PENTAGON MAILROOM INCIDENT

Arlington County was called by Pentagon officials to respond to the suspected anthrax incident at the Pentagon on the morning of Monday, March 14, 2005. To effectively support mitigation and containment operations at the Pentagon incident, Arlington County committed its emergency management, fire, police, public affairs, and public health departments.

This section presents the timeline on what happened in Arlington County from March 14 to March 17, 2005. The timeline incorporates the events that took place from each of the major contributing Arlington County departments. The chronology outlined here is based on in-person and telephone interviews with Arlington County officials. In some cases, interviewees provided draft timelines and other post-incident review information they had collected. Interviews were conducted from Monday, March 21 to Thursday, March 24, 2005.

Caveat: The timeline here should not be considered a legal record; it was developed mainly from interviews and some communications logs, and may have errors or omissions. The timeline represents what could be assembled in one week. It does not record every call, e-mail, etc. We relied on the senior people interviewed to identify key information. The timeline was reviewed by each jurisdiction, but they, too, had only a short time to do so. Notwithstanding these limitations, the timeline should provide a reasonably accurate overview of the events.

Background

Arlington County, located across the Potomac River from Washington, DC, is a diverse, community spanning 26 square miles with an estimated population of nearly 200,000. This densely populated jurisdiction is home to the Pentagon, Arlington National Cemetery, Washington Reagan National Airport, and various other businesses and residential areas.

The County has initial responsibility for safety, security, and preparedness for all areas within the county, including many federal government buildings. Arlington County responded to and had incident command responsibility for rescue and emergency operations at the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. Arlington County first responders, including fire, emergency medical services, and police as well as other coordinating agencies such as emergency management and public health, were significant contributors to the 9/11 Pentagon response.

The Pentagon 9/11 response involved complex issues of communication and coordination of resources from the Commonwealth of Virginia, State of Maryland, the District of Columbia, and the federal government. Many

of these issues are unique to the National Capital Region. As the lead agency, Arlington County gained much experience in coordinating and managing such a large effort.

Following the September 11 attacks, Arlington County has provided resources or managed other incidents requiring a multiple jurisdiction response and government entities, including the anthrax scare in October 2001. The prospect of similar attacks pose significant challenges to Arlington County and other responders. Because of this, the county’s emergency providers and departments regularly train for disasters and emergencies on a regional basis. It frequently trains with other local, state, and federal providers. It regularly trains with the Pentagon and has staff embedded in the Pentagon Force Protection Agency (PFPA). As a result, Arlington County was well prepared for the incidents at the Pentagon and Fairfax County on March 14, 2005, involving suspected anthrax contaminations.

Overall, in terms of preparedness, operations, communications (horizontally and vertically), and coordination, Arlington County performed at a very high level in the March anthrax incident. Arlington County’s training and past experience was invaluable.

It is important to note that Arlington County was not the lead entity of the Pentagon incident, but rather operating in a support capacity. Therefore, because it did not have ownership of the incident, it was not the primary decisionmaker.

Monday, March 14 10:48 A.M.

Arlington County personnel embedded in PFPA contact the Arlington County Emergency Communications Center to alert them to the possibility of a hazardous material incident. No information on the type of incident was given.

In turn, Arlington County ECC sends a page to Arlington County OEM to be on alert should this incident develop further. Also, per instruction by the embedded Arlington County personnel in PFPA, the OEM Duty Officer, Deputy Chief of Police Stephen Holl, is asked to call the ECC for additional information.

10:58 A.M.

Arlington County ECC receives an “official” call for a hazmat incident at the remote delivery facility (mail handling center) at the Pentagon. (They were not told it was a possible anthrax incident at this time.)

Arlington County Fire Department (ACFD) sends a full hazmat response, including three engines, two hazmat units (one from Alexandria), two special service units (truck and rescue squad), and a battalion chief. They start arriving on the scene within 3 minutes. Units that responded are:

- Engine 105, Quint 104, and Engine 107
- Truck 105 and Rescue 104
- Hazardous Materials Response Team (HMRT) 101 and 202, which is comprised of one Arlington County unit and one City of Alexandria unit
- Medic 105
- EMS 112
- FM 114
- Battalion 111 and 112 and the special operations chief

11:02 A.M.

Once the AFD units arrive on scene and are informed about the anthrax possibility, they immediately warn the Arlington County ECC, which in turn sends a page to the Arlington County OEM that there is a possible anthrax problem.

One member of OEM who received the page, Captain Carl Lindgren, is serendipitously at a meeting of the Northern Virginia Region 7 emergency managers being held to discuss emergency management training. He stops the meeting to inform the emergency management managers present from VDEM, Fairfax County, Fairfax City, Alexandria, Falls Church, Loudoun County, Herndon, and Prince William County that a potential anthrax incident has occurred. (Thus the state VDEM representative and most Northern Virginia jurisdictions knew of the incident just a few minutes after Arlington County did.) Captain Lindgren then e-mails the information to Alexandria’s Emergency Management Manager and the VDEM Region 7 Coordinator (Cindi Causey).

The page announcing the incident was also received by the Arlington County Director of OEM, Bob Griffin, who was at the regular Monday morning staff meeting of Arlington department heads and the Arlington county manager. He informs the county manager and other county department heads of the incident. (Thus Arlington County leadership knew of the incident very quickly.)

11:10 A.M.

OEM Duty Officer Stephen Holl arrives at the Pentagon and meets with Captain Stout, the watch commander for PFPA and incident commander at that time Gil Cook, ACFD captain embedded at PFPA, and Battalion Chief Scott McKay (who led the Arlington County fire response) to the incident. Chief Holl then contacts Lieutenant Hayslett, Arlington County Police Department.

Assistant Fire Chief Benjamin Barksdale responds to the Pentagon.

11:50 A.M.

Chief Barksdale contacts Fire Chief Jim Schwartz regarding the situation. Chief Barksdale also contacts Anthony Colantoni, FBI liaison to the Council of Governments (COG), regarding the situation. The FBI was already en route to the Pentagon.

12:00 P.M.

DCEMA makes the first regional notification, using the Washington Area Warning Alert System (WAWAS). DCEMA had been informed by the PFFPA, also using WAWAS.²

12:15 P.M.

Deputy Chief Holl (OEM) attends a briefing at the Pentagon remote mail distribution facility (RDF). Questions are asked about the type of tests run at the lab in Richmond, Virginia. Deputy Chief Holl hears that the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test was positive.

12:28 P.M.

Arlington County Public Health is first notified of the problem by Deputy Chief Holl when he calls Elissa Laitin, an epidemiologist with the Arlington County Communicable Disease Bureau, to consult with her regarding the significance of a positive PCR test for anthrax. (The Communicable Disease Bureau Chief, Evelyn Poppell, was unreachable at the time; normally she would have been the contact.)

12:35 P.M.

Elissa Laitin, Arlington County Public Health, contacts Director of Emergency Planning for Public Health Josephine Peters to notify her of the phone call from Deputy Chief Holl. As director of Emergency Planning for Public Health, Ms. Peters works closely with the Pentagon and other regional agencies. The mission of the public health emergency planning agency is to be prepared for disease outbreak, serve as a “support tool” in emergencies, and take the lead role in something like an anthrax attack.

12:40 P.M.

Deputy Chief Holl (OEM) is asked to attend a 1:00 p.m. meeting regarding the RDF mail situation at the Consequence Management Center (CMC) in the Pentagon. Also requested to report to the meeting are Arlington County OEM, Public Affairs, and Public Health.

² RICCS is a universal communication platform that delivers text to any type of cell phone, pager, or other wireless device to instantly alert a preselected set or several sets of leaders and to convene conference calls to organize a regional response. WAWAS is a telephone line that is bridged to all the communications centers in the area, with outlets in many federal agencies. WAWAS is not directed to a “target” audience, whereas the RICCS is.

12:45 P.M.

Tom Panther, a police captain assigned to OEM, contacts Ms. Peters (Public Health) to notify her that Arlington County Public Health is being requested to respond to the Pentagon.

OEM Director Bob Griffin is also notified of the meeting at CMC and the request for Arlington County agencies to attend.

12:50 P.M.

Ms. Peters tries to contact the following people to notify them about the events taking place:

- Tom Maddox, Arlington County Public Health Director and Division Chief of Public Health
- Donna Caruso, Arlington County School Health Bureau Chief and OEM Public Health Liaison
- Evelyn Poppell, Arlington County Communicable Disease Bureau Chief.

Ms. Caruso and Ms. Poppell are unreachable (their Blackberries were not working). Meanwhile, Tom Maddox made a decision that Ms. Peters and Ms. Laitin should respond immediately to the Pentagon. They are picked up by Captain Panther.

1:00 P.M.

Captain Panther, Ms. Peters, and Ms. Laitin arrive at the Pentagon. They receive information from some of their Arlington County colleagues, including Assistant Chief Benjamin Barksdale, Deputy Chief Holl, and Charles Taylor, Media Manager, Arlington County Public Affairs, all of whom had already responded to the Pentagon. The information is that there had been a lab test taken on Thursday at the remote mail distribution facility that was returned positive (PCR for anthrax) on Monday, and that the mail had already been distributed when the test result was received. Normally, mail would be held for 3 days or until test results are returned. A number of routine tests made of samples taken on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday had been negative, following the Thursday positive sample. Tests had been done by a lab in Richmond, Commonwealth Biotechnologies (CBI), which is not part of the Laboratory Response Network (LRN). Specimens were then sent to the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) at Fort Detrick, Maryland, to verify the CBI results. CBI itself also was performing additional tests.

Ms. Peters and Ms. Laitin are directed to the Pentagon CMC, but were not invited to participate in briefings or the public health decisionmaking process. The chain of command was not made clear to the Arlington County Public Health staff. (If this were an Arlington County incident in

a civilian building, Public Health would have been the lead agency in the mitigation of an anthrax incident.)

The role of Arlington County Public Affairs at this time was to monitor the situation, determine how it might impact the Arlington community, and decide if a message needed to be sent to the community as a whole.

1:10 P.M.

OEM, public health, fire department, police department, state police, public affairs, and FBI attend the briefing at the Pentagon. OEM staff at the EOC is monitoring the situation.

1:00 P.M.–2:00 P.M.

Bob Griffin, Arlington Director of OEM, notifies his counterparts in Alexandria (Mark Penn) and Fairfax County (Doug Bass), about the incident at the Pentagon. Bob Griffin also contacts Tom Lockwood (NCR) and Cindi Causey (VDEM).

1:30 P.M.

Inside the Pentagon, Ms. Peters and Ms. Laitin (Public Health) and Charles Taylor (Public Affairs) are escorted to a hallway outside of the office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, Dr. William Winkenwerter. While waiting for the meeting, they meet with David Smith, head of CBRN Lab, and Colonel Mandy Lopez from the Pentagon lab. A decision had already been made to do nasal swabs and provide antibiotics (Cipro) to the RDF employees. Arlington County Public Health officials express their concerns about the appropriateness of this action, concerns about the upstream and downstream postal facilities, the impact on Arlington, and the needs of the RDF employees sequestered at the Child Development Center on Pentagon grounds.

2:00 P.M.

Dr. Winkenwerter convenes a meeting in his office. He requests assistance from Arlington County Public Health with nasal swabbing. Arlington County Public Health responds that they cannot do it, for lack of an inventory of swabs to do the test but note that Walter Reed has the capability to assist. Public Health offers technical assistance with briefing sheets, victim questionnaires, etc. (Arlington County Public Health was not approached again by DoD regarding provision of assistance.)

2:15 P.M.

Ms. Poppell, Communicable Disease Bureau Chief for Arlington County Public Health, notifies the Commonwealth’s regional public health office of the current situation.

2:25 P.M.

Prior to the Skyline Towers incident, Dr. Gloria Addo-Ayensu, Fairfax County Health director, is notified of the situation at Arlington. Since

Arlington’s health director position is vacant, Dr. Addo-Ayensu provides coverage for them as needed (an excellent intercounty cooperative arrangement).

2:40 P.M. (APPROXIMATELY)

Arlington County OEM (Deputy Chief Holl) learns of what is described as an alarm on a mail processing machine at 5111 Leesburg Pike in Fairfax County (Skyline Towers). He calls the Arlington ECC and requests that Fairfax be notified of the event at the Pentagon. (Fairfax had just heard of it.)

2:56 P.M.

Deputy Chief Holl, still at the Pentagon, receives a phone call from Chief Mullins of the Fairfax County Fire Department and briefs him on the Pentagon situation.

3:00 P.M.

Ms. Peters and Ms. Laitin (Public Health) reconvene with Deputy Chief Holl. (Prior to this, they and Charles Taylor had been meeting with the “exposed” employees of the RDF at the Child Development Center.) Deputy Chief Holl advises Ms. Peters and Ms. Laitin about the reported sensor alarm problem at Skyline Towers. They meet with Lieutenant Commander Jane Campbell of the Pentagon’s public affairs office, who advises them that she is working on a press release for the Pentagon website and an employee e-mail.

After this conversation, Ms. Peters contacts Ms. Caruso (OEM Public Health liaison) and gives her a full update of the situation (e.g., about nasal swabs taking place and the Skyline Towers incident).

Back at the public health office, Mr. Maddox coincidentally receives a phone call from Jeff Lake, Deputy Commissioner for Community Health Services for the Commonwealth of Virginia, about an unrelated issue. Mr. Maddox notifies Mr. Lake (and Virginia Public Health) about the situation.

Shortly thereafter, Mr. Maddox also updates Marsha Allgaier of the Arlington County Department of Human Services and her assistant, Glenda Blake regarding the situation.

Donna Caruso reports as OEM public health liaison to the emergency operations center (EOC).

4:00 P.M.

Arlington county public health and public affairs staff return to the Pentagon CMC, but is still not consulted or invited to participate in discussions. They are aware of an internal conference call that is to begin.

News reports begin to come in about the Skyline Towers facility incident. The reports indicate that a particle sensor has activated in one of the mailrooms at the Skyline Towers facility, which is a downstream of the Pentagon mail site.

4:30 P.M.

Captain Lindgren, Arlington EOC, notifies the District of Columbia Emergency Management Agency (DCEMA) of the events at the Pentagon and Skyline Towers, and instructs them to call the EOC if they need further assistance or information.

5:00 P.M.

Conference call with local Virginia jurisdictions, which included Arlington, Fairfax, Alexandria, and state officials. All Arlington departments participate. The local county executives or their representatives also participate.

5:10 P.M.

Another meeting takes place at the Pentagon CMC. Participants learn that although five subsequent tests at the RDF were negative, the RDF is closed pending further testing.

6:00 P.M.

A conference call was placed, including participants from OEM, public health, public affairs, police, fire, city and county managers, and others of Arlington County, Fairfax County, Alexandria, District of Columbia, NCR (Tom Lockwood), Virginia Department of Health, Virginia Governor’s office, VDEM, and the DoD (Bob Stephens).

7:00 P.M.

The virtual Joint Information Center (JIC) is activated; VDEM and Fairfax County participate along with Arlington County. (The JIC had been developed by a regional directive, “The Regional Emergency Support Functions (R-ESF) 14.”³ The virtual JIC is basically a website where information can be shared with others. Participants include all regional members of COG.)

8:00 P.M.

Arlington/Fairfax conference call relating that people being held at Skyline Towers have been given a briefing by the Fairfax County Health Department. The conference call notes that a flyer has been developed for the Skyline Towers occupants and that the Fairfax County Health Director, Dr. Addo-Ayensu, was developing a plan for getting the people

³ The Regional Emergency Support Functions were developed in the Regional Homeland Security and Public Safety Plan by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments approved on September 11, 2002.

out of the building (they were being sheltered in place). Also, responders at Skyline Towers were still trying to get access to the filters from the mail machine.

Ms. Peters and Ms. Laitin return to the public health offices at 8:45 p.m. Charles Taylor returns to the county manager’s office to work on a press release.

9:00 P.M.

Conference call between local, state, and regional participants takes place with about 40 people, mostly public health or public information personnel. The primary focus is to develop a blast fax to local health providers regarding the Pentagon and Skyline Towers incidents.

10:20 P.M.

Blast fax with updates of the situation sent to local health providers (doctors, hospitals) by Arlington Communicable Disease Bureau.

10:30 P.M.

The Arlington EOC closes about 10:30 p.m., to reconvene at 7:00 a.m.

10:39 P.M.

After coordinating with Fairfax and VDH during the 9:00 p.m. conference call, Arlington public affairs issues a press release about its response to the Pentagon incident, advising Arlington County residents that there is no risk to the general population, and providing a link to Pentagon and VDH press releases.

11:00 P.M.

Conference call reports that 40 people underwent decontamination at Skyline Towers.

Tuesday, March 15

6:00 A.M.

Deputy Chief Holl, Arlington OEM, attends briefing at the Pentagon CMC. USAMRIID (Fort Detrick) reports that there was a positive PCR test at the Pentagon and further testing is being done to determine the viability of the spores. A PCR test at the Skyline Towers incident was negative, but Skyline Towers buildings 4, 5, and 6 would remain closed. Mail from the Pentagon had been delivered to the following addresses in Arlington County:

- 1931 Jefferson David Highway
- 1777 N. Kent Street
- FOB 2 (Navy Annex)
- 2511 Jefferson Davis Highway

- 701 S. Courthouse Road

7:00 A.M.

Arlington OEM staff returns to their EOC. Arlington County public health, public affairs, police department, technology services, and fire department are requested to send representatives to the EOC.

7:30 A.M.

Incident command system is established in the Arlington County EOC.

In addition, Arlington County Public Health formally establishes its own incident command system (which is linked to the EOC). The management team was defined, and objectives were established as follows:

- Monitor test results
- Maintain alert status to assist Fairfax, as needed
- Keep medical community updated
- Participate in regional conference calls, coordination of public messages, etc.
- Maintain surveillance at local hospitals
- Establish hotline

8:00 A.M.

Public health conference call is facilitated by Fairfax County. Participants included local and state officials only.

Dr. Gloria Addo-Ayensu, health director for Fairfax County, and Dr. Charles Konigsberg, health director for Alexandria, and other public health department members discuss the current status of the incidents. There are no positive results received to date on Skyline Towers. However, Fairfax County may need help if a mass dispensing site is required. Arlington will stand by to assist as needed. The call also informs the group that the staff at the V Street post office would receive prophylaxis and nasal swabs because of concern that they were upstream from the Pentagon.

8:15 A.M.

Arlington County EOC contacts the fire department warehouse and has the Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS) cache of prophylaxis put on alert for possible use based on testing.

8:30 A.M.

Dr. Konigsberg becomes the acting Arlington health officer. (As noted earlier, Arlington’s health officer or health director position is vacant.) Donna Caruso and Mary Ellen McKenzie, a public health nurse, report to the EOC.

9:00 A.M.

Ms. Poppell, Operations Chief for the Arlington Communicable Disease Bureau, meets with her supervisors. Decision is made to establish a hotline for concerned callers.

A conference call facilitated by DHS/Pentagon had been scheduled for this time for local, state, and federal officials, but is cancelled and rescheduled for 1:00 p.m.

10:00 A.M.

From the EOC, Donna Caruso phones Darrell Rashid, an employee of the DeLorenzo TriCare Clinic at the Pentagon, to determine the Pentagon’s role in following up with “exposed” employees. He states that employees were given instructions to go to their private doctors if additional medications are needed. This information is then provided to Arlington public health incident command management and relayed to Dr. Addo-Ayensu to further discuss with DoD representatives.

Ms. Caruso continues to participate in conference calls.

11:00 A.M.

The EOC instructs ECC to use the “white powder” protocol to answer questions the public may have.

11:30 A.M.

Public affairs staffs from Arlington and Fairfax counties are working together using the virtual JIC to craft a common message for public release. The message is released.

1:00 P.M.

Conference call with federal, state, regional, and local attendees. It is reported that the specimen sent to the Fort Detrick lab tested positive for viability (spores alive). Further confirmatory tests were pending. The CDC made the following recommendations:

- Prophylaxis to be given to high-risk persons only.
- Pentagon to do full course for high risk persons.
- No medication for Skyline Towers incident, unless additional positive results.

A decision was to be made later in the day, after additional tests results become available (about 4:00 p.m.), as to whether Fairfax would open a mass treatment clinic. Alexandria will be sending staff and Arlington is on standby.

Notes were made to update the virtual JIC, which the feds should set up.

The Virginia Department of Health activates the Emergency Coordination System.

The Public Health Epi Response Team, a volunteer team of 50 people, mostly trained nurses and other public health officials with additional training in disease prevention, are put on standby in the event that Fairfax needs to administer prophylaxis to as many as 1,800 Skyline Towers employees.

2:00 P.M.

EOC staff is assigned work schedule for the remaining operations period for March 15 and for the full day of March 16.

2:30 P.M.

The executive leadership team of Arlington is updated by phone of the positive test results (anthrax spores were viable).

4:00 P.M.

The (physical) JIC is established in Fairfax County’s Alternate Emergency Operations Center (AEOC). Diana Sun, Arlington Director of Public Affairs, is present at the JIC.

5:00 P.M.

Conference call with Arlington County OEM, public health, and public affairs. The Pentagon culture and PCR are reported negative. The cross-contamination issue is discussed. Skyline Towers tests are reported negative. No mass clinic is planned. The validity of the anthrax test results is still in question.

6:00 P.M.

The Arlington EOC is closed for the day. Situation being monitored by Deputy Chief Holl, the duty officer, and Bob Griffin, Director of OEM, until the EOC opens.

7:30 P.M.

Second blast fax is sent to local hospitals and other medical providers with a status update.

Wednesday, March 16

8:00 A.M.

The Arlington EOC opens with the appropriate staff.

8:30 A.M.

The Arlington EOC is closed pending any new information. The situation is still being monitored by OEM staff from regular offices.

8:30 A.M.–12:00 P.M.

Mr. Maddox and the public health management team establish revised objectives to:

- Monitor pending lab results as they are received.

**“Anthrax” Incidents
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- Update local physicians as situation requires.
- Participate in any other conference calls.

The Epi response team is notified to “stand down.”

Thursday, March 17 7:30 A.M.

Dr. David Wilder from the regional office of Virginia Department of Health reports that the last samples from both Skyline Towers and the Pentagon RDF were negative for PCR and 12-hour culture as of 7:00 a.m.

The FBI closes its investigations at both sites.

Friday, March 18 7:30 A.M.

Third and final blast fax sent to local medical community and hospitals.

Observations POSITIVES

The Arlington County response was a coordinated and controlled effort that included multiple agencies and many personnel who participated efficiently and effectively. Arlington County was prepared and performed at a very high level. Arlington’s training and past experience were invaluable. Pertinent information was communicated horizontally and vertically. Roles and responsibilities of personnel were clearly defined. As illustrated by the timeline, participants knew where to go and what to do. There was no confusion for the Arlington responders, other than the lack of accurate and timely test information from external sources.

Other positives:

- Early notification from the Pentagon to Arlington County.
- Timely activation of the Arlington County EOC.
- Early communication to state officials, particularly to VDEM and state public health, as well as local officials, especially Fairfax County and Alexandria.
- Participation of Arlington officials in the DoD CMC.
- Activation of the virtual JIC.
- Establishing the (physical) NCR JIC.
- Excellent coordination with Fairfax County and to a lesser (and less necessary) extent with other local governments and regional entities.

CONCERNS

Although the overall response by Arlington County was very good, a few areas could have been improved in their opinion.

Coordination of Public Health Emergencies – A major concern of Arlington County (and other local) officials was the coordination of public health decisions, particularly the decision to distribute prophylaxis medications at the Pentagon mail facility.

Although Arlington County Public Health was an active participant in the consequence management center and invited to participate in many top-level discussions, their input was not requested in regards to prophylactic treatment. Arlington County Public Health concerns included:

- The impact on the downstream and upstream postal facilities.
- The effect on the medical community and local hospitals.
- Tracking those that were being given the medication.
- Insufficient information about the results of the tests.

Even if the decision to distribute prophylaxis was valid, local participation and cooperation is a must in dealing with the local community. The local government perception was that the Pentagon was treating this incident as an isolated incident. As the local public health agency, Arlington was concerned about the regional impacts.

Recommendation on Coordination of Public Health Emergencies: The public health officials of the host community should be an active member of the team and participate in the health decisionmaking process. In the future, Arlington should continue to train with the Pentagon. Public health emergencies can be more delicate and intimidating than a fire or other physical disaster. Fires and physical disasters may require a fast response and some suppression or immediate containment. Public health emergencies often are “hurry up and wait.”

Virtual JIC Participation – Participation in the virtual JIC was limited to Arlington and Fairfax. Others did not participate or post messages. It was missing key agencies, such as DoD, DHS, postal service, and others.

Involvement in the physical JIC also was limited. District of Columbia and the postal service were not present.

Conduct of Conference Calls – Over the course of the incident from March 14 to March 15 there were numerous conference calls. Participants on each call varied from local, state, and federal government agencies. The challenges were as follows:

Length and Frequency of Calls: The average length of each conference call was between 45 and 60 minutes. Conference calls were often back-to-back, leaving little time to act upon the issues raised during the call in a timely manner before starting the next call.

Jargon: Conference calls had many diverse participants, including scientists, local and government officials, firefighters, public health

experts, and others. At times, too much technical jargon was used, and some key participants could not understand the discussion. Because these calls have so many participants, it makes sense to speak in clear English (without as much technical jargon) so everyone can understand. If a call is designed to be “technical,” either the participation should be limited or the purpose of the call explained early on.

Organization: There was no agenda, chairperson or moderator, or plan of action for most calls. Several personnel we interviewed used words like “posturing,” “chaotic,” and “uncontrolled” to describe the conference call environment. Some suggested that conference calls should not be a forum for critical decisionmaking. Rather, key decisions should be made by a smaller group of people involved with the incident (perhaps over the phone, if necessary), and then communicated to others who are responsible for implementing the plan. It was not uncommon for 80 or more people to be participating on a call. It was difficult to discuss even minor issues or reach consensus of opinion on a critical topic. This was further exacerbated by the absence of a chairperson or moderator.

Written record: No written records or official documentation was made of the conference calls. Other than intermittent notes written by participants, usually pertaining to their area of expertise, no coordinated effort was made to document the discussions or decisions that resulted from each call. Such records are extremely important, especially when critiquing an incident and analyzing the decisionmaking process. An official record should be kept of all conference calls.

Ability to Participate: At least one conference call conducted by DHS officials electronically restricted some people in attendance from engaging in the discussion. This is counterproductive, especially if those not permitted to participate have relevant and, in some cases, more accurate information to contribute. If conference calls are to be an effective communication tool, information must flow in both directions. But to do this, they have to be led and kept orderly.

Recommendations on Conduct of Conference Calls: Assign a moderator or chairperson, and better plan the calls.

To be most effective, conference calls should be planned in advance and scheduled at regular intervals with sufficient time between calls to allow personnel to act on the issues discussed during the previous call. When planning a conference call, an agenda should be developed and distributed in advance so that participants come prepared to discuss the issues. The topics of discussion should be limited and prioritized so that the most pressing issues are discussed first.

A moderator should be designated to preside over the call, maintain order, and keep participants on track. This individual should have a level of

authority enough not to be intimidated by anyone participating in the call.

The number of participants should be kept to an absolute minimum; only those that need to be on the call should be.

If possible, conference calls should be recorded and later transcribed and used to critique the incident for lessons learned. The calls could be electronically or digitally recorded (e.g., by transmitting them through the EOC, which has the capability to record each call) and later transcribing the information as part of an after-action report.

Regional Jurisdictional Notifications – Regional notifications to all local government entities, as well as state and federal entities were intermittent, sometimes incorrect, and confusing. In January of 2002, the Washington Metropolitan COG passed Resolution R14–02 adopting the recommended actions of the Task Force on Homeland Security and the Emergency Preparedness for the National Capital Region. The centerpiece of the Regional Emergency Coordination Plan (RCEP) is the Regional Incident Communication and Coordination System (RICCS). The system was designed to be the primary emergency notification system for the Washington Metropolitan Area.

The purpose of RICCS is to disseminate and coordinate information during a regional crisis. The system was not used to its fullest advantage during the March anthrax incident, opined Arlington officials.

The first regional jurisdiction notification occurred at approximately 12:00 p.m., Monday March 14, 2005, when the DCEMA makes a brief announcement that there was a hazmat response to the Pentagon for an unknown substance. The PFFA had notified District of Columbia using the Washington Area Warning Alert System (WAWAS) to inform them of the hazardous material incident, though the Maryland Emergency Management Agency was responsible for making the notification using RICCS. DCEMA immediately made an announcement over WAWAS to the region about the Pentagon hazardous material incident. According to DCEMA, there was no record of further updates on the status of the Pentagon situation from PFFA.

On Tuesday March 15, the Metropolitan Washington COG released a RICCS e-mail through the Maryland Emergency Management Agency that contained misinformation concerning negative anthrax test results for the Pentagon and Fairfax County. The credibility of any communications system is directly associated with the quality of information that it shares with other jurisdictions. The nature of the emergency warranted verification of the information before it was released as definitive.

As a result of the RICCS e-mail issue, Arlington County Manager Ron Carlee will soon recommend that the Washington Metropolitan COG

adopt an information management protocol. The protocol would prohibit the release of any information concerning an emergency incident until it has been reviewed and approved by an official in the jurisdiction in which the incident occurred. Such a policy would improve the quality and creditability of the information released to other jurisdictions and the public.

A second issue concerning RICCS notification was raised by Dan McKeever, City Manager of Falls Church. Under the COG Regional Emergency Coordination Plan, and before RICCS is activated, the incident should be of a “significant” nature. The term “significant” is ambiguous and should be clarified.

Recommendation on Regional Jurisdictional Notifications: The Washington Metropolitan COG should adopt an information management protocol that would prohibit the release of any information concerning an emergency incident until it has been reviewed and approved by the Public Information Officer (PIO) in the jurisdiction in which the incident occurred. Such a policy will ensure the creditability of information released to the public. Additionally, to help eliminate confusion over what constitutes a significant incident, the MWCOG should define what “significant” means, providing examples might be appropriate.

4 FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA – SKYLINE TOWERS MAILROOM INCIDENT

Fairfax County is the most populous county in the Commonwealth of Virginia with a population of 1,000,000. It is like many of the other jurisdictions in the National Capital Region (NCR) in that it has many people who work in the District of Columbia, at the Pentagon, and other governmental agencies in the area.

The county has an urban county executive form of government. The powers of government in the county are vested in the elected board of supervisors.

The Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department (FCFD) is a combination department with a total of 1,800 members. The Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD) provides law enforcement services for the county and has 1,358 sworn members. Fairfax County has a separate fully staffed OEM that works closely with the FCPD, FCFD, Health Department, Office of the County Executive, and other county agencies.

Senior members of these agencies were interviewed for this rapid study (see Acknowledgements chapter). An approximate timeline and perceptions about the information flow are given below.

Caveat: The timeline here should not be considered a legal record; it was developed mainly from interviews and some communications logs, and may have errors or omissions. The timeline represents what could be assembled in one week. It does not record every call, e-mail, etc. We relied on the senior people interviewed to identify key information. The timeline was reviewed by each jurisdiction, but they, too, had only a short time to do so. Notwithstanding these limitations, the timeline should provide a reasonably accurate overview of the events.

Monday, March 14 11:03 A.M.

Fairfax County ladder truck (T410) sends a message to the dispatch center’s Uniformed Fire Officer (UFO) asking “Are you aware of the hazmat at the Pentagon?” T410 had been listening to Arlington fire radio traffic the portable radios in Arlington. UFO replies “Nope.”⁴

⁴ Fairfax County dispatch and communications is run mostly by civilians but has one uniformed fire officer position, referred to as the “UFO.” The county might wish to consider changing the acronym.

11:10 A.M.

UFO calls Arlington County to find out “What is going on at the Pentagon?” Arlington County advises apparent “anthrax positive on detectors. Numerous units operating.” UFO notifies by radio Battalion Chief Walsh (head of its hazmat unit and later leading it at Skyline Towers) of an incident at the Pentagon. UFO also notifies FCFD Deputy Chiefs Louder and Baker via Nextel.

12:10 P.M.

Fairfax County Public Safety Communications Center (PSCC) receives a National Warning System (NAWAS) phone call (which is not a recorded telephone line) that the Pentagon is working a hazmat incident and that units from the Pentagon, Arlington, and Alexandria are operating there, and buses have been dispatched to assist with movement of Pentagon employees.⁵

12:12 P.M.

Fairfax County PSCC sends a routine message to the whole PSCC group announcing the incident. The UFO is included in this group, and forwards message to Fairfax County Fire Operations (FOPS), the senior fire operations officers on the fifth floor of headquarters, but it is not read by FOPS until 1:35 p.m.

1:30 P.M.

Fairfax County Health Department director is notified of the Pentagon incident due to her role in the NCR.

2:00 P.M.

Emergency Management Coordinator Douglas Bass receives a call from Arlington County OEM Director Bob Griffin describing the incident at the Pentagon.

Mike Guditus, call taker, approaches the UFO with the information that 5111 Leesburg Pike wanted to send their mail back to the Pentagon, and they did not want Fairfax County to respond. Guditus had told them not to move mail and that FCFD is coming. UFO confirms this decision.

⁵ NAWAS is a dedicated, two-way nationwide special purpose party line telephone system, which connects to all 50 states to include local warning points. It will broadcast threat notifications and conduct a roll call after the broadcast to ensure receipt by each state. The WAWAS is a non-secure, dedicated telephone system for the Washington D.C. metropolitan area, also called the Emergency Management System. It will relay threat notifications to subscribers over the WAWAS. The WAWAS is not tied directly to the National Warning System (NAWAS), however it can be “bridged” at the FEMA Operations Center.

2:09 P.M.

Call taker CT09 receives 9-1-1 call for 5111 Leesburg Pike for a possible anthrax incident. (This starts the Skyline Towers incident.)

FCPD Chief Rohrer is initially informed through his public information personnel about the incident at Skyline Towers and a possible related incident at the Pentagon.

2:17 P.M.

UFO calls Deputy Chief Baker to advise him of the 5111 Leesburg Pike call and references the earlier call about the update on the Pentagon situation.

UFO also calls Battalion Chief Walsh to update him, and Walsh goes en-route.

2:21 P.M.

Fairfax County fire command calls UFO to ask if proper notifications have been made to the Arlington County Fire Department Deputy Chief of Operations and FCPD. UFO advised “yes,” but advisory page subsequently was held until confirmation of the event, and then sent.

2:40 P.M.

UFO provides update from Arlington OEM. UFO stops him to direct him to the IC phone (BC405).

2:53 P.M.

UFO calls staff duty to provide update. Staff duty is to notify the fire chief in a teleconference.

3:00 P.M.

Emergency Management Coordinator Douglas Bass informs the Fairfax County executive, health department, public affairs, fire chief, and chairman of the Board of Supervisors about the occurrences at Skyline Towers and the Pentagon.

3:12 P.M.

Command calls UFO and asks that the PIO be notified about Skyline Towers.

3:15 P.M.

Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs is paged by OEM about incident. The county executive, Board of Supervisors chairman, and Office of Public Affairs are briefed by OEM.

3:20 P.M.

UFO notifies the communications section to respond to scene.

3:23 P.M.

BC405 requests Fairfax County Health Department notifications to be made about the Skyline Towers incident.

3:25 P.M.

UFO notifies Health Department.

3:44 P.M. (APPROXIMATELY)

UFO contacts FCFD assistant chief of operations to cover the county.

4:04 P.M.

Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs receives the first media call pertaining to this situation.

4:40 P.M.

Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs contacts FCPD PIO for update. No FCPD PIOs were at the scene, but they were aware of the situation.

4:50 P.M.

Arlington County and Fairfax County public affairs offices confer on the two situations.

5:00 P.M.

Conference call staffed by Fairfax County public affairs, Arlington County public affairs, Deputy Chief Baker (incident commander at Skyline Towers), and Deputy Chief Louder (who headed the special operations side of the Skyline Towers operation). Approximately 30–50 employees in the Skyline Towers mailroom area are isolated. The postal machine also is isolated. All other employees in the buildings are being held on scene.

5:10 P.M.

Deputy Chief Louder (Special Operations) holds conference call with the county executive and agency heads to provide an update of on-scene activities at Skyline Towers:

- Nine-story, mixed-use, high-rise office building.
- Biodetection alarm from an eighth floor DoD mailroom.
- Unified command (UC) established with FDFD, FCPD, Fairfax County Health Department, FBI, Pentagon police, FPS.
- Mailroom area evacuated and secured. All other occupants being held in the building pending test results and recommendations.
- Making arrangements to decontaminate workers that were in the mailroom (approximately 23 individuals, fewer than first noted).
- Hazmat unit preparing to take environmental samples and conduct field tests.

- FBI advised that Pentagon samples from previous Thursday tested positive using PCR technology and positive from a culture. Samples have been sent to USAMRIID for additional testing. Expect preliminary results between 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. The FBI has stated that all of the mail coming through the Pentagon had been irradiated at the V Street postal facility.⁶

Deputy Chief Louder was informed that Pentagon employees were being started on a 3-day regimen of antibiotics.

Senior Fairfax County officials express the need that the Fairfax County plan be aligned with the Pentagon and Arlington County plans, and that the building occupants be kept informed and provided information and direction as soon as possible.

6:00 P.M.

UC at Skyline Towers is established with the following joint objectives:

- Provide information to the occupants.
- Develop an information flyer (Health Department) for all of the occupants.
- Collect contact/demographic information from the occupants for the epidemiologists.
- Decontaminate the workers from the mailroom. This was going to be accomplished at an adjacent health club.
- Obtain the filter/cartridge from the mail machine and obtain the results of field tests.
- Jointly approve field media releases.
- Continue the investigation.

6:10 P.M.

Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs receives a situation update from on-scene FCFD PIO Raul Castillo. He reports that the three buildings (5111, 5109, and 5113 Leesburg Pike) remain shut and that workers are being held in the buildings. ATF PIO, FBI, and Postal Service also on scene.

7:00 P.M.

Fairfax County conference call is run by Fairfax county executive.

Deputy Chief Louder runs conference call with agency heads. Provides update on incident objectives:

⁶ Subsequently it was determined that the V Street mail gets sent to New Jersey to be irradiated, and is not irradiated at V Street.

- ***Provide information to the Skyline Tower occupants*** – Crafting message for the occupants to be read over the public address system.
- ***Develop an information flyer (Health Department) for all occupants*** – Health Department representatives at their headquarters are currently developing the flyer. Making arrangements to get it reproduced on-scene once it is faxed.
- ***Collect contact/demographic information from the occupants for the epidemiologists*** – Form is on-scene and being reproduced for distribution.
- ***Decontaminate the workers from the mailroom*** – This was going to be accomplished at an adjacent health club. Finalizing arrangements for decontamination.
- ***Obtain the filter/cartridge from the mail machine and obtain the results of field tests*** – Obtained air samples and preparing to complete bioassay tests. The hazardous materials response team (HMRT) is having difficulty removing the filter from the postal machine with the biohazard detection system (BDS). Working with Pentagon police to obtain assistance from the contractor.
- ***Jointly approve field media releases*** – PIO directed to ensure that the field (county) media releases are aligned with the regional releases.

7:11 P.M.

Virtual JIC is activated.

7:27 P.M.

Raul Castillo (FCFD), the on-scene PIO, reports that the FCFD is preparing to send firefighters by stairwell throughout the buildings to remove everyone from the scene. All persons will be provided a flyer produced by the health department, and firefighters will also gather personal contact information from each person in the building.

7:30 P.M.

Beginning to decontaminate 45 mailroom workers at Skyline Towers.

8:00 P.M.

Arlington County/Fairfax County conference call is held to inform all agencies that the people being held at Skyline Towers have been given a briefing by the Fairfax County health department, and are being systematically released after proper authorities gather contact information from them and they are given a flyer regarding personal decontamination and showering.

8:30 P.M.

Virtual JIC is populated with a DoD news release (255–05) issued by the Pentagon press office, , “Positive Initial Detection for Anthrax at Pentagon,” and the “Biohazard Detection System in Post Offices” fact sheet from the Virginia Department of Health.

9:00 P.M.

Fairfax County conference call – Tony Griffin, Douglas Bass, Chairman Connolly, Fire Chief Neuhard, Deputy Chief Louder, Major Smith (FCPD), Kelly Vance Lobanov (Virginia Department of Health), Bob Spieldenner (VDEM), Charles Taylor (Arlington County Public Affairs), Alisa Layton (Arlington County), George Foresman (Commonwealth), and Merni Fitzgerald and Jim Person (Office of Pubic Affairs). Numerous others were also on the conference call.

Deputy Chief Louder conference call with county executive and agency heads: Provided update on incident objectives:

- ***Provide information to the occupants*** – Coordinated the release of occupants with FCPD and health department. Three floors have been released at this time. Notified that one suite was refusing to leave because they provide health consultation service to the DoD on a 24/7/365 basis.
- ***Develop an information flyer (health department) for all of the occupants*** – Flyer was completed by the health department and vetted by UC. Flyer was copied and is being distributed as occupants are released from the building.
- ***Collect contact/demographic information from the occupants for the epidemiologists*** – Occupants are completing the questionnaire as they vacate the building.
- ***Decontaminate the workers from the mailroom*** – This was going to be accomplished at an adjacent health club. The health club initially retracted their offer to assist with decontamination, but have now reconsidered. Decontamination has begun and a total of 41 workers are now being decontaminated.⁷
- ***Obtain the filter/cartridge from the mail machine and obtain the results of field tests*** – HMRT completed field testing and obtained positive protein tests and negative bioassay (anthrax) tests. They have collected environmental samples to be sent to USAMRIID via the FBI. The HMRT still cannot free the filter from the BDS. Have requested assistance from the Postal Service and the site contractor; however, no one is able to provide assistance.

⁷ Minor note: the number of workers reported as being decontaminated changed several times. A name list should be kept if possible, in the future.

- ***Jointly approve field media releases*** – Senior officials reiterated the need for a regional approach for media releases. It was noted that there was no information on the health department hotline even though it was referenced as a source in the flyer given to the occupants.

9:13 P.M.

FCPD Major Smith reports that almost everyone was out of the Skyline Towers buildings.

10:00 P.M.

Deputy Chief Louder UC discusses the need to make a decision on the building being open or closed for business on March 15. It was decided that all three addresses would be closed based on the positive results from the initial Pentagon tests, the fact that the mail in question had come from the Pentagon, and because the BDS machine activated at Skyline Towers.⁸ There were still no results available from the testing being conducted at USAMRIID. The following issues still needed to be addressed:

- Notification of employers/employees.
- Site security.
- Transfer of the DoD health consultation service to another location.
- Extraction of the filter/cartridge from the BDS machine.
- Decision on providing antibiotics to the workers from the mailroom.

Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs contacts the secretary of communications for District of Columbia Mayor Anthony Williams and provided an update.

10:32 P.M.

Final Fairfax County news release “County Responds to Hazmat Incident” (#080/05) is sent to the on-scene PIO (Dan Schmidt, FCFD).

10:40 P.M.

News release “County Responds to Hazmat Incident” (#080/05) is faxed to the Board of Supervisors and media.

10:45 P.M.

Fairfax County news release is posted to the website and virtual JIC. Virginia Department of Health and Arlington County news releases are posted to the virtual JIC.

⁸ In fact, as later learned, there was no such machine at the Fairfax County site.

10:58 P.M.

News release “County Responds to Hazmat Incident” (#080/05) is e-mailed to media.

11:00 P.M.

Deputy Chief Louder holds conference call with county executive and agency heads. He provides an update on incident objectives and preparation for March 15. It was decided that the Fairfax County Health Department would assume the “lead agency” role in the UC at this point. Updated status of objectives:

- ***Provide information to the occupants*** – Completed; all of the occupants have been removed from the building.
- ***Develop an information flyer (Health Department) for all of the occupants*** – Completed and distributed.
- ***Collect contact/demographic information from the occupants for the epidemiologists*** – Completed and collected by the Health Department.
- ***Decontaminate the workers from the mailroom*** – This was going to be accomplished at an adjacent health club. A total of 31 of the 42 workers have completed decontamination at the adjacent health club; 11 still need to undergo the process.
- ***Obtain the filter/cartridge from the mail machine and obtain the results of field tests*** – Environmental sampling is complete and the material has been transferred to the FBI for transportation to USAMRIID. Still unable to extract the filter from the BDS machine.
- ***Jointly approve field media releases*** – On-going.
- ***Notification of employers/employees*** – DoD Operations Center will begin to make calls to the various supervisors. Smith Reality will place the information on their website. The building closing was to be publicized in the media releases.
- ***Site security*** – FDPD will secure the outer perimeter and Pentagon PD will secure the building. Decided that the Fairfax County fire marshal’s office would invoke a segment of the fire prevention code to prevent occupation.
- ***Transfer of the DoD health consultation service to another location*** – Service agreed to leave the building and implement their Continuity of Operations Plan.
- ***Extraction of the filter/cartridge from the BDS machine*** – HMRT still unable to remove the cartridge. The FBI HMRU will assist

with the project in the morning and the Fairfax County HMRT will support the operation.

- ***Decision on providing antibiotics to the workers from the mailroom*** – Decision was made not to provide antibiotics to the mailroom workers, but DoD will provide the medications in the morning.

11:09 P.M.

News release is added to the emergency information line.

Tuesday, March 15

6:22 A.M.

Office of Public Affairs sends messages on incident status to Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Office of National Capital Region Coordination.

8:00 A.M.

Fairfax County facilitates conference call for state and local public health officials.

8:15 A.M.

Merni Fitzgerald (Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs), Dan Schmidt and Lucy Caldwell (Virginia Department of Health), and Kimberly Cordero (Fairfax County Health Department) formalize a plan to transition to a lead health PIO at the scene, and to include a health message in the day’s key messages and talking points.

9:15 A.M.

R–ESF 14 conference call – Merni Fitzgerald, Debra Bianchi, Jim Person, Cathy Lemmon, Angela Morlu, and Dalia Martinez (Fairfax County Public Affairs); Matt Martin (Arlington County Police Department PIO); Barbara Gordon and Ray Owens (Alexandria); Pete Peringer (Montgomery County); Jane Mallick (Alexandria Fire); Charles Taylor (Arlington County Public Affairs); Nicole Galbo (Falls Church); Bob Spieldenner (VDEM); Mark Wolfson (HHS Office of Public Health Emergency Preparedness); Dave McMillion, John Snarr, and Calvin Smith (COG); and Kimberly Cordero (Health Department).

10:00 A.M.

Fairfax County officials monitor media briefing at DC Hospital by Mayor Anthony Williams.

10:13 A.M.

First “official” notification about the Skyline Towers incident from Fairfax County OEM to VDEM (though VDEM knew about the incidents from conference calls and informal communications the previous day).

10:23 A.M.

Information on the situation sent to R–ESF 14 group via RICCS.

10:36 A.M.

As a follow up to the earlier R–ESF 14 conference call, Merni Fitzgerald calls DHS to coordinate communications and to verify and obtain additional contacts; she is placed on the DHS e-mail dissemination list.

10:55 A.M.

CBS Nightly News calls and questions holding Skyline Towers employees when “normal” procedure is to evacuate the area.

11:02 A.M.

Update on anthrax tests is sent by John Snarr COG to R–ESF 14 Media Relations (via cell phones, pagers, e-mail, and other devices) through COG RICCS Roam Secure Alert Network. (This was communication from the region to all NCR jurisdictions.⁹)

“From: MWCOG RICCS [mailto:riccs4841@riccs.mwcog.org]

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2005 11:02 a.m.

To: RSAN

Subject: Testing info on Anthrax

Lab tests from the Pentagon and Sky samples are negative.

Additional testing still pending. Pentagon samples still being tested – 65 follow up hand-held tests negative. Additional information after 1600 today.”

(Message provided by MEMA EOC.)

11:30 A.M.

Public Affairs guidance document is obtained from DHS.

11:30 A.M.

On-scene PIOs brief the media.

11:56 A.M.

DHS sends Public Affairs guidance document with talking points.

12:00 P.M.

Fairfax County conference call. Decision is made to open a JIC in the Fairfax County AEOC.

⁹ This message subsequently proved to be erroneous in that it was sent before the tests were confirmed negative.

1:00 P.M.

Federal conference call; Fort Detrick confirms positive anthrax tests for Pentagon site.

1:30 P.M.

R–ESF 14 conference call regarding activation of a JIC – Office of Public Affairs; Diana Sun (Arlington County Public Affairs); Nicole Galbo (Falls Church); Pat Sullivan (Prince George’s County Health Department); Ryan Hall (VDOT); Bob Spieldenner (VDEM); Kirk Whitworth (DHS); and Sharon Gang (District of Columbia Public Information).

2:30 P.M.

Physical JIC is activated at the AEOC. Staffing: Merni Fitzgerald, Jim Person, Cathy Lemmon, Debra Bianchi, Margaret Showalter, and Lindsey Culin (Office of Public Affairs); Kirk Whitworth (Homeland Security); Diana Sun (Arlington County); Rich Perez (FDPD); Raul Castillo (FCFD); Rich Perez and Mary Ann Jennings (FDPD); Perry Bishop (DoD); Dawn Eischen (VDEM); and Lucy Caldwell (Virginia Department of Health).

Dan Schmidt to relieve Raul Castillo as FCFD PIO following the evening news cycle.

2:50 P.M.

Meeting with contractor Rita Merritt, MVM Security, to alert her that an AEOC was being partially activated and that an armed guard needed to be stationed there.

3:00 P.M.

Rumor control: JIC personnel tracks down rumors about a white powdery substance at Skyline Towers and focuses media on the correct information.

3:15 P.M.

Fairfax County draft news release 082 sent to DHS.

3:40 P.M.

News release 082 (“NCR Opens Joint Information Center”) is faxed and e-mailed to media and BOS.

4:30 P.M.

AEOC is partially activated by the Fairfax county executive.¹⁰

¹⁰ A new EOC is being constructed, and the AEOC is currently being used as the prime.

5:00 P.M.

Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs director participates in regional conference call.

6:00 P.M.

Another regional conference call.

6:15 P.M.

Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs drafts news release 084 on closing the JIC.

6:30 P.M.

Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs drafts news release 085 on continued closing of Skyline Towers complex.

7:00 P.M.

Meeting of PIOs to discuss messages for the evening news.

Fairfax County officials monitor DHS conference call with national print media on background information.

7:30 P.M.

DHS issues Public Affairs guideline on background, including test results.

9:10 P.M.

Fairfax County public affairs starts contacting media outlets to schedule Wednesday morning briefing.

9:26 P.M.

E-mail press release NR 085/05 “Skyline to Remain Closed Pending Further Test Results” is sent to media and additional folks.

10:00 P.M.

JIC closes for the day.

Wednesday, March 16

6:00 A.M.

Fairfax County OEM powers up AEOC.

8:00 A.M.

JIC re-opens. Staffing: Merni Fitzgerald, Jim Person, Paula Harper , Margaret Showalter, Cathy Lemmon, Angela Morlu (Office of Public Affairs); Dawn Eischen (VDEM); Perry Bishop (DoD Health Affairs); Raul Castillo and Dan Schmidt (FCFD); Douglas Aldrich (DHS); Chris Darlington (Red Cross); and Mary Mulrennan (Police).

8:41 A.M.

Key messages and talking points shared with DHS.

9:16 A.M.

OEM forwards VDEM Situation Report #2 dated 3/15/05, 2000 hours.

11:00 A.M.

Regional conference call.

12:00 P.M.

Fairfax County conference call.

12:30 P.M.

Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs monitors the USPS website to see their message since they reopened V Street post office at noon.

1:00 P.M.

Fairfax County update conference call.

2:35 P.M.

Draft news release sent to regional partners for approval.

3:45 P.M.

Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs issues news release 086/05, “Skyline Office Complex To Reopen Thursday Morning/JIC to Close at 6 p.m.”

4:15 P.M.

PDF of news release 086/05 is provided to Virginia Department of Health for posting on their website.

5:00 P.M.

Regional conference call.

6:15 P.M.

JIC closes.

Thursday, March 17

7:00 A.M.

Regional conference call.

Observations

POSITIVES

Overall, Fairfax County officials felt that communications, cooperation, and capability have come a long way in the last 3 to 5 years as a region. Among the positives:

Fairfax – There is a heightened awareness about bioterrorism due to previous anthrax scares within the county. The county response generally went as planned.

Regional Coordination – Although there is room for improvement, this first true regional response to a biohazard threat went well for the local jurisdictions.

State–Local Coordination – Coordination between Commonwealth agencies and Northern Virginia community participants was handled very well.

Fairfax County–regional–state coordination also was excellent.

County communication with the Virginia Department of Health and with the state police was very good. They were ready to assist.

Fairfax–NCR – Communications with the National Capital Region OEM were frequent and helpful (though there also were some suggested improvements, noted below under Concerns).

Fairfax–Pentagon – Coordinated well with the chief of the Pentagon police force.

Regional Health Coordination – Virginia regional public health coordination was good. They established their own communications bridge, conferencing when necessary, which improved consistency in communications and in terminology, and shared information with the District of Columbia and the State of Maryland.

Unified Command – Local unified command was well organized and effective.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – The CDC received praise from Fairfax County for their involvement and actions.

CONCERNS

Clarifying Information Sources and Accuracy – Official information that was being disseminated was being combined with reports in the news media. The challenge in these incidents is to determine what is correct information. There were concerns about the accuracy and currency of the content and the context of information that was distributed.

Misinformation was propagated in part due to out-of-date information. Virtually everyone interviewed in Fairfax County felt this was a problem area.

Clarifying Information Significance – The significance of the notification messages that were received was sometimes missed, and did not trigger a heightened response. The context of some messages was that of a routine transmission, not of an urgent message.

Early Notification – Notifications of the situation at the V Street mail facility were received via news media. However, V Street was reacting to the Fairfax County and Pentagon incidents, not vice versa.

Federal Communication and Cooperation – There was concern about the lack of communication coming from the federal government.

“Real” concern at the county executive level arose on Tuesday, March 15, when the county executive participated in a 12:00 p.m. federal conference call and heard that a doctor from Fort Detrick who was handling the sample testing was confirming many suspicions.

The county executive made the decision to partially activate the Fairfax County EOC and begin to ramp up the county’s response as a result of information that was received regarding positive PCR results, which raised the credibility of the threat.

There was much confusing information regarding cross-contamination at the private testing lab in Richmond.

Another concern was getting the federal partners on board and in line with the local response. Once the Pentagon was on board, communications were good.

No context or urgency was placed on information and notifications of the Pentagon incident.

It would be helpful for the Pentagon to have a procedure in place for the notification of adjoining localities and sister agencies, and not just to Arlington County. Fairfax County needed to know more than that it was just an alarm. Federal agencies need to reach out to localities to address the outcomes of the federal after-action review.

There was major concern in the upper echelon of the county government about the lack of connectivity with the DoD regarding the flow of information. DoD was perceived to be too secretive and incommunicado at the outset of the incident.

Conference Calls – There was inadequate control maintained on multi-agency conference calls. Information became fragmented as many agencies jumped in to provide their input, relevant or not, and reliable or not.

One of the biggest concerns was “Who is in charge of the information? Who should the locals listen to while on these conference calls?” The identification of who was responsible for the information—who is the central clearing house for distribution of the information—needs to be identified and clarified.

The conference calls included many individuals besides those necessary to be on the call.

Regional Information Flow and Coordination (see also Conference Calls and other related concerns above) – A notification message was received through the NAWAS, which was not time stamped or tracked. The message received was routine and was transmitted to each of the

county’s dispatch stations. At 12:12 p.m. on Monday, notification of this message was passed on by the UFO. The fire chief said that senior fire officers do not normally rely upon that notification route, which is usually used for routine messages.

Public Information – Public information was difficult to coordinate; the local message differed from the federal message.

The process and specifics regarding “release” of the Skyline Towers building by the FBI could have been better coordinated with Fairfax County fire and health officials.

Region–State Coordination – Fairfax County senior managers felt there was confusion as to whether the focus of coordination was the NCR or VDEM, and which it should be.

There is a need to have a stronger regional recognition of the NCR role in coordinating regional communities. There should be coordination between activities in Richmond and in the NCR.

5 COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA PERSPECTIVE

The two suspected anthrax events of March 11–15, 2005, occurred in two counties within the Commonwealth of Virginia. As with most emergencies, the first to respond were local emergency services. State-level support, however, sometimes is required and certainly, in the case of any potential terrorist activity, the state has to be involved at the earliest possible time to put in place support operations and to begin coordination with federal resources should these also be required.

The following timeline is based on a series of meetings in Virginia with the various Commonwealth officials listed in the Acknowledgements. It also includes information from a Williamsburg meeting of state and local health officials that happened to be taking place the week after the two events occurred.

Caveat: The timeline here should not be considered a legal record; it was developed mainly from interviews and some communications logs, and may have errors or omissions. The timeline represents what could be assembled in one week. It does not record every call, e-mail, etc. We relied on the senior people interviewed to identify key information. The timeline was reviewed by each jurisdiction, but they, too, had only a short time to do so. Notwithstanding these limitations, the timeline should provide a reasonably accurate overview of the events.

Monday, March 14 11:17 A.M.

Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) receives a call from Cindi Causey, State Emergency Management Regional Coordinator for Region 7 (NOVA) who was at a meeting of Northern Virginia emergency managers. She had just been advised of a full hazmat response to the Pentagon’s Remote Mail Delivery station. Anthrax was mentioned. No further details.

VDEM Operations then informs Glen Rudner, state hazmat lead for Region 7, who in turn contacts Arlington County Battalion Chief Scott McKay to get details. McKay relates information about the previous Thursday “alarm” at the Remote Delivery Facility of the Pentagon—including that testing had been done, and that the Pentagon mail service had delivered some of the mail without having results of the tests.

1:06 P.M.

The National Response Center’s (NRC) Duty Officer (located at the U.S. Coast Guard) receives a report from the Pentagon police of a possible hazmat release at their remote mail delivery facility.¹¹ “Substance or source of hazmat unknown at this time.” Pentagon police say they are awaiting assessment from hazmat teams.

1:30 AND FOLLOWING

Dr. James Pearson, Director, Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS), Virginia Department of General Services, receives a call from an EOC in the District of Columbia (the caller did not identify whether it was the District of Columbia’s EOC or a federal EOC, which is also in the District of Columbia) asking what the lab results showed.¹² Dr. Pearson has no knowledge of the Pentagon incident at this time and asked what the caller is referring to. He checks with his staff and is told that it was probably referred to the private CBI lab, which is in the Richmond area.

Denise Pettit, DCLS (Lead Scientist for BioTerrorism response), calls Richard Jaffee, Director of Microbiology and Special Government Projects at CBI, who says he had confirmed positive test results on Friday from one of the samples taken on Thursday, and that he has reported the results to the contracting officer. Dr. Pettit asks, “Why didn’t you send it to our lab for confirmation?” Answer: “We were told not to” —that is, not to use the LRN (Laboratory Response Network for Bioterrorism) labs, but rather go back to the military (USAMARIID) lab. CBI also said they were instructed to do more work on samples, and that they worked over the weekend. Jaffee stated that CBI reported the results from the weekend testing to the primary contractor on Monday.

Dr. Pearson contacts the FBI (Dave Wilson, Unit Chief of the Chemical/Bio Response Unit). Wilson invited Dr. Pearson to participate on the laboratory calls involving DHS (Dr. Jerry Parker and Dr. Peter Estacio), USAMARIID (Dr. Erik Henshel, Dr. Mark Wolcott, and Dr. John Ezzell), CDC (Dr. Richard Meyer), and the Navy Medical Research Center (Dr. Al Mateczun), which is an LRN lab in the District of Columbia.

2:30 P.M.

VDEM Operations pages Rudner (Virginia Hazmat Region 7) to tell him that Fairfax County was responding to a call at Skyline Towers.

¹¹ The National Response Center maintains agreements with a variety of federal entities to send notification on incidents meeting certain trigger criteria. The NRC is run by the Coast Guard and serves as the sole national point of contact for reporting all oil, chemical, biological, and etiological discharges.

¹² District of Columbia subsequently told us it was not their EOC.

Rudner calls Battalion Chief Walsh of Fairfax County and offers the Commonwealth’s assistance to each jurisdiction, including lab services and hazmat resources. (Rudner remained in contact with Chief McKay and Chief Walsh through the evening.)

3:00 P.M.

Bob Mauskopf, Virginia Department of Health Statewide Planning Coordinator, receives a call from the state’s Northern Virginia Regional Team regarding the incident at the Pentagon. This is first notification of Virginia Department of Health.

3:30 P.M.

Bob Mauskopf, Virginia Department of Health, receives call from Fairfax County public health informing him of the incident at Skyline Towers.

3:00 P.M.–4:30 P.M.

Rudner and VDEM Operations continue communications. Dr. Pearson calls Anthony Mclean (Deputy Operations Director, VDEM), Greg Britt, (Hazmat Branch Director) and Brett Burdick (Division Director, Technological Hazards). Continues monitoring situation.

4:00 P.M. (SOMETIME AFTER)

Bob Spieldenner, Public Affairs Coordinator, VDEM, is contacted by Harry Colestock, Operations Director, VDEM, who tells him about the incidents. Spieldenner contacts Kelly Vance Lobanov at Virginia Department of Health and they discuss what they knew. He then contacts Merni Fitzgerald, Public Affairs, Fairfax County and Charles Taylor, Public Affairs, Arlington County.

4:15 P.M.

Cindi Causey (VDEM Region 7) calls VDEM with updated report. From that point, the situation broke loose as an action for VDEM.

4:30 P.M.–5:00 P.M.

VDEM begins paging out/notifying others, including John Marshall, Secretary of Public Safety. A series of conference calls begins, variously organized by Fairfax County; some federal to state with some locals; and federal to local.

4:30 P.M.

George Foresman, Assistant to the Governor, Office of Commonwealth Preparedness (OCP), receives his first call—paged by the VDEM EOC. Calls go back and forth with the EOC. Foresman asks EOC to make sure Virginia Department of Health knew (which they did earlier by 3 p.m.). Foresman advises the governor through staff. (The governor subsequently is updated 14 times throughout the event.)

4:45 P.M.

Foresman calls Tom Lockwood, National Capital Region, DHS. Lockwood reports that the issue is just starting to get a higher level of visibility at DHS.

5:03 P.M.–5:15 P.M.

Bob Spieldenner, Public Affairs Coordinator, VDEM forwards NBC “Breaking News” release (updated 1:30 p.m.) about the Pentagon to VDEM and then to DHS Region III.

5:55 P.M.

National Response Center reports that mail sensors at Washington Headquarters Services (a contractor mail service with offices at Skyline Towers) indicated anthrax contamination in the mailroom that serves three buildings. About 1,000 people sheltering in place for investigation and medical testing.

6:00 P.M.

Conference call among Fairfax, Arlington, VA State, possibly DC and federal partners.

VDEM receives call from Michael Brown, FEMA, requesting information regarding the Skyline Towers incident. Request is given to Anthony Mclean to respond.

6:15 P.M.

Mclean e-mails OCP and other VDEM personnel regarding upcoming 6:30 p.m. conference call with DHS and Arlington.

6:30 P.M.

Conference call with Virginia state representatives; they receive a briefing from DoD and other federal entities.

Spieldenner, VDEM Public Affairs, is contacted by Fairfax PIO regarding 7:00 p.m. call. He already had missed the 5:00 p.m. conference call.

VDEM et al. is still trying to reconstruct events.

Merni Fitzgerald, Director of Public Affairs, Fairfax County, sends situation summary on Pentagon and Skyline Towers to VDEM, VDH, Arlington, and Fairfax representatives.

6:33 P.M.

Michael Cline, State Coordinator, VDEM, calls to get the conference call number. The information also is sent to Secretary Marshall and Deputy Secretary of Public Safety Crouch.

6:45 P.M.

Spieldenner, VDEM Public Affairs, communicates with VDEM regarding Pentagon and Skyline Towers update from Fairfax County Director of Public Affairs, Merni Fitzgerald, per 5:00 p.m. conference call. Is also notified of 7:00 p.m. conference call to be hosted by Fairfax County. Anthony Mclean immediately notifies VDEM, Virginia Department of Health, and OCP officials.

6:00 P.M.–11:00 P.M.

Conflicting scientific information received. The federal agencies were the focus for conference calls, but no declared federal leadership point of contact.

7:00 P.M.

New conference call with locals in Virginia. County executives or their representatives are present. Calls continue about every 45–60 minutes. Foresman recommends that the health agencies work with the PIOs to develop common messages. He asks to have something by the next conference call, scheduled for 9:00 p.m. Fairfax County health department agrees to draft something and send it out before the call.

7:50 P.M.

Mclean notifies other VDEM personnel of 8:00 p.m. conference call with the feds.

8:00 P.M.

Dr. Robert Stroube, Virginia State Health Commissioner, is paged and receives his first notification of the incidents.

8:07 P.M.

Spieldenner notifies Mclean that Fairfax public health is developing messages for doctors and media. Fairfax County is planning to e-mail them before the 9:00 p.m. conference call. Kelly Vance Lobanov, Virginia Department of Health public affairs, also works on some generic information for press releases.

8:52 P.M.

Lobanov drafts a press release to have ready, as requested by her boss. Sends it to VDEM PIO and Lucy Caldwell (Virginia Department of Health Public Information Officer) at 8:52 p.m. for input. No press release yet from Fairfax County.

9:00 P.M.

During conference call, little progress is reported by Fairfax County on developing something to go out to the media.

9:15 P.M.–9:30 P.M.

Foresman works on press release with other Commonwealth officials to get something out before the 10:00 p.m. news.

10:09 P.M.

Lisa Webber, CDC, reports that she received a call from an independent duty paramedic requesting treatment options for 2,000 people exposed at the Skyline Towers site. Bob Mauskapf is contacted and given the information.

10:40 P.M.

Fairfax County sends its own press release to the media.

EVENING

Region 7 state police are on alert and ready with resources to respond to a significant biological incident, if needed.

Tuesday, March 15

7:09 A.M.

VDEM receives situation report from Arlington County, which said they were awaiting conference call from Fairfax County at 8:00 a.m. and from Pentagon at 9:00 a.m.

8:00 A.M.

Virginia EOC augments staff.

9:00 A.M.

Steven Mondul, Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), is first notified of events. He immediately alerted the NOVA regional office with its Smart Traffic Center.

9:15 A.M.

Federal Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) PIO holds a conference call. DHS is on the call and says they were developing some talking points. (The Commonwealth received these at noon.) DHS promises to include the state and local PIOs on the next federal PIO call. Also related is that the District of Columbia mayor’s office was holding a news conference about V Street, which subsequently was held at 11:00 a.m.

9:20 A.M.

VDEM PIO e-mails a DHS contact about the next conference call, trying to get some federal representation. Contact says she will monitor, but that they are not actively involved. She is asked if she had a DoD contact, and she sent a name a few hours later.

11:39 A.M.

Cindi Causey, VDEM Region 7, e-mails Foresman requesting a conference call with state representatives and jurisdictional people. She reports that no single authority is taking the lead, and agencies not in lead roles are sending out RICCS messages.

12:00 P.M.

Special briefing for Virginia congressional delegation occurs.

Dr. Stroube, State Health Commissioner, sends five-person team to CBI lab in Chesterfield, Virginia.

12:45 P.M.

State police brings Cipro and doxycycline to Dr. Wilder, the state’s NOVA regional medical consultant in Fairfax County.

1:26 P.M.

Arlington has EOC Health contact Fairfax. EOC not yet opened.

EARLY AFTERNOON

At the request of Governor Warner, John Marshall, Virginia Secretary of Public Safety, departs Richmond en route to Northern Virginia to be in a better position to coordinate state resources in the event of a positive culture test.

1:47 P.M.

Virginia Department of Health Emergency Coordination Center (ECC) is activated and exchanges liaison officer with VDEM.

2:18 P.M.

Kelly Vance Lobanov, Virginia Department of Health, Public Affairs sends updated news release requested by Foresman to JIC in Fairfax County (after OCP had reviewed it earlier).

2:29 P.M.

Spieldenner (VDEM Public Affairs Coordinator) informs OCP and VDEM managers that Fairfax County is establishing a JIC. Dawn Eischen prepares to travel to JIC to represent VDEM.

3:10 P.M.

VDEM PIO sends a staff person to the JIC in Fairfax County.

6:07 P.M.

VDEM sends news release for the Governor’s executive order to OCP in preparation for possible use if needed.

7:20 P.M.

Bob Mauskopf, Virginia Department of Health, e-mails Bob Blitzer (HHS/OS), Fairfax County, and others requesting that HHS/CDC be prepared to deploy the vendor-managed inventory of the strategic national stockpile on short notice. Requested for Skyline Towers Complex is a 30-day regimen of doxycycline for 2,000 personnel, to be sent to the Fairfax County Health Department.

7:30 P.M.

Secretary Marshall meets with Fairfax County Executive Anthony Griffin and Fairfax County Fire Chief Michael Neuhard at the Fairfax County AEOC/JIC.

9:26 P.M.

First JIC news release sent is out.

Wednesday, March 16

7:30 A.M.

VDEM PIO identifies senior Commonwealth participant for WTOP radio interview at 9:20 a.m.

3:45 P.M.

VDEM PIO reviews second JIC news release on buildings reopening. Release sent out.

Observations

POSITIVES

Public Health Coordination – The Virginia Department of Health set up their emergency coordination center, and it worked well.

Use of the Commonwealth’s regional public health team was excellent. (The regional public health teams include a physician consultant, a health planner, an epidemiologist, a PIO, and a trainer.)

There was excellent communication among Fairfax County, Arlington County, and state agencies. The state was in constant communication and shared whatever they had, said the Commonwealth secretary of public safety.

State–Federal Cooperation – The federal DHS was helpful once they got involved.

State–Local Coordination – Coordination between Commonwealth agencies and Northern Virginia community participants was handled very well, in general.

Support Activities – Behind-the-scenes support by the state was in place and ready to go had the situation proven to be an actual event: LRN labs, physicians, drug stockpiles, state police, PIO’s, etc.

State Police – Response of State Police units in Northern Virginia was excellent. They were ready to muster and staged resources in coordination with the regional players. The State Police provided two troopers and two vehicles to transport additional doses of Cipro, as requested by the Virginia Department of Health. The transport mission was successfully completed.

CONCERNS

Delay In Information – There was a delay in getting information about the first incident (Pentagon) to the office of the governor. The leading concern of the Commonwealth was the time gap between the first positive test and when the rest of the world heard anything about it.¹³

Lack of Commonwealth Lab Involvement – There was much concern by the Commonwealth of Virginia that after the first positive reading by the CBI lab, the Virginia DCLS was neither notified about the result nor used to confirm the finding. Standard procedures, in which all Virginia sentinel labs have been trained, require immediate notification of the DCLS in this type of circumstance.

Federal–State Coordination – A Joint Operations Center was never established. As a result, the federal/state/local/military communication and coordination were managed by conference calls—at least 14 and probably more in one day alone. The Federal Interagency Incident Management Group (IIMG), a policy group, made operational and tactical decisions. The IIMG has no state or local participants. Conference calls were the only avenue for state input. This is not the way an incident is supposed to be coordinated according to the National Response Plan. Since there was no confirmed anthrax release, the federal agencies appeared to be directing the activities from the IIMG. From the Commonwealth’s viewpoint, this essentially became a federal incident. Although this may be valid for the Pentagon remote handling facility that is on DoD property, the incidents also involved Virginia office buildings and citizens. Once there was a problem at a civilian site (Skyline Towers), there was an acute need for DoD to coordinate directly with local and state governments.

Public Health Coordination with DoD – DoD took responsibility for their employees’ health, but failed to consult with or notify state and local public health officials about planned health and medical measures before

¹³ Subsequently, Pentagon police testified to Congress on April 5, 2005 that the Pentagon did not know about any positive test until Monday morning on March 14.

they were taken. Public health officials at local and state level in Virginia felt they were something of an afterthought in terms of communications with the Pentagon. They questioned some of the medical procedures being implemented (e.g., use of nasal swabs, Cipro versus doxycycline), and that those pharmaceuticals were issued as early as they were in the face of conflicting test information at that point in time.

Physical Communications Problems From Within Pentagon –

Communications via cell and computer from state and local personnel inside the Pentagon to those outside reportedly were impossible due to lack of cellular phone connection and security firewalls on the computers.

FBI – The FBI decided to wait for final confirmatory test results before releasing the Skyline Towers buildings and people, even though the Virginia health department had already declared the buildings safe. This made it difficult to communicate the status of the situation to the public.

District of Columbia–State Public Affairs Coordination – The District of Columbia did not coordinate their V Street news conference with Maryland, Virginia, or other localities.

State–Fairfax County Public Affairs Coordination – Personnel from VDEM, VDH, and the OCP were concerned with the time lag for Fairfax County to release the first written press release. The Commonwealth developed a news release on Monday evening, but held off issuing it because the county had the incident and was the lead. The Commonwealth finally felt it had to go forward with its own Department of Health release because it was nearing the 10:00 p.m. news time.

Unclear or Imprecise Terminology – Lack of clear and uniform terminology compromised communication and the intelligibility of messages. For example, a particle detection system at Skyline Towers was referred to as a “PDS” in voice communications. Those who were knowledgeable about the biohazard detection systems at all state USPS distribution centers heard “BDS” (a more specific testing system), so they made incorrect assumptions.¹⁴ Early public notices from the Pentagon and major newspapers referred to “alarms” in the Pentagon mail alert system, but there is no physical alarm system there; the use of that terminology pointed to a wholly different sort of real-time detection system.

Hazmat Protocols – Hazmat protocols at Skyline Towers went well initially, but broke down over time. For example, numerous “2020 sensor” hazmat tests were performed, which provided no additional guidance; rather, they added to the confusion, because the 2020 sensors test for the presence of certain proteins, and anthrax is but one of several that could be involved.

¹⁴ Note that there is no anthrax-specific automated alarm at present.

Conference Calls – Conference calls got out of hand. There were too many conference calls, too many people on the calls (up to 100 at one point), no roll calls, too much detail on some issues that were not of interest to the other conference participants (e.g., medical folks discussing testing SOPs), etc.

Key leaders had to spend too much time on the telephone, which reduced their time in overseeing operations. Another conference call problem was that access (PIN) numbers were not changed, and the press got in the loop, reporting almost immediately what was being discussed in some of the conference calls.

Federal–Local Coordination – The Pentagon has good communications in place with Arlington County first responders, but does not coordinate well with the other suburban VA jurisdictions that also have military facilities within their protection areas, said representatives of the Commonwealth. At Skyline Towers, there were no federal POCs with whom to coordinate with the county, and no DoD representation on site to handle DoD-related decisions. A single FBI agent at the Skyline Towers site began to take control of the site and activities, but was understaffed for the task.

Nature of Northern Virginia – The region was characterized as having “too many people in charge”—a system further complicated with layers of regional and subregional “coordination.” This created a plethora of organizations in a communications network that has too much redundancy. It has caused delays and confusion rather than better coordination.

Weaponization – Virginia Department of Health and other Virginia local public health officials noted that in all of the discussion over tests for anthrax, there was no discussion of whether the samples involved weaponized anthrax; that is, tiny spores versus larger spores that occur naturally. Size of spores is a critical factor because it impacts appropriate response and treatment. Everyone rushed to prophylactic treatment.

6 DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PERSPECTIVE

The District of Columbia was involved in the suspected anthrax incidents both as concerned potential exposure of postal employees at District of Columbia sites, and as a member of the National Capital Region. The project team interviewed Deputy Mayor Edward Reiskin, District of Columbia Emergency Management Agency (DCEMA) Director Barbara Childs-Pair, and Health Department Director Dr. Gregg Payne. The project team also collected policy documents and operational logs to help construct the timeline below. Sources included the DCEMA, Anthrax Incident-Situation Report 1, March 15, 2005.

Caveat: The timeline here should not be considered a legal record; it was developed mainly from interviews and some communications logs, and may have errors or omissions. The timeline represents what could be assembled in one week. It does not record every call, e-mail, etc. We relied on the senior people interviewed to identify key information. The timeline was reviewed by each jurisdiction, but they, too, had only a short time to do so. Notwithstanding these limitations, the timeline should provide a reasonably accurate overview of the events.

Monday, March 14

12:22 P.M.

District of Columbia EOC first becomes aware of the Pentagon incident via the Pentagon police broadcast (via NAWAS). The District of Columbia EOC is under the DCEMA.

The initial awareness did not provide enough information from which to make decisions. Specifically, it did not identify the type of hazardous material, when the sample was found, or whether employees at the Pentagon were prescribed an antibiotic prophylactic regimen.

The DCEMA EOC log reads : *“Pentagon Police reports a piece of mail (letter) deemed hazardous at their mail facility. Hazardous Material Teams are on site conducting tests. No streets were closed.”*¹⁵

6:00 P.M.

DHS National Capital Region (NCR) Coordinator Thomas Lockwood initiates a conference call with DCEMA participation.

This was the first official information District of Columbia received regarding a positive anthrax test. It was also the first information that the District of Columbia EOC acted on. DCEMA log: *“Tom Lockwood of*

¹⁵ DC Emergency Management Agency. Excerpt from Emergency Operations Center Log, March 14, 2005.

DHS–NCR held conference call with the senior policy group from Homeland Security on possible anthrax incident at Pentagon mail facility.”¹⁶

At the conclusion of the conference call, DCEMA starts its initial notification to the DCEMA staff.

6:30 P.M.

Tom Lockwood notifies Deputy Mayor Reiskin about the incident and encourages him to join the Health and Human Services Department (HHS) conference call that was in progress.

6:55 P.M.

Deputy Mayor Reiskin notifies the following personnel of the incident:

- Sharon Gang, Press Secretary for District of Columbia Mayor
- Charles Ramsey, Chief, Metropolitan Police
- Adrian Thompson, Chief, District of Columbia Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services
- Barbara Childs-Pair, Director, DCEMA
- Dr. Gregg Pane, Director, District of Columbia Department of Public Health

8:00 P.M.

Another DHS-sponsored conference call. DCEMA learns that prophylactic antibiotic treatment has been prescribed for certain Pentagon mail employees. Based on this information, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) and District of Columbia Department of Health (DOH) start planning for the administration of antibiotics as prophylaxis to V Street postal workers.

Roger Harlin, CDC, notifies DCEMA of an upcoming NCR conference call regarding the situation. DCEMA then notifies:

- Deputy Mayor Edward Reiskin, District of Columbia
- Barbara Childs-Pair, Director, DCEMA
- Dr. Gregg Pane, Director, and Sherry Adams, District of Columbia Department of Public Health
- Mr. Siltean, Maryland Emergency Management Agency
- Special Agent Pat Race, FBI Washington Field Office
- Metropolitan Police Department Strategic Operations Command Center

¹⁶ Idem.

During the CDC conference call, CDC reports that samples taken from the mail processed at the Pentagon mailroom on March 10 came back positive for anthrax and were sent out for additional testing. The test results were expected back at approximately 1:00 a.m.–2:00 a.m.

Pentagon officials state during the call that the first alarm went off on Thursday and that samples were sent to their lab in Richmond. (Note: This was an error. The Pentagon incident involved a false positive from a swab. There was no evidence of an alarm activation.)

CDC states that the lab was not a certified LRN and that the sample has been sent to another lab. Also, the Pentagon says it has provided 44 workers at their rapid dispatch unit with antibiotic prophylaxis.

The call further relates that the Fairfax Skyline Towers facility has been closed, but no employees had been given any medicine. There was one handheld positive that has been sent to a certified lab and results are expected late Tuesday.¹⁷ (This also was an error; no positive results were ever found beyond the initial alarm at Fairfax Skyline Towers.)

The postal facility at V Street sends mail into the Pentagon facility. Mail officials stated that all mail sent to V Street is irradiated at a New Jersey facility. There were no alarms at the V Street facility. Tom Day of USPS said they had done an initial handheld test and received a positive reading. The Post Office would be getting a team together to go into the V Street facility and begin testing for spores. The facility would be closed tomorrow.¹⁸

CDC has been tasked with notifying private mail carriers like Fed Ex, UPS, Mail Carriers, etc., since it is not known how the samples may have gotten into the Pentagon.

The DC DOH command center at 64 New York Avenue is opened. They are charged with keeping the DCEMA EOC aware of changes or major issues. The CDC was to call DCEMA with any updates on the sampling results. The Fairfax County EOC began to form a Joint Information Center (JIC). The DCEMA Director requested a 9:15 p.m. conference call with city officials to brief them on the anthrax situation at the Pentagon and V Street.

9:45 P.M.

Deputy Mayor Reiskin conducts a conference call with top level staff (DCEMA director, chiefs, health director) to determine a direction for issuing a press release. District of Columbia was awaiting additional information from the CDC before issuing a press release.

¹⁷ Idem.

¹⁸ Idem.

10:30 P.M.

Mayor Williams responds to the District of Columbia EOC and is briefed via landline by DCEMA Director Childs-Pair and City Administrator Bobb. Mayor Williams requests Director Childs-Pair to immediately notify him once Pentagon lab test results are received.

Tuesday, March 15

5:00 A.M.

During a CDC conference call, it is reported that initial tests by the Richmond lab are positive for anthrax. District of Columbia health assists the DC General Hospital in preparing to administer prophylactic antibiotics to 140 postal employees from the V Street Postal Facility.

The Skyline Towers facility was still being tested and there were no results on it at this time.

The DCEMA EOC was not notified of this 5:00 a.m. conference call.

5:05 A.M.

DCEMA Director Childs-Pair briefs Mayor Williams on the possible positive test result from the Pentagon.

6:47 P.M.

E-mail is received from Tom Lockwood, NCR, saying “No call occurred last night. Early call in a.m.”

7:00 A.M.

DCEMA Director Childs-Pair conducts a conference call with Mayor Williams and senior officials to update them on both the Pentagon anthrax incident and the DC General Hospital’s administration of antibiotics to V Street postal workers. The Mayor schedules a 10:00 a.m. press conference at DC General Hospital to update the public.

8:00 A.M.

Deputy Mayor Reiskin and Director Childs-Pair participate in a conference call sponsored by HHS. The main issues discussed are the 4-day delay in incident notification and the difficulties in notifying private mail carriers whose employees could have been exposed to anthrax.

9:00 A.M.

DCEMA Director Childs-Pair and Deputy Chief of Operations Kerry Payne respond to DC General Hospital for 10:00 a.m. press conference. DCEMA supplies 30 cases of water to DOH. DCEMA obtains two Metro buses to take USPS staff to DC General Hospital after the USPS bus broke down. DCEMA staff member R. Stewart is on site.

The DC EOC notifies via pager the EMA Plan Tiers 1–4 personnel on the operations going on at DC General Hospital.

10:00 A.M. (APPROXIMATELY)

Mayor Williams holds press conference at DC General Hospital that is well-attended by media. USPS orders V Street mail processing facility closed, and prophylaxis treatment started.

1:00 P.M.

CDC conference call states that the specimen from the Pentagon may have been contaminated at the Richmond lab. Skyline Towers has not received their results from the lab. USPS states they are just starting to run tests at the V Street facility and that they did not take handheld readings there on Monday.

3:00 P.M.

A conference call with several law enforcement agencies and labs on the status of the anthrax specimen takes place. The DCEMA EOC was locked out of the call; it is unclear why this lockout occurred.

4:00 P.M.

CDC call with NCR states that the Pentagon specimen may have been contaminated by the Richmond lab. A conference call is scheduled for 6:00 p.m. to provide information on the Pentagon testing status.

6:00 P.M.

The Pentagon states that readings are negative and that there was specimen cross-contamination.

7:15 P.M.

DCEMA Director briefs senior staff and Mayor Williams that the incident has ended.

7:30 P.M.

DCEMA EOC initiates the Emergency Notification Matrix, Tier 1 –4 page and RICCS information to report to key personnel that the anthrax test results were negative and that the incident is concluded.

Wednesday, March 16

10:30 A.M.

Dr. Reed (USPS) in consultation with Dr. Pane (DCDOH) decide that all V Street employees could discontinue prophylactic antibiotic therapy.

11:00 A.M.

Mayor Williams holds a press conference to provide the public with both a summary of the incident and reassurance that they are not at risk.

12:00 P.M.

USPS reopens V Street post office.

Observations POSITIVES

Overall Good Handling – Though there were some notification issues (described below), the District of Columbia emergency management system overall appeared to function well. There was excellent cooperation between DCDOH and DC General Hospital in the distribution of antibiotic therapy.

Rapid Internal Alerting – Alerting of key District of Columbia personnel began immediately after Tom Lockwood/NCR notified DCEMA Director Childs-Pair of the incident. Notification of DC personnel by its EOC was then made using the standard protocol (December 2004). The protocol describes a four-tier reporting system, regional information center (RIC) notification, and a direct notification to public health. This system is well tested and efficient.

CONCERNS

Notification Procedures – DCEMA expressed concern that issues with the notification procedures led to several shortcomings:

- A 4-day gap appears to have occurred between the initial Pentagon mail room swab test and notification of regional public safety agencies. (It subsequently was determined that the Pentagon itself also did not have confirmation of a positive anthrax test until the Monday of the event.)
- The initial alert from the Pentagon police announced a hazardous materials incident with no mention of anthrax.
- The DCEMA EOC received the initial alert at 12:22 p.m., but it was not until 6:00 p.m. that they had an indication that anthrax was involved.
- The initial alert was not received in the prescribed fashion. DC felt that the responsibility for generating these alerts belonged to either the DHS Homeland Security Operations Center (HSOC) or the Washington Area Warning Alert System (WAWAS).¹⁹
- Initially, the Pentagon incident was thought to be a non-event. Had DCEMA known that the Fairfax Skyline Towers incident had occurred, other actions would have been considered.
- DCEMA was not promptly notified when the Pentagon started workers on prophylactic antibiotic therapy. DCEMA learned of this via one of the later conference calls. Information was lacking on the basis for the decision to start antibiotic therapy and who made the decision.

¹⁹ DHS. Fact Sheet: Homeland Security Operations Center (HSOC). Available: www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/display?content=3814. Retrieved on March 24, 2005, pp. 1–5.

The inadequate flow of information from federal officials to DCEMA could have interfered with appropriate patient care and negatively affected the District’s credibility with the community. By not knowing that Pentagon officials had started prophylactic antibiotics, DCEMA could not warn local healthcare facilities that “exposed” patients could be expected at their facilities.

- USPS decision to start the V Street workers on antibiotic therapy was done without consulting DCDOH; USPS and DCDOH consulted before and after the decision, but the actual decision was unilateral.
- DCDOH was concerned that its health department officials did not receive early notification of medical intelligence from federal organizations, nor timely notification of negative test results.
- The lack of both a timely and an accurate initial notification jeopardized DCEMA’s ability to rapidly initiate its emergency plan.
- There is no formal plan for notification of private mail services regarding biohazard exposure.

Use of Lab Not Certified by CDC – The use of a non-CDC-certified testing laboratory is unacceptable in the District of Columbia’s view. Earlier notification could have provided greater access to certified laboratory services available in the NCR.

Conference Calls – Several DHS-sponsored teleconference calls had too many participants. Better planning should be done to restrict conference calls to the appropriate officials. The calls were not well managed, and it was unclear as to who was making decisions or recommendations.

Public Information – Lack of credible information created a public information issue as the media had more information than local officials at times.

It was not until Tuesday evening that the first press release information was received from DHS. Mayor Williams had to initiate a press release prior to DHS guidance in order to explain why DC postal workers were receiving antibiotic treatment for anthrax.

Information Records – DCEMA EOC logs and Situation Report 1 contained several errors that could have led to further misinformation. For example, the log noted that an “alarm” sounded at the Pentagon and “a positive sample” was retrieved from Fairfax Skyline Towers. Both of these points were inaccurate.

A standardized reporting format should be adopted so that all the necessary information is addressed to ensure a timely, accurate, and complete information flow.

**“Anthrax” Incidents
in the National Capital Region**

6. District of Columbia

EOC logs lack precision, which can lead to misunderstanding. For example, many teleconferences occurred over several days. It was difficult to identify the specific conference call pertinent to various issues.

7 STATE OF MARYLAND PERSPECTIVE

Several state and local agencies in Maryland had indirect but important roles in this incident. Though there was no active threat to the state, the incident tested preparedness of Maryland and two of its National Capital Region counties, Montgomery and Prince George’s. The incident provided an opportunity for Maryland’s emergency managers to evaluate how various elements performed during this potential threat. The issues that emerged for Maryland included:

- The need to exercise its evolving state and local emergency plans.
- The need to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of emergency communications systems.
- The ability to evaluate communications processes within state government.
- The efficacy of interagency mutual aid agreements (especially with COG, DHS–NCR).

The project team conducted interviews with key leaders within the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), Maryland Department of Homeland Security (MDHS), and the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (MDHMH) Office of Emergency Preparedness and Response. Telephone interviews were also conducted with emergency management representatives from Montgomery and Prince George’s counties.

The timeline below was synthesized from the interviews, plus the MEMA log. Montgomery and Prince George’s issues are discussed separately after the state perspective.

Caveat: The timeline here should not be considered a legal record; it was developed mainly from interviews and some communications logs, and may have errors or omissions. The timeline represents what could be assembled in one week. It does not record every call, e-mail, etc. We relied on the senior people interviewed to identify key information. The timeline was reviewed by each jurisdiction, but they, too, had only a short time to do so. Notwithstanding these limitations, the timeline should provide a reasonably accurate overview of the events.

State of Maryland

Monday, March 14 12:10 P.M.

Maryland EOC receives National Warning System (NAWAS) report that the Pentagon police have announced a possible hazmat situation at the

remote delivery facility on the north side of the Pentagon. Reports of one positive and one negative hazmat hit. There is a limited evacuation going on of the North Building, and no roads are blocked at this time.

12:15 P.M.

MEMA EOC notifies several senior officials of the incident:

- Major General Bruce F. Tuxill, State National Guard
- MEMA Director John W. Droneburg III
- MDHS Director David Schrader

2:20 P.M.

Information is received by EOC from the informal fire chief’s Statewide Alert Network indicating Pentagon sensors activate. (Note: This was an error; there were no sensors at the Pentagon incident.)

5:15 P.M.

Dr. Jeff Roach, MDHMH bioterrorism physician on-call, receives a phone call from Diane Woodward, Virginia Department of Health notifying him of the Pentagon anthrax incident.

5:25 P.M.

Dr. Julie Casani, MDHMH, becomes the incident contact point for Maryland. She is advised that there was a “positive result from a mailroom detector at the Pentagon.”

5:50 P.M.

Maryland Director of Homeland Security, David Schrader, receives initial notification from Dr. Lisa Kirk, MDHMH, about the anthrax incident at the Pentagon. Dr. Kirk also formally notifies Dr. Michele Gordine, MDHMH Deputy Secretary for Public Health, and Clay Stamp, Director of Operations, Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS).

6:01 P.M.

MEMA log notes that Fox News reported positive test results at Pentagon for anthrax. MEMA contacts the Pentagon police, who advise that to date all tests have been negative. Update by MEMA sent to its incident notification group

7:12 P.M.

Call from Dave Carney, Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, to Dr. Casani, who says that 500 people in DC are on antibiotic prophylaxis. Everyone busy, Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene will call back when more information is available.

9:00 P.M.

Tom Lockwood, NCR Regional Coordinator, contacts Director Schrader to advise that they are still unclear as to what was happening. Director Schrader discusses the incident with Mary Beth Carozza, Deputy Chief of Staff for Governor Erlich. They agreed that Governor Erlich should be notified, with a recommendation that no formal action be taken.

Tuesday, March 15 7:20 A.M.

Director Schrader spoke with Edward Reiskin, DC Deputy Mayor for Public Safety, concerning the incident status.

7:25 A.M.

Director Schrader reviews the situation with Dr. Lisa Kirk, MDHMH, and then participates in a Department of Homeland Security-sponsored conference call.

2:26 P.M.

Situation report is received by the MDHMH from the Virginia EOC with an overview of both incidents and an explanation of the sample testing process.

3:10 P.M.

CDC Health Advisory is received. CDC recommends prophylactic antibiotic therapy for V Street postal workers, notification of private mail services, review of epidemiological records, and alert to clinicians to increase index of suspicion when assessing patients.

5:00 P.M.

Director Schrader participates in conference call with Department of Homeland Security and DoD. Participants are advised that the samples tested may have been cross-contaminated. Based on this information, Maryland decides to relax its posture concerning the potential threat.

Observations POSITIVES

Overall Good State Agency Coordination – Once it was determined that the incident was of a public health nature, there was a smooth transition in incident command from MEMA to MDHMH.

Good State Readiness – The state agencies were on top of the potential for escalation and prepared to deal with it.

After the incident, each organization took the proactive step of reviewing its performance and each is considering appropriate policy modifications.

CONCERNS

Alerting Procedures – MEMA and MDHS reported that the prescribed alerting process was not used. The initial alert should have come from the HSOC, in their view. MDHMH, too, noted that while there is no traditional alerting method for this type of incident, HSOC should have been the primary alerting mechanism.

Each Maryland agency has a prescribed emergency notification protocol that was revised within the last year. MEMA’s reorganization, which integrates civilian and military authorities, has led to an ongoing reevaluation and revision of this protocol. The integration process is ongoing, and there could be some minor glitches in the process.

Based on the initial notification, the state organizations elected to take a stand-by approach to the incident. MDHMH had more information than MEMA, which in their view should have elevated the seriousness of the incident.

MEMA followed their alerting policies, except they unintentionally failed to alert MDHMH.

Record Keeping – The MEMA EOC log excluded several items and contained inaccuracies that could have jeopardized the credibility of the log.

Conference Calls – Each Maryland State organization stated that the federally sponsored conference calls were disorganized. This reduced the credibility of their information and obstructed the flow of information between jurisdictions.

Interagency Misinformation – There was one major contradiction in information between MEMA and MDHMH. On Monday at 6:01 p.m., MEMA reported that all tests for anthrax were negative. At 7:12 p.m., MDHMH reported to MEMA that 500 people have been given antibiotics based on positive test results.

Unified Command – The Maryland state agencies interviewed felt that the principles of unified command were not followed at the federal level. Because the initial alert did not originate from HSOC, initial notifications were received from several organizations. The accuracy and quality of information becomes more questionable.

The delineation of a command structure was unclear.

Recommendation on Unified Command: Even in a peripheral incident, MEMA should consider a partial activation of the EOC, with the appropriate major players reporting to the EOC facility. This would allow

the lead agency to formulate a unified command structure and allow decisions to come from “one voice.”

State–Local Coordination – MDHMH noted that this was the third “incident” of this type within 2 years. They are concerned that the quality of federal–state interaction is still not adequate and is not improving as expected.

Law Enforcement–Health Coordination – MDHMH is concerned that there is still a disconnect between law enforcement and public health agencies concerning medical intelligence. There was concern that the FBI did not provide state health agencies with timely and accurate information.

Montgomery County

Montgomery County, a suburb of close to 1 million population, is adjacent to both Virginia and Washington, DC, but had little direct involvement in the incident.

Notification of the incident was received by the Montgomery County Office of Homeland Security from the Montgomery County Public Health Department. A simultaneous notification was received from Maryland State Police via their Intelligence Bulletin e-mail.

A formal policy for homeland security issues was developed after September 2001. The protocol is reviewed for possible updates at each meeting of the Monthly Terrorism Task Force.

Public Health is not the normal alerting mechanism for homeland security under the protocol.

The county decided to go into a standby mode for the potential anthrax incident. The emergency management operations and planning groups were notified, but no formal action was taken.

There were no imminent concerns for the county during the incidents. The emergency management team was prepared for rapid activation.

Montgomery County did not participate in any of the federally sponsored conference calls.

Montgomery County Emergency Management had no major issues to report.

Prince George’s County

Prince George’s County is a suburban county of nearly 1 million population that borders both DC and Virginia. Their participation in this incident also was minimal, like Montgomery County.

**“Anthrax” Incidents
in the National Capital Region**

7. State of Maryland

Prince George’s County was notified of the incident on Monday via the Metropolitan Council of Governments.

Notification protocols vary, but the current protocol was used and worked well.

Upon receiving notification, Prince George’s County Fire Chief Carl Sedgwick instructed the Special Operations Bureau Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Carla Blue, to place the teams under her command on stand by. No further action was necessary.

Prince George’s County has three postal processing facilities within its borders. Based on this risk and the proximity of the incidents, its OEM should have been contacted.

The county had no other concerns with either notification or information management.

8 NCR NORTHERN VIRGINIA JURISDICTIONS

Although most Northern Virginia jurisdictions other than Fairfax County, Arlington County, and to a lesser extent Alexandria and City of Fairfax were not directly involved in the response to the anthrax incidents, they were concerned because of potential for their citizens to have been among those affected; potential involvement of their public and private safety and health personnel and facilities in mutual aid and medical treatment; and potential related incidents that might have occurred in their jurisdictions.

In addition, all jurisdictions were interested in emergency management coordination in the Northern Virginia and entire National Capital Region (NCR) area as an exercise aid for potential future need themselves.

This section summarizes the findings from brief interviews by phone or in-person with each Northern Virginia jurisdiction except Loudoun County, whose knowledgeable senior officials were not available during the short study period.

Caveat: The timeline here should not be considered a legal record; it was developed mainly from interviews and some communications logs, and may have errors or omissions. The timeline represents what could be assembled in one week. It does not record every call, e-mail, etc. We relied on the senior people interviewed to identify key information. The timeline was reviewed by each jurisdiction, but they, too, had only a short time to do so. Notwithstanding these limitations, the timeline should provide a reasonably accurate overview of the events.

City of Fairfax

The City of Fairfax is an independent city of six square miles located in northern Virginia. The city has a population of 21,500 and serves as the county seat for public safety and court-related offices and facilities. Like much of the NCR, the city’s population is very well educated. Per capita income is the second highest in Virginia. It has a council/manager form of government.

The City of Fairfax Fire Department (CFFD) is a combination department. The career side of the department has 50 members and is supported in a cooperative effort by the 80 member Fairfax Volunteer Fire Department. The City of Fairfax Police Department has an authorized strength of 35. The chief of the CFFD acts as the emergency coordinator for the city.

Monday, March 14 3:15 P.M.

City of Fairfax finds out about the Skyline Towers incident through a Fairfax County 911 group page. They are unaware of the earlier response to the Pentagon at this time.

Fairfax County dispatch asks City of Fairfax to send a mobile command unit to Skyline Towers. The unit was there until released in mid-evening.

City of Fairfax also sends Andrew Wilson, Director of Inspections, to participate in the conference calls with labs and medical representatives.

Tuesday, March 15 AFTERNOON

Conference call with regional police chiefs. City of Fairfax participated.

Wednesday, March 16 12:00 P.M.

Conference call is run by Fairfax County to provide briefing on all-clear. Also, the normally scheduled Joint Terrorism Task Force conference call provided an update on the status of the situation.

Observations POSITIVES

The City of Fairfax was in the loop, kept informed, and on standby.

CONCERNS

Pentagon–Local Communications – The Pentagon has good communications in place with Arlington County first responders, but not with the other suburban Virginia jurisdictions that also have military facilities within their protection areas.

Complexity of Regional Coordination – The City of Fairfax commented (as did some others) that the Northern Virginia emergency management system is complicated with the new layers of regional and subregional “coordination.” This has created a plethora of organizations in a communications network that is too redundant.

Local jurisdictions in Northern Virginia serve two masters—their own community and the region. State statute requires that they must go to the state first with notifications, alerts, etc., not to a regional entity.

Also, the Washington Metropolitan COG is acting as an operational entity, but cannot supersede local command and control. The trend is causing concern and complications during emergencies. For example, the RICCS paging system was used as a de facto regional communications center, even though it does not have and is not set up with adequate communications quality assurance, rumor control, etc. In fact, one of the RICCS messages was just plain wrong, and no one knew who allowed or

authorized the messages. This creates a real problem—responders do not know who to believe.

City of Falls Church

Falls Church is an independent city bordered by Arlington County and Fairfax County. The city has 2.2 square miles and a population of nearly 11,000. It has its own police and emergency management departments. Fire protection is provided through a contract with the Arlington County Fire Department (ACFD) and supplemented by the city’s own volunteer fire department.

Telephone interviews were held with the emergency manager, Robert Murray and City Manager, Dan McKeever.

Monday, March 14 11:02 A.M.

Robert Murray, police chief and emergency manager for Falls Church, is notified serendipitously early about the incidents while attending a meeting of the Northern Virginia Region 7 emergency managers being held to discuss emergency management training. The information was provided by Captain Carl Lindgren, deputy coordinator for the Arlington County OEM.

As noted in the Arlington County section of this report, Captain Lindgren received a page during the meeting and stopped the session to inform those who were present, which included a representative from Falls Church. Information at the time was sketchy—that a potential anthrax incident was taking place at the Pentagon.

11:10 A.M.–12:00 P.M.

Dan McKeever, City Manager of Falls Church, is notified, per local protocol, by the police chief regarding the current situation. No actions are taken at this time.

3:06 P.M.

City Manager McKeever learns of the subsequent Skyline Towers incident from a page sent by the Fairfax County OEM and a RICCS e-mail and page.

Upon learning of this second incident, the city manager notifies the city’s communication center and management staff of both events. After having an anthrax scare a few years ago, McKeever wants to ensure that his staff and communications would be on guard against pranksters that might take advantage of the situation. (This is another good reason for letting neighboring jurisdictions know as soon as possible about an incident, a point no one else raised.)

4:30 P.M.

The Emergency Manager, Robert Murray, hears more about the Skyline Towers incident by listening to the police radio while driving home.

6:30 P.M.

The Falls Church city manager and emergency manager are updated by e-mails from the Fairfax County OEM and VDEM situation reports. (Both perceive Fairfax County as effectively updating them on their situation.)

Tuesday, March 15 10:00 A.M.

Police Chief Murray is contacted by Assistant Chief John White of the Arlington County EOC to relate that the samples appeared to be negative, but testing and data were still being processed.

10:15 A.M.–4:00 P.M.

Chief Murray goes to the post office and Army recruiting center to see if any mail from the potentially contaminated sites had been received by them.

Chief Murray was not advised of any conference calls, and therefore did not participate in them.

4:30 P.M.

Chief Murray sends a police captain to participate in the Fairfax County EOC.

Observations POSITIVE

Local Cooperation – Overall, both the City Manager and Emergency Manager were pleased with the local jurisdictional cooperation. Fairfax County kept them informed about the nearby incident.

CONCERNS

Miscommunication – The City of Falls Church is concerned about miscommunications. During the Skyline Towers incident, it was announced over the radio by media personnel that the incident was taking place in Falls Church, which is very close to Skyline Towers. Concerned citizens contacted the Falls Church communications center for more information.

Notification Process – The City of Falls Church also is concerned over the notification process and flow of information. It was not clear if this was a “significant event.” The city manager believes there is a need to establish a protocol on what is an event of regional significance. According to him, the regional notification policy requires jurisdictions that experience an emergency of regional significance to notify RICCS to

contact the rest of the region through a group page and by e-mail, which is not always done. The term “incident of significance” is left up to interpretation by the jurisdiction in which the incident occurred. This tends to lead to underreporting up the line.

City of Alexandria

The City of Alexandria is an independent city with a population of 128,000 in northern Virginia. It borders on Arlington and Fairfax counties and is a major city in the NCR. Like other northern Virginia cities, it is shaped by its proximity to the nation’s capital and has many people who work in the District of Columbia and at the Pentagon. It has a council-manager form of government.

The Alexandria Fire Department (AFD) is a combination department. The Alexandria Volunteer Fire Department is a voluntary adjunct to the City’s 268 career fire employees. The Alexandria Police Department has an authorized strength of 302 officers. The Emergency Planning Coordinator (EPC) for the city is assigned to the office of the fire chief. This position works closely through the fire chief with all city agencies.

Alexandria fire units responded to both potential anthrax sites, the only local jurisdiction to do so.

Monday, March 14 11:02 A.M.

The AFD receives information that the Pentagon had a general alert on one of their detectors. The information is sent as a page from the EPC to fire department members including the chief. The chief could not recall whether he first received notification verbally or by this page, because his office is across the hall from the EPC. Alexandria’s initial understanding is that one of the detector units at the Pentagon had gone off. As part of the Regional Hazmat Team for the northern part of the state, Alexandria fire units responded in conjunction with the Arlington County Fire Department. The nature of the call was not specific until units got to the scene. The Alexandria Deputy Chief of Special Operations began to learn about the incident when the captain of the unit on scene provided him with a situational report.

3:00 P.M.–5:00 P.M.

After initial response of the AFD, on-scene personnel start to hear of positive test results or a “threat” at the Pentagon.

As the situation develops, the incident commander from Arlington County, Battalion Chief McKay, became the main conduit for information to Alexandria.

The Alexandria Emergency Planning Coordinator was getting limited information from outside sources. When any information came through to him, his office became the conduit for keeping the city informed.

4:10 P.M.

One of the AFD engine companies responds to the Skyline Towers at Bailey’s Crossroads as part of its mutual aid agreement with Fairfax County. They return to quarters at 6:51 p.m.

7:30 P.M.

Fire Chief Mesaris receives his first call from Chief Neuhard of Fairfax County with a situational update. He continues to be updated in this manner into March 16th.

7:47 P.M.

An AFD medic unit responds to Skyline Towers. They return to quarters at 9:54 p.m.

Tuesday, March 15 11:02 A.M.

Part of the Alexandria team receives an erroneous MEMA RICCS communication. All subsequent communications and situational updates come from localities such as Fairfax County or Arlington County.

Observations POSITIVE

Overall Good Communications – All Alexandria officials interviewed generally felt that the internal and local jurisdictions’ communication process went well.

CONCERNS

State and Federal Communication – Alexandria had varying degrees of concern with regards to how the system worked with respect to state and federal coordination. Only two Alexandria officials received RICCS notifications and the notifications were spotty. They also could not participate in a VDEM conference call because all the lines were full. And they had concerns about the inaccuracies in information that came from various sources, including RICCS.

Normally when both AFD and Arlington County FD work together they stay closely in touch. There seemed to be a Pentagon communications blackout. Had Arlington Battalion Chief McKay not been on scene, the AFD Special Operations Chief felt that information would have been scarce. Information was not coming out on the testing process. Information sources were limited and should have been coming from different directions according to their Special Operations Chief.

City of Manassas

Manassas is an independent suburban city located in northern Virginia, and a member of the NCR. It has a council-manager form of government and a population of approximately 35,000.

The City of Manassas Volunteer Fire Department is a combination department with about 90 volunteer members and a small career staff. The Manassas City Police Department acts as the coordinator of emergency management for the city.

Monday, March 14 6:14 P.M.

The first e-mail about the Pentagon incident comes from VDEM. The Manassas OEM Director is out of the office and does not see the communication until the following morning.

Emergency management coordinators in Manassas hear that the Fairfax County HMRT has responded to some sort of possible anthrax incident at Skyline Towers. They hear about the Pentagon incident after the Skyline Towers incident.

Most information is learned through the news media and e-mail announcements from VDEM. (Manassas did not receive any RICCS notifications.) The Manassas OEM has conversations with the police chief.

The city manager first learns from television news at about 6:00 p.m. that an unknown substance might have been found in a building in the Pentagon that served DoD, and that mail may have been affected at Skyline Towers at Bailey’s Crossroads in a USPS facility. At about the same time he receives a page from VDEM. It is a local coordinator’s alert in the form of a situational report.

Tuesday, March 15 8:00 A.M.

The first formal situational report (SIT REP #1) is received from VDEM. Emergency Management Coordinator Don McKinnon and the Deputy Coordinator communicate later this morning.

1:00 P.M.

The city manager receives his first documented report (city manager Sit Rep) from VDEM.

8:52 P.M.

The city manager receives notification from the Manassas acting health director via e-mail.

9:30 P.M.

The city manager receives RICCS message from metro COG.

Observations POSITIVES

Internal Notification and Communication – The Manassas internal protocols for emergency notification generally worked well, as far as communications technology would allow, which included telephone, Blackberry, Nextel, and pagers.

The standard protocol is to have all relevant emergency information passed first to the police chief and then to the city manager and city council as warranted. The police chief is not notified by RICCS; he stays informed via his emergency management coordinators.

The city’s protocol for an emergency situation is to have information go through the police department information center. The city manager would get a call immediately from one of the deputy emergency coordinators. After being informed and updated, the protocol would revert back to the deputy coordinators in the following manner:

Deputy Emergency Manager → Deputy Police Chief →
Determination of what the city’s response will be → Open the EOC
if necessary → Notification by city manager to chief elected
officials → Fire and rescue (volunteers), with coordinated response
and direction from deputy police chief.

The information then is passed as follows:

City Manager → Mayor → Vice Mayor → all other council
members.

The initial information in this particular instance was not passed on to the city manager because the Office of the Emergency Coordinator did not believe it was necessary since no real impact on their community was foreseen. However, the city received updates in the form of situational reports daily via VDEM, about two reports per day.

Situation Reports – Manassas felt that the SIT REPs kept them quite well informed and updated. Most of the e-mail updates went well, and Manassas relied on the information those situational reports provided.

CONCERNS

Initial Notification – At first, information was chaotic. The CAO SIT REP was the city manager’s first official documentation and notification. The most frequent mode of receiving information was SIT REPs, not daily briefings.

Conflicting Information – Manassas was concerned about the conflicting information that came out during the course of events, and

inaccuracies that came from media outlets. It made them aware that they must rely more on the situational reports than the media.

Faster Updates – If a local frontline incident or situation had faced their city, the information received would not have been sufficient. Manassas would need direct communications from state and federal sources or at the very least 2-hour updates throughout the course of the incident.

A clear communications system is supposed to be implemented by the RICCS, but Manassas did not receive regular updates in that mode. They felt that the regional system needs to have the same information disseminated via different mediums.

Irregular Protocol – Information from outside the city did not come to the city manager in the expected manner. When there have been weather-related events, the city has generally been contacted by RICCS. The COG jurisdictions have agreed to a concentric circle of notification and calls emanating from the host jurisdiction that is handling the incidents to the RICCS. Manassas expected a RICCS page to inform the city of, say, a conference call, but were not called to participate in any.

The city primarily stayed updated initially from the media. By the 15th, the SIT REPs were arriving regularly from VDEM. By the 16th, the city manager was receiving reliable information from the COG–NCR Northern Virginia CAOs monthly meeting. It is the city manager’s feeling that the first responders on a scene are the primary disseminators of the initial information.

Given the information in the news reports, the city was anticipating the arrival of patients at their hospital emergency rooms. The city manager’s first concern was “Did we have city residents in the group of workers who were possibly exposed?”

There were not many concerns based on the information they had during the initial stages of the incident. However, the overall response and reports were not as complete as they should have been. The mini-response task force that included Arlington, Fairfax, the FBI, and DHS were all critically important participants, especially of the FBI and DHS. However, regarding the dissemination of information from them, it was not very good in the view of Manassas. The city felt they needed more immediate access to the critical actors.

The city manager felt that it was not acceptable for city officials to first be learning about these types of incidents on CNN. It was too long before they received anything from any major agency and that was VDEM (Mike Gray) sending out updates daily via direct e-mail. By then, the incident and threat were already widely discussed in the media.

The COG RICCS (100–1,000 people) should have had passed information to managers about such incidents. “We ought to know when it happens and that didn’t happen.”

The mail facility in question is no more than 10 miles from Manassas, and there was the potential for residents to carry biohazards to Manassas communities and homes. Incidents radiating from the NCR ought to involve notification of surrounding jurisdictions. Communications between upper management need to be reviewed and revised.

Manassas Park

Manassas Park is an independent city located in northern Virginia, and another major suburb of the NCR. It has a council-manager form of government and a population of over 10,000.

The City of Manassas Park has a 23-member career fire department. The city manager is the official emergency manager for the city. The fire chief is currently filling his position on an acting basis. He is also the city’s emergency management coordinator.

The fire chief first heard about a possible anthrax incident through the COG RICCS roam secure net, which reported the Arlington Fire Department response to the Pentagon. He learned more about the incident via Nextel and e-mail. He learned about the threat via RICCS well before any media outlets. Manassas Park received the same notifications as other jurisdictions in the area at about the same time.

No media outlets contacted Manassas Park at any time.

The fire chief was updated by the same notification means as he was initially informed—by RICCS situational updates. He also participated in several conference calls with VDEM that were facilitated by the FBI.

Observations POSITIVES

Protocols in Place – As emergency coordinator, the fire chief’s greatest concern revolved around the interjurisdictional notification system that is still in the process of being implemented and honed, but just not there yet. “It is in the mail, but it just hasn’t been delivered yet.” The fire chief felt that they had no great concerns early in the incident. He felt more prepared because procedural protocols were in place in the NCR.

RICCS – In the estimation of the fire chief, the notification process went well. The RICCS short tenure roam servers system worked well. Because of his newness to the position (4 months), he took it as an exercise and growth opportunity.

CONCERNS

Protocols Not Followed – The normal means they expect for notification is RICCS → VDEM → Online EOC VSEN terminals.

According to the fire chief, the City of Manassas Park has no (internal) jurisdictional protocol for emergency notification. They do have a fire department protocol, but there is no emergency communication system between city agencies. They are in the process of installing a RICCS notification protocol for all relevant city officials to address this.

Information is passed along in the following manner: City Manager → elected governing body → police → fire.

Loudoun County

The project team made calls to the Loudoun county executive and the emergency management director, but they were not reachable during the short period available for information collection for this study. The deputy county manager did not know the details of the information flow during the incidents. A fire department battalion chief to whom we were referred refused to discuss the events or issues, questioning the team’s bona fides.

Prince William County

Prince William County (PWC) is located in northern Virginia and is part of the National Capital Region (NCR). Many of its residents work in the capital’s metro area. The county has a population of 290,000. It has a county executive form of government, with the county executive implementing policies of the board of county supervisors.

The county has a fully staffed Office of Emergency Management. The Prince William Fire and Rescue Department (PWCFRD) is a combination department with 330 career members which supports 12 volunteer companies throughout the county. The Prince William Police Department has 400 uniformed personnel.

The highlights of their timeline in the suspected anthrax events were as follows:

Monday, March 14 11:02 A.M.

The Prince William County Administrative Support Coordinator (PWCASC) receives an announcement during a routine Region 7 meeting of the emergency managers from Carl Lingren, Arlington County, that there was a possible false alarm that had gone off in one of the Pentagon’s biosensors. (Note the varied interpretations of the meeting attendees as to

what was said.) He then contacted the Prince William County Emergency Coordinator (PWCEC) via telephone.

6:00 P.M.

PWCEC begins to receive information generated via media outlets that a sensor has gone off somewhere in the Pentagon.

6:14 P.M.

PWCEC receives its first SIT REP from VDEM via e-mail that anthrax had been detected in a mail room at the Pentagon. The SIT REP also stated that the Arlington Fire Department had responded and determined that further testing was needed. PWCEC informs the County Executive (CE) about the Pentagon incident.

Tuesday, March 15 7:24 A.M.

PWCEC sends out a message via e-mail to all relevant county representatives (including the county executive) with all of the information he had up until that point.

8:24 A.M.

PWCEC receives an e-mail update from VDEM about the Pentagon incident.

8:30 A.M.

PWCEC receives an e-mail from the Prince William County Health Director about the possible positive result for anthrax testing of samples from the Pentagon biosensor.

11:02 A.M.

Everyone in Prince William County who was authorized to be a part of the RICCS roam secure system receives a page from RICCS:

1102 - From: MWCOG RICCS

[mailto:riccs4841@riccs.mwcog.org]

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2005 11:02 AM

To: RSAN

Subject: Testing info on Anthrax

Lab tests from the Pentagon and Sky samples are negative. Additional testing still pending. Pentagon samples still being tested - 65 follow up hand held tests negative. Additional information after 1600 today.

Provided by MEMA EOC.

Sent by John Snarr COG to RESF 14 Media Relations (cell phones, pagers, E-mail accounts devices) through COG RICCS Roam Secure Alert Network

3: 00 P.M.

PWCEC receives the first of about three SIT REPS via e-mail from VDEM on the Skyline incident. That is also about the time that he first gave a situational report about the Skyline incident to the CE and other county representatives via county protocols.

Observations POSITIVES

Information Updates – RICCS and SIT REPS from the state worked well from a technological standpoint, and when the information was correct the updates were useful.

CONCERNS

Uncertainty About the Event – One of the biggest concerns for PWC was that they did not know whether anthrax was found or not. This caused uncertainty in how to act with regards to gearing up for possible mass prophylaxis for people who live in PWC and work at either the Pentagon or Skyline.

Lack of Protocol for Notification in Biohazard Incident – There is a concern about the lack of a specific NCR protocol or template for biohazard incidents.

There should be a context to the information that is received, and a more standardized method of dealing with the dissemination of information. The communications system itself worked well, it was the content that was skewed and caused much consternation. The region including local, state and federal agencies need to come up with a standard template for notification, which makes sure content is correct and up to date.

Timeliness – VDEM needs to take into consideration that SIT REPS sent after 5:00 P.M. will probably not be read until the following day.

9 PUBLIC INFORMATION VIEWPOINT – CHRONOLOGY FROM GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

This section summarizes and comments on the official information released by the Department of Defense and state and local government agencies during the period of the incident, March 14–17. The chronology outlined here is based on official information found on government website news pages, not on information e-mailed or otherwise “pushed” informally to reporters. Links to the releases are included in each paragraph. Copies of releases are attached at the end of the section.

In addition to written releases, there were verbal, nondocumented communications with reporters over the course of events, but it is difficult, if not impossible, to document all such instances. This highlights even more the importance of ensuring all information of importance to the public is issued via official news releases.

Monday, March 14 AFTER 5:00 P.M., DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

The Department of Defense issued a news release, “Positive Initial Detection for Anthrax at Pentagon,” announcing that “during routine mail operations, the Pentagon had a positive detection for the presence of anthrax bacteria at the Remote Delivery Facility (RDF).” The release was the last one of the day issued March 14 by the DoD Press Office. It is numbered as No. 255-05, but the release time was not indicated. The two releases immediately preceding it, Nos. 253 and 254, were released by e-mail at 5:00 p.m. and 5:08 p.m., respectively, so it is logical that the release was issued officially sometime after 5 p.m. SPC subscribes to DoD’s e-mail news service and received releases 253 and 254, but did not receive number 255 via e-mail. If we are a typical subscriber, we were not informed of the anthrax incident. A search of DoD’s public information website “defenselink” reveals that this was the only information released formally (in an official news release) during the course of the incident.

Release URL: <http://www.defenselink.mil/releases/2005/nr20050314-2230.html>

(TIME UNKNOWN), VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

The Virginia Department of Health issued a news release, “Health Districts Respond to Positive Screening Signals for Anthrax from Department of Defense Sites,” announcing that Fairfax and Arlington health districts were responding to positive screening signals “detected by two Department of Defense air sampling sensors.” The release further indicated that “the sensors were located in mail facilities at the Pentagon

and an office building in Fairfax County.” This is the first mention that two sites were involved. Neither the release document nor the VDH website indicates a time of release.

Release URL:

<http://www.vdh.state.va.us/news/PressReleases/2005/031505Anthrax.asp>

Note: According to information learned during interviews with Commonwealth of Virginia officials, this initial release was issued shortly before 10 p.m. in order to make the late evening news programs.

10:39 P.M., ARLINGTON COUNTY

The Arlington County government issued a news release, “Arlington Responds to Potential Anthrax Exposure at the Pentagon,” announcing that “Arlington officials have been working with the Pentagon since the afternoon of March 14 in response to the detection of the presence of anthrax bacteria at a mail facility at the Pentagon.” The release contains electronic links to news releases issued by the Department of Defense and the Virginia Department of Health referenced above. The Arlington County release is the first to include a release time. According to information developed during this review, Arlington County OEM said that they deferred to the Pentagon to issue the first release because it was a Pentagon incident and under the cognizance of DoD. Therefore, Arlington County waited until after the Pentagon issued its first release before issuing its own.

Release URL:

<http://www.co.arlington.va.us/NewsReleases/Scripts/ViewDetail.asp?Index=1735>

10:45 P.M., FAIRFAX COUNTY

Fairfax County issued a news release, “County Responds to Hazmat Incident,” announcing that the county “is responding to the activation of a Department of Defense detection system at the Skyline Towers office complex in Fairfax County.” The release goes on to say that county officials “provided employees and occupants of the facility information and instructions on anthrax.”

Release URL: <http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/news/2005/05080.htm>

(TIME UNKNOWN), FAIRFAX VIRGINIA

Coincidentally on March 14, and chronologically before this incident was first reported publicly on its website, Fairfax County issued a news release, titled “Fairfax County Announces the Community Emergency Alert Network,” which outlined that the county would use CEAN to “deliver important emergency alerts, notifications, and updates to county residents during a major crisis or emergency,” and how “persons registered on the CEAN will be provided a personal connection to real-time updates, instructions where to go, protective actions that need to be

taken, and other important information.” The updates would come via e-mail, cell phone text messaging, satellite phones, and wireless PDAs registered on the system. One could speculate that this system, if operational, would have been useful during this incident.

Release URL: <http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/news/2005/05020.htm>

Tuesday, March 15 (TIME UNKNOWN), VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

The Virginia Department of Health issued a news release, “Health Districts Continue Response to Positive Screenings for Anthrax,” indicating that Fairfax and Arlington health districts continue “to coordinate with federal, state, and local officials to respond to yesterday’s reports of positive screenings for Bacillus anthracis, the agent that causes anthrax.” The release indicated that “Forty-two DoD postal employees at a Skyline Towers facility in Fairfax County, called the Skyline Towers Postal Facility, are being counseled by Department of Defense health officials and offered a three-day supply of antibiotics.” This is the first mention of the number of people directly affected at any facility. There is no mention of the Pentagon incident in this release. No release time is included.

Release URL:

<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/PressReleases/2005/031505AnthraxUpdate.asp>

Note: This release corresponds to one forwarded to Fairfax County at 2:18 p.m. by the Virginia Department of Health.

(TIME UNKNOWN), DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

The DC Government issued a press advisory that Mayor Anthony Williams would hold a press conference at 9:30 a.m. on the grounds of DC General to update the anthrax situation in the region. No other official information is released.

(TIME UNKNOWN), FAIRFAX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The Fairfax County Health Department issued a “Health Department Information Update for Employees/Visitors of 5109, 5111, and 5113 Leesburg Pike,” which provided instructions to individuals “not in the immediate vicinity of the mail processing machines at the time of the signal” on how to clean themselves, what to do with their clothing, and who to call for additional information. This document was not posted on the main Fairfax County news page; it was found by searching the Fairfax County website, where a link to a Health Department page cited this document. No release time is given.

Document URL: <http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/service/hd/fxhdpress0314.htm>

Note: This document was distributed to employees at about 9 p.m., March 14, 2005.

3:40 P.M., FAIRFAX COUNTY/NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

Fairfax County posted a “National Capital Region News Release” on its website titled “NCR Opens Joint Information Center,” which states that “The National Capital Region has opened, in coordination with federal, state, regional, and local jurisdictions, a Joint Information Center to address the ongoing situation at the Skyline Office Complex.” The release advises that the Joint Information Center “will provide support to the media and should be the source media officials contact for information on the ongoing incident” and that the Joint Information Center is located “at the Fairfax County AEOC” in Fairfax. A telephone number for media to call is included, but no other contact information is provided nor is a web address provided. Nothing in the release explains the role of the National Capital Region, who runs it, or why it is involved.

Release URL: <http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/news/2005/05082.htm>

9:26 P.M., FAIRFAX COUNTY/NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

Fairfax County posted a second “National Capital Region News Release” on its website titled “Skyline To Remain Closed Pending Further Test Results; NCR JIC Reopens Tomorrow.” The release announces that the “Falls Church Skyline office complex will remain closed Wednesday, March 16, pending further tests.” It also confirms that “all tests received today, March 15, for anthrax have been negative.” There is no information in the release about the “NCR JIC Reopens Tomorrow” portion of the headline, which seems to refer to the Joint Information Center in the 3:40 p.m. release above. Likewise, there is no further information about the entity called “the National Capital Region,” its purpose or its points of contact.

Release URL: <http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/news/2005/05085.htm>

Wednesday, March 16

**3:45 P.M., FAIRFAX COUNTY/VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH/
NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION**

Both Fairfax County and the Virginia Department of Health posted a news release issued by the National Capital Region Homeland Security Office titled “Skyline Office Complex To Reopen Thursday Morning.” This release announces the reopening of “the three buildings in the Bailey’s Crossroads Skyline complex,” and states that one suite will remain closed pending additional testing. A second portion of the release below the main body indicates that “the National Capital Region will close its Joint Information Center today, Wednesday, March 16, at 6 p.m. After 6 p.m., please direct all media inquiries regarding this incident to the Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs.” The version of the release posted on the

Virginia Department of Health website is on the letterhead of “National Capital Region Homeland Security—DC—MD—VA.” No other identifying information about the organization (including a web address) is provided. The bottom of the release lists all government agencies that comprise the National Capital Region.

Fairfax County Release URL:

<http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/news/2005/05086.htm>

Virginia Department of Health Release URL:

<http://www.vdh.state.va.us/news/PressReleases/PDFs/2005/131605Skyline.pdf>

Thursday, March 17 8:38 A.M., FAIRFAX COUNTY

Fairfax County issued an “Emergency Notice” titled “Hazmat Incident Information,” announcing that “the three buildings in the Bailey’s Crossroads Skyline Towers complex reopened today.” The announcement is not a news release like other information released and was not posted on the county’s main news page. There is no obvious way to find it on the Fairfax County website. It was found by searching for information about the incident. The notice, however, contains links to all news releases mentioned in this section.

Emergency Notice URL:

<http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/emergency/hazmat.htm>

**Findings and
Recommendations**

These findings and recommendations are based on the search of news releases and other public information posted on DoD, state, and local government websites as well as from an understanding based on extensive experience of how government agencies handle breaking news and crisis information.

Information flow to the public is rarely smooth, especially in the early stages of an incident or crisis, and can become more confused when multiple jurisdictions, agencies, and offices that respond to press queries routinely become involved simultaneously or nearly so.

PRIOR PLANING

At times like these, prior planning often can ameliorate the effect of having “competing” spokespersons providing incomplete (and sometimes inaccurate or out-of-date) information to reporters as the event unfolds. While one agency might be responsible for making the initial announcement, another agency might quickly assume the role of information clearinghouse and source for media queries.

In the case at hand, it is not apparent that such coordination occurred beforehand and that attempts to accomplish it while events were in

progress seem to have failed. Of four releases issued March 14, only the Virginia Department of Health contains the information that two sites were affected by the apparent positive screening for the presence of anthrax. None of the releases indicates which agency is in charge of responding to media queries or providing official information to the public directly.

TIMELINESS

It is only about 24 hours after the Monday incident, in a 3:40 p.m., March 15, release that Fairfax County posted a National Capital Region news release on its website, which indicated that “the National Capital Region has opened, in coordination with federal, state, regional, and local jurisdictions, a Joint Information Center to address the ongoing situation at the Skyline Office Complex.” No mention is made in the release of the incident at the Pentagon Remote Delivery Facility. The release likewise does not explain what entity runs the National Capital Region, what its role is, who is responsible for it, who will answer media questions, and so on. A single phone number is provided in the release, along with information that the Joint Information Center will be housed at the Fairfax County AEOC.

POINT(S) OF CONTACT

The Fairfax County release seems to promise that one agency (or representatives from a variety of agencies) will pull the public information portion of this incident together. But just 24 hours after it was announced, the Joint Information Center was disbanded in a 3:45 p.m., March 16, news release, once again posted on the Fairfax County website on behalf of the National Capital Region. All subsequent media queries were referred to the Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs without explanation. The Virginia Department of Health also posted the same release on its website, in a PDF format, on National Capital Region letterhead. The letterhead shows it to be from the National Capital Area Homeland Security Office (DC–MD–VA) and the document lists each jurisdiction that composes the NCR. Unfortunately, the news release contains no information about how to reach the organization, how to find its website, how to contact its public information office, and so on. Thus, the apparent attempt to coordinate public dissemination of information about the incident fell short.

On March 15, all the information released to the media for further public dissemination came independently from the Virginia Department of Health, the Fairfax County Health Department, and the Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs, which posted two releases on behalf of the National Capital Region. One of the two NCR releases announces the opening of the Joint Information Center; the second indicates that the Skyline Towers complex would remain closed March 15 pending a second testing effort. Only one release mentions a number of individuals who

were possibly affected (42 at the Skyline Towers facility), but there is no mention of the hundreds who were held, counseled, and later released late on March 14. Nor is there a mention in any of the releases about the status of the Pentagon’s Remote Delivery Facility or its employees.

PHASE DOWN

The next day, March 16, only a single release was issued on behalf of the National Capital Region. The release appeared on the Fairfax County website and the Virginia Department of Health website. The release advised that the Skyline Towers complex buildings were free of contamination and would reopen (with the exception of one suite) March 16. The release (issued at 3:45 p.m.) also announced that the NCR Joint Information Center would close at 6 p.m. (a little more than 2 hours after the release was issued). Additional queries would be handled by the Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs. Again, there was no mention on March 16 of anything associated with the Pentagon’s Remote Delivery Facility or other activities in connection with the incident.

COMMENTS

While one can appreciate that events unfolded quickly and perhaps from multiple sources at the same time, it is striking how little information is contained in the “official record” as documented in public releases of information from involved government agencies. In part, this may be attributable to the time demands of the multiple conference calls and the paucity of verifiable information at the outset. A reading of media reports reveals that much information must have passed from official sources informally, perhaps in response to reporters’ inquiries, making it difficult for the public (and media) to know and track information as the event unfolded. In this regard, the media performed a service for the public, which expects to be kept informed of events such as this.

The final information released publicly came as an “Emergency Notice,” not a press release, titled “Hazmat Incident Information” and posted on the Fairfax County website. As noted in the chronology above, however, there is no way to find it easily. No press release summed up events. No federal, state, regional, or local officials made remarks or issued a statement to advise the public of what had happened.

After the initial DoD news release, no further information was issued officially about the incident at the Remote Delivery Facility, even as the region opened a Joint Information Center (first as a virtual JIC, then as a physical entity in Fairfax County). With proper information flow and coordination among federal, state, regional, and local public information officials, the Joint Information Center (under the NCR logo) would have provided the media with one place to go for all information. It would have been helpful in this instance (and will be in the future) if the NCR and its Joint Information Center had its own website on which to post news.

Each locality and government organization could contribute material that, after proper coordination, could be posted in one place and also be mirrored (in toto) on other government sites as well.

We could find no official information about the incident on government news pages in Maryland or the District of Columbia. Although the news media might know to call a particular press office for information, citizens most likely would visit their own jurisdiction’s news page for information they might need. It would be helpful if all citizens in the National Capital Region had access to the same information about an incident affecting the region, even if one area is more affected than another.

RECOMMENDATION

Clear channels of communication among federal, state, regional, and local public information officials are required, just the same as has been implemented to varying degrees among first. A Joint Information Center website or other means of disseminating information should be set up early in an incident and remain active until well past the event.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Date/Time: _____ Interviewer: _____

Interviewee Name and Title: _____

1. What was the first information you received about the suspected anthrax incidents?
2. How did you learn about the incident(s)?
3. When did you first learn about the threat?
4. Was that normally how you would have expected to learn about the situation?
5. Is there a protocol in your department/jurisdiction that covers emergency notification?
6. To whom, then, did you pass along this information?
7. How did you remain updated on new developments as the situation continued?
8. What concerns, if any, did you have at the beginning?
9. What concerns, if any, do you have now given the outcome of the situation?
10. What communications procedures went well?
11. What do you think should be done differently if a situation like this were to occur again?

APPENDIX B: COMMUNICATIONS REVIEW AND TIMELINE PROJECT

Interviewing Protocols

Introductions. Please get a business card; if they do not have one, be sure to get correct spelling of name, plus title and agency and phone number. Make sure they receive a business card from you.

After introductions, ask the person you are interviewing if he knows what the project is about and what we are tasked to do.

Provide brief summary of project’s purpose and the scope of interviewing outreach this week.

Cover the questions. Get more details as available.

Please do not lead folks to an answer you think you already know. Be as objective and open-minded as possible. Don’t forget to note any aspects of communications that went well. We are not on a witch hunt (per se), but want honest feedback.

Nail down dates and times as much as possible so we can fill in the required timelines. Most folks won’t know precise minutes, but they probably can get close to the hour or half hour.

If they ask, we are submitting a summary review on Friday, with a final deliverable shortly thereafter.

THANKS

**APPENDIX C:
NEWS ARTICLES AND PRESS RELEASES**

WashingtonPost.Com

Anthrax Alarm Uncovers Response Flaws

Pentagon Procedures Baffled Other Agencies, Delaying Health Officials

By Spencer S. Hsu

Washington Post Staff Writer

Thursday, March 17, 2005; Page A01

The anthrax scare at the Pentagon this week exposed gaps between the military's procedures in handling biohazards and those of the rest of the federal government, which could increase the threat to public health in the event of an actual contamination, health experts and federal and Virginia officials said yesterday.

Health officials inside government and out said the Pentagon's reliance on detection and response systems that are isolated from those at other federal agencies delayed Virginia health officials, the U.S. Postal Service and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in moving to protect the public from a possible biohazard in the mail.

"The takeaway for me is, the government hasn't learned too many lessons from the last few years," said Scott J. Becker, executive director of the Association of Public Health Laboratories. "The Department of Defense appears to be developing their own detection systems. . . . The linkages to public health just didn't seem to be there. Clearly, things broke down."

In the muddle, local hazardous materials teams were confused by sensor equipment that differed from equipment used by the Postal Service and Department of Homeland Security, said Robert B. Stroube, Virginia's health commissioner.

State and federal officials responsible for deciding public health actions said scientists had trouble interpreting the findings from a Pentagon contract lab, which is not part of the CDC's national network of labs that respond to bioterror.

Yesterday, the top elected officeholders in Fairfax County and the District, along with members of Congress, called for a summit to discuss the federal response. They said they were kept out of the loop during Monday's anthrax scare at the Pentagon and a subsequent biohazard alarm at a Defense Department office complex in the Baileys Crossroads section of Fairfax.

Now that anthrax tests have come back negative and the buildings are beginning to reopen, several officials also are concerned about the differing testing guidelines.

Since the 2001 anthrax attacks, the Postal Service has been spending \$1.4 billion to install a biohazard detection system at 283 mail facilities; the federal government has spent \$370 million to boost state and local public health labs, the backbone of the CDC's 140 bioterror Laboratory Response Network; and Homeland Security has launched a \$60

million-plus BioWatch system to monitor air in more than 30 U.S. cities. All rely on the same CDC protocols.

But the Defense Department has not signed a federal memorandum of understanding that standardizes alerts, terminology, data sharing and response when biohazard systems at military sites in the United States are triggered, a senior federal health official said. The Pentagon is spending \$1 billion on a five-year program to develop biohazard warning systems and procedures at 185 U.S. and 15 overseas bases.

"Why are they using a private facility to do environmental testing when we have invested billions of dollars to enhance public health and defense facilities to deal with 21st-century public health threats?" said George W. Foresman, homeland security adviser to Virginia Gov. Mark R. Warner (D).

The BioWatch system has gone two years without a false positive. The Postal Service's system has reviewed 500,000 samples without a false positive.

Pentagon spokesman Glenn Flood defended the department's actions while acknowledging that "we're looking at all those issues."

"The contractor laboratory has worked well. We have protocols in place. . . . Until we get all the information, I could not go beyond that," Flood said.

The Postal Service reopened its main government mail processing center at V Street NE at noon yesterday and advised about 200 employees that they could stop taking antibiotics. Last night, Pentagon officials awaited more lab results from the Pentagon's Remote Delivery Facility and the Baileys Crossroads office complex.

The Pentagon expected to reopen its intake facility today. The Fairfax buildings will reopen today except for a suite in one of the towers, where more testing will be done, Homeland Security officials said.

The events began last Thursday when one of four swab samples taken daily from sensor filters at the Pentagon delivery facility tested positive for anthrax at Commonwealth Biotechnologies Inc. in Richmond, a Pentagon subcontractor. The finding was confirmed by a highly accurate polymerase chain reaction test and forwarded Friday to the prime contractor, said Robert B. Harris, president of the Richmond lab.

Pentagon officials say they were notified Monday morning of the finding. That afternoon -- apparently by coincidence, military officials said -- a machine on the eighth floor of the Fairfax complex that receives mail from the Pentagon sounded an airborne biohazard alarm.

Military officials said that although Army scientists at Fort Detrick confirmed the initial positive finding, quality control problems at the lab probably spoiled the sample.

"We stand by our results, and the work is ongoing," said Harris, whose company has processed 2,000 samples from the Pentagon over two years. "To say the way the release was made was premature, unfortunate and unwarranted is an understatement."

A federal health official familiar with Pentagon operations said its lab practices vary from those of civilian agencies, complicating the interpretation of scientific data.

Staff writers Allan Lengel and Josh White contributed to this report.

False Alarm

Thursday, March 17, 2005; Page A24

AS OF TODAY, it seems virtually certain that anthrax scares at two Defense Department postal facilities on Monday were false alarms, odd though that coincidence may be. But the procedures followed in both cases still reveal a great deal about how well the national capital region, with its confluence of federal, state and local agencies, managed what could have been a health crisis. Unexpectedly, they may have also revealed a deep gap between military and civilian approaches to bioterrorism.

First, the good news: Enormous progress has been made since October 2001, when the first -- and still unsolved -- anthrax attack took place in Washington. The mere fact that the Pentagon's mailrooms are no longer inside the Pentagon itself is a big advantage. The screening systems also represent an advance. Last time around, nobody realized that postal workers were even endangered until some of them became sick. This time postal facilities were immediately shut down and workers were issued antibiotics. Both the Pentagon and local authorities were prepared for this kind of crisis and had the right equipment to deal with it.

But while it seems that the Defense Department worked well with Arlington County police -- who agree that they have had ample time to train and practice with the agency -- the Pentagon failed to coordinate its initial activity with the Department of Homeland Security or the Department of Health and Human Services and its Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Not only were the latter not informed of the first incident for several hours, it isn't clear that the Pentagon ever intended to rely on them anyway. Apparently, the Pentagon has developed its own system of gauging and dealing with threats. This system depends heavily on private contractors, whose labs not only sounded the first false-positive alarm on Monday morning but let some mail circulate before establishing that it was safe to do so. The Pentagon has no explanation for that lapse, or for the fact that neither federal public health authorities nor Fairfax County police were aware of the first incident until after the second one took place in their jurisdiction. The Pentagon says it informed all relevant law enforcement agencies in good time, but if some didn't get the message, something is seriously wrong with the communication system.

The post hoc examinations of the incident may reveal more. But it is already clear that deeper and more frequent cooperation among all of the region's federal and local authorities has to be a critical part of emergency preparedness. It is also time to ask why the Pentagon has felt the need to develop, in effect, its own internal biohazard detection procedures, separate from those of the rest of the country. Does the Pentagon not think that DHS and HHS are up to the job?

WashingtonPost.Com

New Tests For Anthrax Negative

Threat to Public Health Unlikely, Pentagon Says

By Spencer S. Hsu and Josh White
Washington Post Staff Writers
Wednesday, March 16, 2005; Page A01

U.S. military officials said last night that they were confident that there is no public health threat at mailrooms at the Pentagon and a Fairfax County office complex because a series of tests performed yesterday all came back negative for deadly anthrax bacteria.

Based on a positive overnight test on material from the Pentagon, public health and postal officials acted throughout the day on the assumption that the capital region faced an anthrax threat for the first time since 2001. Defense Department officials recommended that nearly 700 people begin antibiotic treatment, and the U.S. Postal Service began medicating 200 workers at its main government mail center at V Street NE in the District, which was shuttered for testing. Virginia moved antibiotics for 3,000 people to Fairfax.

Mail service to the federal government in Washington was shut down. Deliveries of mail, food and office supplies to the Pentagon were halted. U.S. health officials issued a nationwide alert urging doctors to look out for cases of anthrax exposure.

But analysis of more than 70 samples subsequently taken from filters, surfaces and machines at both mailrooms showed no trace of anthrax bacteria, living or dead.

A senior military official said investigators are concentrating on the possibility that the sample from the Pentagon actually was contaminated at a contractor's laboratory in Richmond. The material, a swab taken from a filter on a biohazard detector, was then passed on to Army scientists at Fort Detrick on Monday. They confirmed the positive finding early yesterday.

"The probability is low to very low that we're dealing with a true health threat," said William Winkenwerder Jr., assistant secretary of defense for health affairs.

Still, federal and local health officials recommended that those already advised to take antibiotics keep taking them, pending final test results.

The day's events renewed anxieties across the Washington region and resurrected memories of the government's halting and problem-plagued response in September and October 2001, when at least four letters containing anthrax spores were mailed to the news media and two senators, sickening 17 people and killing five, including two postal employees at the Brentwood facility in the District. No suspect has been identified.

The nation's first bioterrorism attack led to wholesale changes in the handling of government mail near Washington and new emergency protocols for the Postal Service.

and public health officials. Many of those protocols worked this week, authorities said. But Fairfax and Virginia officials were angry that the Pentagon had not alerted them to a potential threat. And postal workers remained wary of the official response.

Government officials expressed alarm that familiar problems of coordination and information-sharing, originating chiefly at the Pentagon, added to the confusion and delayed the ability of postal officials, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Virginia and District health officials to respond by as much as a day or more.

"There is a concern that [the Department of Homeland Security,] which has a key role in these types of incidents under the incident management system, was not alerted," a Bush administration official said on condition of anonymity, because of the sensitivity of the criticism. "Once alerted, DHS, in coordination with the FBI, [Health and Human Services Department] and CDC began initiating a response coordinated with state and local agencies."

U.S. Rep. James P. Moran Jr. (D-Va.), who represents the areas around both facilities, and Sen. John W. Warner (R-Va.), chairman of the Armed Services Committee, asked the Pentagon to explain its response. "We need to hear what the explanation is," Moran said.

Bryan Whitman, a top Pentagon spokesman, said the department followed its playbook and notified local officials in Arlington.

"The department acted very aggressively," Whitman said. He said the event would allow Pentagon officials "to evaluate our procedures and decide whether or not we can improve them from an incident management standpoint."

But even at the Pentagon, there was concern that some procedures were not followed properly. Workers did not hold up delivery of an estimated 8,000 pieces of mail that flowed Thursday and Friday throughout the building. Standard procedure requires mail to be held until daily tests are completed, and military officials said complacency might have played a role after years of negative results.

The assessments came during a long day for security officials, who held their collective breath pending conclusive test results from samples taken from the Pentagon's Remote Delivery Facility in Arlington and the Skyline office building complex of defense workers and contractors at Baileys Crossroads in Fairfax.

The incident began before 10:30 a.m. Monday when a defense contractor responsible for daily biohazard monitoring at the Pentagon mailroom reported a positive alert for anthrax from a sensor filter sampled Thursday. The facility, which also handles food and other deliveries to the Pentagon, was shuttered; 263 employees submitted swab samples to medical personnel, and Arlington emergency crews were called.

About 2:30 p.m. at the Baileys Crossroads complex, which receives mail from the Pentagon facility four miles away, a sensor gave an alert in an eighth-floor mailroom at Skyline Five Place. About 800 workers were locked down in three buildings for almost six hours. Dozens were decontaminated, and workers who had left were told to wash exposed skin, jewelry and eyeglasses and seal their clothing in a plastic bag.

Pentagon officials said they are continuing to investigate but have found no connection between the alerts at the two facilities, calling the situation an apparent coincidence. Defense officials are working with Fairfax County and the FBI to determine when the buildings may reopen, pending additional tests.

Postal officials expressed relief that the mail was not involved. About 240,000 pieces of government mail held at the V Street facility over two days probably will be delivered today, and the building will reopen pending the results of testing, spokesman Gerry McKiernan said.

The test that produced the confirmed positive finding of anthrax was performed by the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases at Fort Detrick and completed about 4 a.m. yesterday, a top military official said. The polymerase chain reaction test is accurate to "very, very close" to 100 percent in confirming the presence of the molecular signature of anthrax bacteria, he said. But all subsequent lab culture tests, used to determine if there were any live or viable bacteria, were negative.

Officials said the Pentagon incident did not bear the signature of the 2001 attacks, when anthrax spores were found in more than two-thirds of tests at mail facilities in Brentwood and New Jersey.

Authorities have not recovered any mail believed to have triggered the sensors, and they said there were no threats to lend credence to a possible attack. That, coupled with the many negative test results, provided federal officials with the confidence to say there was no health risk.

WashingtonPost.Com

Officials Say Fairfax Was Out of Loop

Pentagon Criticized for Not Informing County Responders of Previous Incident

By Jerry Markon and Lisa Rein
Washington Post Staff Writers
Wednesday, March 16, 2005; Page A14

As Fairfax County emergency crews converged on a Department of Defense mailroom in Baileys Crossroads on Monday afternoon, county officials learned for the first time about a biohazard alert at a Pentagon mailroom -- four hours earlier.

Doug Bass, the Fairfax emergency management coordinator, said he was contacted by his counterpart from Arlington County government, not by the Department of Defense. "Until then, no one had connected Fairfax with Arlington," Bass said yesterday.

Pentagon officials said they have found no connection between the anthrax scare in Arlington and the alert four miles away in Fairfax, where sensors detected a suspicious biological substance, calling the two incidents an apparent coincidence. After tests came back positive for anthrax, officials said they followed their standard response plan in alerting emergency officials in Arlington, who then told Fairfax.

But angry Fairfax officials raised questions yesterday about why the Pentagon had not alerted them and others in the region to a potential biological threat. Those concerns were echoed by others in government at levels as high as the White House.

Some question whether the lessons of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks -- where coordination problems marred what was called an otherwise exemplary first response at the Pentagon -- had been learned.

"We went through this on 9/11," said Fairfax Board of Supervisors Chairman Gerald E. Connolly (D). "The federal government has to understand that it functions in the context of local government."

Fairfax Supervisor Penelope A. Gross (D-Mason), whose district includes the three affected buildings in Baileys Crossroads, called the breakdown in communication "another example of the federal government dissing Fairfax."

The federal government shared the concerns.

A Bush administration official said the White House and other agencies were alarmed at what they considered the Pentagon's tardiness in notifying other parts of government about the initial positive test results for anthrax. Monday night, "significant concern was raised by the highest levels of government about notifications by the Department of Defense," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue.

Officials were especially concerned that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which has a key role in coordinating the government's response to any health disaster, was not immediately alerted. Spokesman Bill Hall said the department was not initially made aware of the Pentagon incident and found out only after the Fairfax alarm sounded Monday afternoon.

After the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon and the anthrax attacks that followed, a Justice Department-funded report praised the actions of Arlington officials who oversaw the massive rescue operation at the Pentagon. But the report said coordination and logistics needed to be improved.

Federal and local officials set up an elaborate system to notify the Washington region about biological and other threats. The Pentagon said it followed those procedures Monday.

Bryan Whitman, a top Pentagon spokesman, said defense officials moved swiftly after the initial alert that anthrax might have been present in the building, notifying local authorities as part of a set procedure.

"The department acted very aggressively," Whitman said, in dealing with the incident and notifying surrounding communities and agencies. He added that the situation will allow Pentagon officials "to evaluate our procedures and decide whether or not we can improve them from an incident management standpoint."

At the Arlington emergency operations center, the phone call came in Monday morning on a line directly connected to the Pentagon's communication center.

"They said: This is the Pentagon, here's what we've got, we need your hazardous materials teams," county Fire Chief James Schwartz said yesterday.

Arlington officials immediately dispatched at least 20 emergency workers to the scene, where they aided Pentagon crews that had isolated the suspect mail facility.

Schwartz said he is "very confident that the moment they had anything, they let us know." He added that Arlington emergency officials meet with their Pentagon counterparts "on an unbelievably frequent basis" to coordinate the response to biological or other attacks.

Each anthrax event "reinforces the need to put a premium on getting information to all the relevant stakeholders in the response, and most importantly, getting regular, timely and accurate information to the general public at large," said George W. Foresman, homeland security adviser to Virginia Gov. Mark R. Warner (D). "The way to make sure we help the public ameliorate their individual fear . . . is through communication and information flow."

WashingtonPost.Com

Va. Defense Facility Locked Down

Similar Incident at Pentagon Spurs Queries About Coordination

By Jamie Stockwell and Allan Lengel
Washington Post Staff Writers
Tuesday, March 15, 2005; Page A01

A sensor at a Department of Defense mailroom in Fairfax County signaled the presence of a suspicious biological substance yesterday, forcing hundreds of workers to remain inside three buildings for almost six hours.

The lockdown came just hours after the mail facility at the Pentagon, about four miles away in Arlington, was evacuated and closed. The Pentagon took that action yesterday morning after tests conducted last week came back positive for anthrax, officials said. Later tests at the Pentagon were negative.

Spokesmen for the Pentagon and the Fairfax fire department initially said the events at the Pentagon and in the Baileys Crossroads section of Fairfax were unrelated. But last night, a Virginia official said the events might be linked. In addition, emergency officials responding to the Fairfax incident said they were not aware of the Pentagon evacuation, causing Virginia's top homeland security official to say that coordination by the Defense Department would have to be reviewed.

Authorities said that there is no imminent danger to the public, that Defense Department mail is irradiated and that new detection systems worked. But state and local officials remained concerned that 3 1/2 years after the attack on the Pentagon and anthrax mailings that affected local postal facilities, coordination did not work smoothly yesterday.

"Clearly, the big question that's got to be answered is when did the DOD make the notification and did they make all appropriate notifications to make sure all federal, state and local players were aware of the problem?" said George W. Foresman, homeland security adviser to Gov. Mark R. Warner (D).

As many as 800 people, a majority of whom work as government contractors, were kept inside their buildings on Leesburg Pike in Baileys Crossroads after a sensor was activated about 2:30 p.m., a fire department official said.

Hazardous materials teams descended on the area and immediately secured the buildings, prohibiting people from leaving or entering, said Lt. Raul Castillo, a spokesman with the Fairfax fire department. He said initial tests indicated only that a "protein" was detected inside the eighth-floor mailroom at Skyline Five Place and added that a filter was taken to the U.S. Army Research Institute for Infectious Diseases at Fort Detrick in Frederick County for further testing.

A Pentagon spokesman said the Fairfax incident appeared to be unrelated. "There is no connection that I've been made aware of," Glenn Flood said. "I have received no information about that."

But a source familiar with the incidents said that mail goes from the Pentagon site to the Baileys Crossroads site. This could account for the positive readings at both sites within a brief period.

Fire officials began allowing people to leave the buildings about 7:30 p.m., after directing those inside over intercoms to wash their faces and hands. Fire officials said 42 people were decontaminated.

"I was ready to walk out about 4 p.m., and they said to me, 'You can't leave because there's a hazmat situation,' " said Aaron Burrus, 22, of Stafford, who works for the Defense Department on the first floor.

He said people passed the time walking around, talking to one another on their respective floors. He watched TV, but there was nothing to eat. "I don't think that anyone was afraid. We heard several rumors: anthrax positive; anthrax negative."

Keith Kreger, a government contractor who works at Skyline Five Place, was nearing the end of his workday. But along with about 30 co-workers, Kreger was unable to leave.

"I heard about it from an e-mail, that a suspicious letter was mailed to the mailroom. The ventilation system was shut off, which I found out about because our door slammed shut and then it got really hot," Kreger said in a telephone interview.

An e-mail from the building's management was sent at 3:27 p.m. asking tenants to be aware of suspicious people or packages because of a "potential biological threat."

After a while, employees inside Kreger's office grew bored. One of them opened a bottle of white wine that was left over from a holiday party. Others watched television and played video games.

As the evening wore on, apprehension and fear set in.

"Ever since Sept. 11, I've been more aware," Kreger said about three hours after the building was locked down. "It's definitely creepy."

An announcement came over the building's intercom about 8 p.m. directing employees to the bathrooms on their floors. They were told to wash their faces and hands.

The hot water was quickly used up, Kreger wrote in an e-mail a few minutes later. "People are starting to get a bit worried -- as am I," he wrote. "People in the halls don't even want to touch the door knobs to get back into our offices."

At 8:30 p.m., Kreger's office, on the seventh floor, was allowed to leave.

Castillo said that about 3,000 people work in the three buildings that were locked down and that as many as 800 were inside when an air filter designed to detect foreign agents was activated.

An alarm sounded, and moments later, hazardous materials crews responded to the scene, with between 30 and 40 emergency technicians combing through the eight-story building to conduct tests, he said.

Kreger and all those who left the building were given a sheet of instructions from the Fairfax County Health Department. They were told to wash their hands, face and other exposed skin, as well as jewelry and eyeglasses. They were to go straight home, take off their clothes and put them inside a plastic bag, which they were told to tie tightly and keep in a safe place. They were to shower and shampoo their hair.

But before leaving the building, all of those who were locked down were asked to fill out a detailed form that questioned them about their location inside the building. They were told to await further instructions from their bosses or the health department, including whether they will need medication.

Pentagon employees who may have come in contact with the mail also were being advised to take precautions, including providing nasal swabs for cultures and being provided with a three-day regimen of antibiotics. The irradiation to which the mail is subjected is designed to kill anthrax spores. Although the most recent reported tests at the Pentagon were negative, officials said they intended to conduct more detailed analysis as a precaution.

A source familiar with the events said officials were concerned with the Pentagon's decision to distribute antibiotics to its mail workers without the knowledge of local officials dealing with the Fairfax incident.

WashingtonPost.Com Interactive

Anthrax Investigation

Dr. Ken Dretchen

Director, Georgetown University Bio-Security Institute

Tuesday, March 15, 2005; 2:00 PM

Three separate mail facilities in the Washington metropolitan area are now being evaluated for possible biological contamination -- the Pentagon facility where a sample tested positive, the V Street center and a Department of Defense mailroom on Leesburg Pike in Fairfax County where hundreds of people underwent a lockdown yesterday after a sensor was triggered.

Dr. Ken Dretchen, director of the Bio-Security Institute at Georgetown University and consultant for the Department of Homeland Security, was online **Tuesday, March 15, at 2 p.m. ET** to discuss the discoveries and to explain the method of treatment for those exposed.

A transcript follows.

Editor's Note: Washingtonpost.com moderators retain editorial control over Live Online discussions and choose the most relevant questions for guests and hosts; guests and hosts can decline to answer questions.

Dayton, Ohio: Dr. Dretchen -- will DNA typing or other intensive analysis be useful here in determining whether there's a link between this anthrax incident and the one in 2001? Or is the genetic variation in anthrax samples too low? Thanks.

Dr. Ken Dretchen: The situation is that by the test that they use, which is the DNA Typing Test, can tell us about the specifics of this strain of anthrax. It is conceivable but it would be difficult to make that link, but it's possible.

Texas: Anthrax seems to be yet another "weapon of mass destruction" that, in actual use, seems to be considerably less deadly than plain old high explosives. Somewhat deadly, yes (people have died of it); extraordinarily deadly, clearly not.

In your expert opinion, what is the right level of concern to have with regard to anthrax?

Dr. Ken Dretchen: You are correct but it is one of many agents that are in an arsenal of these weapons of mass destruction. They can include explosives, chemicals and biologic agents. Anthrax has been used for many years -- almost a century -- as a toxic agent

because it produces a progressive respiratory distress which, left untreated, can be fatal. Fortunately, with the use of modern antibiotics it can be brought under control.

McLean, Va.: Did the investigation of the first anthrax cases discover anything? I have the feeling the whole case was shoveled under the rug too soon.

Dr. Ken Dretchen: I can't speak to the criminal aspect of the case but it did verify that aerosolize anthrax was in fact the agent that produced the toxicity at the postal station.

Arlington, Va.: Hello and Thank you for the discussion.

The Skyline complex is surrounded by condominiums. Should the residents worry if active anthrax is found?

Dr. Ken Dretchen: I don't believe so. First of all, I think we're looking at an amount of anthrax that is extremely small. Second, it is not even confirmed yet that the agent was in fact anthrax. The initial screening was positive. The second screen was inconclusive and the third screen is going on right now which will be confirmatory one way or the other.

Most importantly, the mail was irradiated prior to entry into the facility which would have rendered it harmless. So all in all, I would say that for the people outside the immediate complex there should be no issues.

Morrisville, N.C.: The fact that sensors in totally separate locations independently and contemporaneously detected anthrax would seem to be extremely strong evidence that this isn't just another false alarm. The PCR test seems to confirm this. Is there any way this ISN'T the "real deal" this time? Could other species of bacteria have both set off the sensors and shown up as anthrax using PCR?

Dr. Ken Dretchen: It is possible. None of the sensor technologies that we have today are 100 percent effective and the same system of detection was used in all of the facilities because it's the same throughout the postal network. So therefore anything that would trigger one system off would trigger off a second system.

The other aspect, as we said before that we should make clear, is that there are many different strain of anthrax, only a few of which are toxic. As a matter of fact, anthrax is very common in the soil surrounding most houses. So it is conceivable that the sensors were alerted by a non-virulent strain.

Anonymous: After inhalation exposure, how quickly do anthrax symptoms become apparent? What are the symptoms?

Dr. Ken Dretchen: Virtually within a day or so you would start to see mild cold or flu-like symptom that would continue to progress. You would start getting some real respiratory distress that could lead to a fatality.

On the other hand, if we begin treatment, even as late as three or four days after the exposure, we can stop the progression. This is a very important point, that we can stop the progression. People should not be alarmed because the treatment is quite effective.

Burke, Va.: How soon can conclusive test results be expected for the Leesburg Pike facility and what action must be taken following the results ... positive or negative?

Dr. Ken Dretchen: It's my understanding that the samples are out now being tested by the most confirmatory test available, which is actually growing the bacteria in culture and seeing what they look like. That usually takes about 48 hours.

Assuming that it's positive, then what will happen is that the HAZMAT teams will have to come in and basically clean the area and disinfect the area. What they will do after that is continue to monitor air samples throughout the building to make sure that all of the anthrax has been eradicated.

If it's negative, there's no action to be taken and the buildings can be reopened.

Manassas, Va.: Who ultimately makes the decision to prescribe antibiotics to those individuals potentially affected? How are the antibiotics administered?

Dr. Ken Dretchen: The only individuals authorized to prescribe are physicians. Assuming that an individual either went to their private physician or to a hospital, it would be the doctor who would prescribe the medication. There are several highly effective antibiotics and in the most severe cases of the disease the medication would have to be continued for 60 days. However, after just a few days all symptoms would be gone. Because we worry about reinfection, we keep people on antibiotics for a long duration.

Centreville, Va.: I work in one of the buildings adjacent to the DoD mail facility on Leesburg Pike. Was keeping us "locked down" in our building yesterday for close to 6 hours putting us at an increased risk of exposure? I would've assumed that if there was

any sense of a possible contamination, that they would've wanted to evacuate as many people from the building as soon as possible.

Also, would this pose any risk to my family once I returned home? I followed all of the precautions regarding my clothes, showering, etc.. but am still worried about transfer. What about my vehicle, that was located in the central parking facility shared by the building where the mailroom was located?

Dr. Ken Dretchen: More likely than not they would've shut down the air handling system in the building so that the bacteria would have remained confined to the mailroom area and not traveled to other rooms in the building.

Again, anthrax is not really communicable from person to person. So taking the precautions of washing clothing and potentially all exposed areas of the body should have taken care of potentially and remaining bacteria that were present.

It's highly unlikely that bacteria would have entered the car simply because it was just sitting there.

Manassas, Va.: OK ... but we are hearing reports that certain people working in the effected facilities have been prescribed CIPRO. In these particular cases who made the call regarding who should take the drug and for how long? Are prescriptions being handed out at the work site, and if so by who the CDC?

Dr. Ken Dretchen: More likely than not it was probably done on the advice of the CDC through the physicians who were part of the first responder team and they prescribed CIPRO which is highly effective against anthrax toxicity. And this would have been more as a precaution than anything else.

Please recall that this was the same procedure used three years earlier.

The New York Times.Com

March 17, 2005

EDITORIAL

The Real Anthrax Scare

It is disconcerting, if not downright alarming, that more than three years after the nation was traumatized by deadly anthrax sent through the mail, the federal government has still not learned how to mount a timely and coordinated response to the threat. A brief anthrax scare at two Pentagon mail centers in recent days has turned out, fortunately, to be a false alarm. But the Pentagon's response to the presumed assault is anything but reassuring.

This Keystone Kops episode started last Thursday, when swabs were routinely taken from air filters and machinery at a mail site next to the Pentagon by an outside laboratory that has been hired to test such samples daily. Four days later, the small Virginia company finally reported that it had identified anthrax spores in its Thursday swabbings. The sample was sent to the Army's crack biodefense laboratory at Fort Detrick, Md., which concurred in the identification of anthrax.

Meanwhile, apparently by coincidence, an alarm went off Monday at another Pentagon mail center in an office complex a few miles away, triggering a shutdown there and at a civilian postal center that forwards Pentagon mail in Washington. Hundreds of people were started on a course of antibiotics before extensive follow-up tests of material and people from the mail sites found no anthrax.

The best guess now is that the first laboratory might have inadvertently contaminated samples with the strain of anthrax it keeps on hand as a reference and then sent the material on to Fort Detrick, which, of course, confirmed the contamination.

Although the precise details of this mix-up remain murky, there is cause for concern. For starters, the four-day time lag between collecting the samples at the mail center and declaring them contaminated with anthrax is an appallingly lax response by the laboratory. Had this been a real anthrax attack, we might be counting the victims. The Pentagon plays down the danger by noting that all inbound mail is first irradiated away from the site, so any spores detected at the Pentagon would presumably have been dead and unable to infect people. But the irradiation system is surely not foolproof, and the swabs are tested to reduce any remaining danger.

In theory, the mail is supposed to be impounded until tests show it is safe. But in this case, some 8,000 pieces of mail were sent to redistribution points within the Pentagon before the seemingly positive tests for anthrax forced a scramble to retrieve them. Pentagon mail handlers have apparently gotten so used to assuming that the tests will be negative that they didn't bother to wait for the results.

A second concern is a possible breakdown in community-notification procedures. The Pentagon insists that it notified key federal agencies and a local emergency responder network shortly after it learned on Monday that anthrax might have been detected. But officials in Fairfax County, Va., have complained that they didn't learn of the first anthrax report at the Pentagon until hours after the fact. Some high federal officials have muttered on background that the Homeland Security and the Health and Human Services Departments were not galvanized quickly. Congress needs to examine how well the response system worked in this inadvertent test run. If we can't handle anthrax-laden mail, a well-understood danger, how will we handle biological threats not yet encountered?

March 17, 2005

Officials Sort Out Anthrax Scare Aftermath

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Filed at 1:44 a.m. ET

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Federal officials began to sort through their handling of this week's anthrax scare, which closed three mail facilities and prompted nearly 900 workers to take antibiotics.

Problems included lack of coordination among many agencies involved and what appeared to have been a serious laboratory error that wrongly suggested the presence of anthrax at a Pentagon mail facility, according to officials close to the events.

The Pentagon said Wednesday it was investigating how the error was made. The FBI, called in to handle a potential criminal case, was instead examining what went wrong, said Debra Weierman, spokeswoman for the FBI's Washington field office.

Investigators are trying to figure out why two lab tests suggested anthrax was present at the Pentagon mail processing center. They also were looking at why a censor went off a second military mail facility, indicating the presence of a suspicious biological substance.

The scare evoked memories of the 2001 anthrax attacks, which killed five, sickened 17 and have yet to be solved.

After further testing, military officials said late Tuesday they were confident no anthrax was present.

But that information came after officials had closed both military facilities as well as a Postal Service center that handles mail on its way to the Pentagon and had distributed three-day supplies of antibiotics to nearly 900 workers as a precaution. On Wednesday, the Postal Service reopened its processing center, and authorities said the Pentagon buildings were expected to reopen on Thursday.

Officials do not know for certain what triggered the false alarm.

The working theory is that employees at the lab that did the initial testing, Commonwealth Biotechnology Inc. in Richmond, Va., contaminated the sample taken from the Pentagon with actual anthrax that is kept on hand for comparison purposes, a Homeland Security Department official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Wednesday. That would explain why the sample came back as positive for anthrax.

That initial sample, possibly already contaminated, was later delivered to a Defense Department laboratory at Fort Detrick, Md., which confirmed the presence of anthrax. ``It

had already been handled by the contractor," said Caree Vander Linden, spokeswoman for the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases at Fort Detrick.

When later tests proved negative, officials concluded the initial results were wrong.

Robert Harris, chief operating officer of Commonwealth Biotechnology, said that is a premature conclusion. He said it is not clear whether there was contamination at his lab, which does daily testing on swabs taken from filters at the Pentagon mail facility. He said testing was trying to figure out what happened.

``The issue of contamination is questionable," he said. He said he still believes that the original sample might have been ``a true positive sample" for anthrax. ``That's a possibility at this point."

One question under discussion is why this testing was performed by a lab that is not part of the federal Laboratory Response Network, which includes some 140 labs that are trained to respond to possible bioterror incidents. The federal protocol for handling possible anthrax attacks involves using a network lab.

Also unclear is when and how and when various officials were notified about the potential anthrax.

Harris said his lab had the initial positive result back on Friday. The lab was told by the principal contractor, Vistrionix, to perform further tests over the weekend to see if the initial results were confirmed, according to officials at both companies.

Pentagon spokesman Glenn Flood said Pentagon officials were not told of the positive test until Monday morning, three days later. Federal health authorities and officials at the Postal Service were not notified until Monday afternoon.

The delay is worrisome because had it been real anthrax, antibiotics should have been started as soon as possible after exposure.

The Postal Service, where two workers died of inhalation anthrax in 2001, is particularly sensitive to this.

``What we learned in 2001 is as much as a threat that anthrax may pose ... if you do timely medication of the exposed individuals you really can virtually eliminate any complications," said Tom Day, vice president for engineering.

March 14:

From ABC 7 News:

Signs of Anthrax Detected at Two Gov't Mailrooms

Location: Bailey's Crossroads, Va.

Posted: March 14, 2005 9:30 PM EST

URL: <http://www.wjla.com/news/stories/0305/213535.html>

Bailey's Crossroads, Va. (AP) - Thousands of workers are finally headed home after they were quarantined for a hazmat scare. Two Defense Department mail facilities have tested positive for anthrax.

Virginia Department of Health officials say there were positive tests for anthrax at both a Pentagon mail facility and a Fairfax County office building in the Bailey's Crossroads area.

3,000 workers in the Fairfax County complex were allowed to go home starting at about 9 p.m. Then officials announced that the buildings at 5111, 5109 and 5113 will be closed indefinitely. The Pentagon mail facility was closed this morning when air sensors triggered an alarm.

Fairfax County Fire and Rescue spokesman Dan Schmidt says they've instructed workers to wash their hands and put their clothes in a sealed bag.

The FBI and ATF have set up a command post at the scene.

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Anthrax Scare Near Pentagon

Written By 9 News

Created 3/14/05

Last Updated: 3/15/2005 12:03:17 PM

Pentagon officials say sensors at two military mail facilities in the Washington area detected signs of anthrax on two pieces of mail Monday.

The mail was irradiated, rendering any anthrax inert. Officials say they aren't sure if it was an attack.

One of the mail facilities was near the Pentagon and another was nearby in the Bailey's Crossroad's area.

The Pentagon mail site was closed after sensors triggered an alarm around 10:30 am. It's not clear when the substance was detected at the second facility.

Firefighters say no one was allowed to leave Bailey's Crossroads complex this afternoon once a hazardous material was detected.

There are no initial reports of illness. Medical personnel have offered some workers antibiotics.

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Related Video

[Nancy Yamada's 11pm Report](#)

SENSORS DETECT ANTHRAX AT MAIL FACILITY, BUT LATER TESTS NEGATIVE

Pentagon Officials Say Mail Already Irradiated

POSTED: 4:44 pm EST March 14, 2005

UPDATED: 10:11 pm EST March 14, 2005

FAIRFAX, Va. -- Sensors at two military mail facilities in the Washington area detected signs of anthrax on two pieces of mail Monday, but Pentagon officials said the mail had already been irradiated, rendering any anthrax inert.

Additional tests at the two facilities, one of them at the Pentagon and the other nearby, found no presence of the bacteria, which can be used as a biological weapon. There were no initial reports of illness.

The Pentagon's mail delivery site, which is separate from the main Pentagon building, was evacuated and shut down Monday after sensors triggered an alarm around 10:30 a.m. EST, spokesman Glenn Flood said. It was expected to remain closed until at least Tuesday while the investigation continued.

It was not clear when sensors at the second Defense Department mailroom were triggered Monday, and Pentagon officials only said a nearby satellite mail facility was closed. But firefighters in nearby Bailey's Crossroads, Va., reported that a military mailroom had been shut down after a hazardous material was detected, and no one was allowed to leave the building.

Pentagon spokeswoman Lt. Cmdr. Jane Campbell said mail at both facilities would have been irradiated before arriving at either one.

The radiation treatment would kill any anthrax bacteria, but sensors would still be able to detect it.

She had no information about the origin of the two pieces of mail.

About 175 people work at the Pentagon's mail facility, and another 100 may have been in contact with deliveries for the Pentagon, officials said.

Medical personnel took cultures from anyone who may have had contact with those deliveries, and those people were also offered a three-day course of antibiotics.

Follow-up tests were being conducted at the U.S. Army Research Institute for Infectious Diseases at Fort Dietrich, Md., officials said.

General operations at the Pentagon appeared unaffected.

Pentagon reports anthrax scare

Updated: Monday, Mar. 14, 2005 - 7:40 PM

WASHINGTON, Mar 14, 2005 (United Press International via COMTEX) -- A routine test of mail in a Pentagon mail room set off alarms for anthrax Monday, although follow-up tests were negative.

The initial test took place at the Pentagon's Remote Delivery Facility, which was evacuated while further tests were conducted. Although subsequent tests for anthrax were negative, the Department of Defense is taking precautions, including obtaining cultures from all people who might have been exposed. Personnel have also been given the option of taking antibiotics.

Anthrax, a bacterium that can last for years in spore form, is not contagious. Although potentially fatal, it is easily treated with antibiotics such as Cipro.

Anthrax-laced letters killed five people, including two postal workers, in the fall of 2001. The subsequent investigation failed to identify the person or persons who sent the contaminated letters.

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Signs of Anthrax at Two Pentagon Mailrooms

Updated: Monday, Mar. 14, 2005 - 11:15 PM

By JOHN J. LUMPKIN

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - Sensors at two military mail facilities in the Washington area detected signs of anthrax on two pieces of mail Monday, but Pentagon officials said the mail had already been irradiated, rendering any anthrax inert.

Officials weren't sure if this was an attack. Additional tests and other sensors at the two facilities, one of them at the Pentagon and the other nearby, found no

presence of the bacteria, which can be used as a biological weapon. There were no initial reports of illness.

The Pentagon's mail delivery site, which is separate from the main Pentagon building, was evacuated and shut down Monday after sensors triggered an alarm around 10:30 a.m. EST, spokesman Glenn Flood said. It was expected to remain closed until at least Tuesday while the investigation continued.

Hours later, sensors at the second Defense Department mailroom were triggered. Firefighters in the nearby Bailey's Crossroads section of Fairfax County, Va., reported that a military mailroom had been shut down after a hazardous-material alert. No one was allowed to leave a high-rise complex that houses the facility until mid-evening Monday.

Pentagon spokeswoman Lt. Cmdr. Jane Campbell said mail at both facilities were irradiated before arriving at either one. The radiation treatment would kill any anthrax bacteria, but sensors would still be able to detect it.

She had no information about the origin of the two pieces of mail.

About 175 people work at the Pentagon's mail facility, and another 100 may have been in contact with deliveries for the Pentagon, officials said.

Medical personnel took cultures from anyone who may have had contact with those deliveries, and those people were also offered a three-day course of antibiotics and told to watch for the signs of anthrax exposure: fever, sweats and chills.

Follow-up tests were being conducted at the U.S. Army Research Institute for Infectious Diseases at Fort Detrick, Md., officials said. They would take two to three days to complete.

General operations at the Pentagon appeared unaffected.

Anthrax can be spread through the air or by skin contact. Officials noted that sometimes anthrax sensors can give false-positive results.

Several cases involving letters laced with killer substances remain unsolved.

In October 2001, someone sent anthrax in letters through the mail to media and government offices in Washington, Florida and elsewhere, raising fears of bioterrorism. Five people were killed and 17 more sickened.

In October 2003, two letters containing the poison ricin, sent to the Transportation Department and White House, were intercepted before they

reached their destinations. The letters objected to new rules for long-haul truckers.

A small amount of ricin was discovered Feb. 2, 2004, on a mail-opening machine in the office suite of Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn. The discovery led to a shutdown of three Senate office buildings for several days, and about two dozen staffers and Capitol police officers underwent decontamination.

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March 15:

From ABC 7 News: Virginia Defense Facility Locked Down

Location: Bailey's Crossroads, Va.

Posted: March 15, 2005 7:37 AM EST

URL: <http://www.wjla.com/news/stories/0305/213595.html>

Bailey's Crossroads, Va. (AP) - Fairfax County officials say they hope to know the results of anthrax tests Tuesday. Until then, three buildings in the Bailey's Crossroads area remain closed.

The buildings were shut down after mail at a military facility tested positive for anthrax Monday. There was a similar scare at the Pentagon.

Fairfax County Fire and Rescue spokesman Dan Schmidt says a lab is testing the substance right now and officials hope to have results Tuesday. Schmidt says he doesn't know if the incident in Fairfax County is linked to the one at the Pentagon.

Schmidt says the buildings in Bailey's Crossroads will be closed at least for Tuesday but he doesn't what will happen after that.

There have been no reports of illness.

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From ABC 7 News: All Clear at IRS

Location: Washington

Posted: March 15, 2005 12:06 PM EST

URL: <http://www.wjla.com/news/stories/0305/213649.html>

Washington (AP) - The all clear has been given at the IRS building in downtown D.C.

D.C. Fire Department spokesman Alan Etter says the hazmat team cleared out after firefighters concluded with a "high degree of certainty" that a powdery substance found in a letter was not anthrax. But Etter says there is a protein present, and it's a chemical similar to strychnine. Etter says more testing is needed.

The hazmat team then went to CNN's offices in the 800 block of First Street, Northeast because of a report of a suspicious package. Etter says a letter was found to have some ammonium phosphate on it, but that is not harmful.

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From ABC 7 News:

D.C. Postal Facility Closed After Anthrax Scare in Virginia

Location: Washington

Posted: March 15, 2005 5:14 PM EST

URL: <http://www.wjla.com/news/stories/0305/213633.html>

 **eVideo: Anthrax Scare Closes D.C. Post Office**

Washington (AP) - The Postal Service says it's taking a cautious approach by closing the V Street postal sorting facility.

The facility only handles government mail. It was closed after signs of anthrax were detected on mail at military mail facilities at the Pentagon and Bailey's Crossroads.

A little over 200 people work at the facility and they are being given antibiotics as a precaution. There are no reports of any health problems. D.C. Health Director Doctor Gregg Pane says there's no reason to panic. He calls it "prudent" to offer the antibiotics to workers at the V Street facility.

About 50 people got the medication last night and another 150 are being taken Tuesday to get it at D.C. General Hospital. Pane says no positive cultures have been detected so far, but area hospitals are being advised to watch for symptoms like respiratory problems, rashes and flu-like symptoms.

Postal spokesman Jerry McKiernan says tests on the building are under way and he does not know how long it will be closed.

Mail arrives at the V Street facility in bulk and is immediately shipped to New

Jersey, where it is irradiated before being returned to Washington. People only handle the mail after it has been irradiated.

McKiernan points out that anthrax will show up on a test even though it is dead anthrax.

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Buildings Remain Closed After Anthrax Scare

Written by The Associated Press

Created: 3/15/2005 7:11:25 AM

Last Updated: 3/15/2005 12:33:34 PM

Fairfax County officials say they hope to know the results of anthrax tests today. Until then, three buildings in the Bailey's Crossroads area remain closed.

The buildings were shut down after mail at a military facility tested positive for anthrax yesterday. There was a similar scare at the Pentagon.

Fairfax County Fire and Rescue spokesman Dan Schmidt says a lab is testing the substance right now and officials hope to have results Tuesday. Schmidt says he doesn't know if the incident in Fairfax County is linked to the one at the Pentagon.

Schmidt says the buildings in Bailey's Crossroads will be closed at least for today but he doesn't know what will happen after that.

There have been no reports of illness.

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Related Video

[Jan Fox Reports](#)

Anthrax Scare Spreads

Written By The Associated Press

Created: 3/15/2005 12:27:06 PM

Last Updated: 3/15/2005 5:41:30 PM

Another postal facility in the DC area was closed Tuesday as concern spread over the detection of anthrax in two pieces of mail at military

mailrooms.

Hundreds of workers were offered antibiotics as a precaution, though no unusual health problems were reported.

Officials said the mail in question had been irradiated, so any anthrax in them was inert when they triggered alarms at the Pentagon mail facility and a Baileys Crossroads facility that handles military mail.

Environmental testing was being conducted on the two military mail facilities and on a third postal facility in Northeast DC, which was closed Tuesday because it may have handled the mail that went to the two military mailrooms.

Antibiotics were offered to some 200 workers at the DC facility and to workers at the military mailrooms.

Hospitals were told to be on the lookout for symptoms like respiratory problems, rashes or flu-like symptoms that could signal exposure to anthrax, which can be used as a biological weapon.

"This is a prudent course of action. I don't think there's cause for alarm or panic or undue worry," said Dr. Gregg Pane, director of the city's Department of Health. "We've also mobilized our strategic national stockpile so we have enough antibiotics available should the need arise."

At the White House, spokesman Scott McClellan said President Bush was told of the developments.

"The initial testing came back positive. There was some additional testing that was done and it was inconclusive," McClellan said. "We're still waiting on more definitive results."

Also on Tuesday, a hazardous materials team was called to a building occupied by the Internal Revenue Service after a report of a powdery substance found in a letter. IRS officials said in a statement later that "initial tests were negative for chemical or biological substances."

At the Pentagon, officials on Tuesday corrected inaccurate information about when mailroom sensors were triggered over the possible presence of anthrax.

Spokesman Glenn Flood said the mail that tested positive for anthrax

passed through the Pentagon's mail handling facility on Thursday, not Monday, as he previously said. The test results on the mail did not come back until Monday.

Anthrax was confirmed in two items of mail at the two military mail facilities. The Pentagon's mail delivery site, which is separate from the main Pentagon building, was evacuated and shut down Monday remained closed, along with a nearby satellite facility in Baileys Crossroads.

Officials disclosed no information about the origins of the two pieces of mail.

About 175 people work at the Pentagon's mail facility, and an additional 100 may have been in contact with deliveries for the Pentagon, officials said.

Follow-up tests were being conducted at the U.S. Army Research Institute for Infectious Diseases at Fort Detrick, Md., officials said. They would take two to three days to complete.

Anthrax can be spread through the air or by skin contact. Officials noted that sometimes anthrax sensors can give false-positive results.

In October 2001, someone sent anthrax in letters through the mail to media and government offices in Washington, Florida and elsewhere, raising fears of bioterrorism.

Five people were killed and 17 more sickened. Those cases have never been solved.

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Anatomy of Anthrax

Last Updated: 3/15/2005 8:17:15 PM

Health Hotline:
703-246-2411

- [How inhalation anthrax kills](#)
- [How cutaneous anthrax is contracted](#)
- [Anthrax questions answered](#)
- [How to handle suspicious mail](#)
- [Interactive Tutorial \(requires Flash\)](#)

What Is Anthrax?

Anthrax is a serious disease caused by *Bacillus anthracis*, a bacterium that forms spores. A bacterium is a very small organism made up of one cell. Many bacteria can cause disease. A spore is a cell that is dormant (asleep) but may come to life with the right conditions.

There are three types of anthrax:

- **skin (cutaneous)**
- **lungs (inhalation)**
- **digestive (gastrointestinal)**

How Do You Get It?

Anthrax is not known to spread from one person to another.

Anthrax from animals. Humans can become infected with anthrax by handling products from infected animals or by breathing in anthrax spores from infected animal products (like wool, for example). People also can become infected with gastrointestinal anthrax by eating undercooked meat from infected animals.

Anthrax as a weapon. Anthrax also can be used as a weapon. This happened in the United States in 2001. Anthrax was deliberately spread through the postal system by sending letters with powder containing anthrax. This caused 22 cases of anthrax infection.

SUSPICIOUS MAIL ALERT

If you receive a suspicious letter or package:

[Click the link above for instructions.](#)

How Dangerous Is Anthrax?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention classifies agents with recognized bioterrorism potential into three priority areas (A, B and C). Anthrax is classified as a Category A agent. Category A agents are those that:

- pose the greatest possible threat for a bad effect on public health
- may spread across a large area or need public awareness
- need a great deal of planning to protect the public's health

In most cases, early treatment with antibiotics can cure cutaneous anthrax. Even if untreated, 80 percent of people who become infected with cutaneous anthrax do not die. Gastrointestinal anthrax is more serious because between one-fourth and more than half of cases lead to death. Inhalation anthrax is much more severe. In 2001, about half of the cases of inhalation anthrax ended in death.

What Are the Symptoms?

The symptoms (warning signs) of anthrax are different depending on the type of the disease:

- **Cutaneous:** The first symptom is a small sore that develops into a blister. The blister then develops into a skin ulcer with a black area in the center. The sore, blister and ulcer do not hurt.
- **Gastrointestinal:** The first symptoms are nausea, loss of appetite, bloody diarrhea, and fever, followed by bad stomach pain.
- **Inhalation:** The first symptoms of inhalation anthrax are like cold or flu symptoms and can include a sore throat, mild fever and muscle aches. Later symptoms include cough, chest discomfort, shortness of breath, tiredness and muscle aches. (Caution: Do not assume that just because a person has cold or flu symptoms that they have inhalation anthrax.)

How Soon Do Infected People Get Sick?

Symptoms can appear within 7 days of coming in contact with the bacterium for all three types of anthrax. For inhalation anthrax, symptoms can appear within a week or can take up to 42 days to appear.

How Is Anthrax Treated?

Antibiotics are used to treat all three types of anthrax. Early identification and treatment are important.

Prevention after exposure. Treatment is different for a person who is exposed to anthrax, but is not yet sick. Health-care providers will use antibiotics (such as ciprofloxacin, doxycycline, or penicillin) combined with the anthrax vaccine to prevent anthrax infection.

Treatment after infection. Treatment is usually a 60-day course of antibiotics. Success depends on the type of anthrax and how soon treatment begins.

Can Anthrax Be Prevented?

Vaccination. There is a vaccine to prevent anthrax, but it is not yet available for the general public. Anyone who may be exposed to anthrax, including certain members of the U.S. armed forces, laboratory workers, and workers who may enter or re-enter contaminated areas, may get the vaccine. Also, in the event of an attack using anthrax as a weapon, people exposed would get the vaccine.

What Should I Do if I Think I Have Anthrax?

If you are showing symptoms of anthrax infection, call your health-care provider right away.

What Should I Do if I Think I Have Been Exposed to Anthrax?

Contact local law enforcement immediately if you think that you may have been exposed to anthrax. This includes being exposed to a suspicious package or envelope that contains powder.

What Is CDC Doing To Prepare For a Possible Anthrax Attack?

CDC is working with state and local health authorities to prepare for an anthrax attack. Activities include:

- Developing plans and procedures to respond to an attack using anthrax.
- Training and equipping emergency response teams to help state and local governments control infection, gather samples, and

- perform tests. Educating health-care providers, media, and the general public about what to do in the event of an attack.
- Working closely with health departments, veterinarians, and laboratories to watch for suspected cases of anthrax. Developing a national electronic database to track potential cases of anthrax.
 - Ensuring that there are enough safe laboratories for quickly testing of suspected anthrax cases.
 - Working with hospitals, laboratories, emergency response teams, and health-care providers to make sure they have the supplies they need in case of an attack.

Workers Fear Anthrax Attack

Written By Kari Pugh

Online Regional Reporter

Last Updated: 3/15/2005 11:37:19 PM

Created: 3/15/2005 5:26:12 PM

At first, it seemed like another aggravation of life after 9/11.

Nearly 800 Department of Defense workers were locked down in their offices in Baileys Crossroads until late Monday night. They were forced to wait inside for five and six hours, told only that the complex was undergoing a hazmat situation.

But by the next morning, the situation seemed reminiscent of the anthrax attacks of October 2001. And exposed workers were worried.

The possibility of anthrax-spiked letters shut down the Baileys Crossroads office, a mail facility at the Pentagon and a post office on V Street in Northeast Washington on Tuesday.

The FBI and an army of local, state and federal officials converged on the three facilities. Hundreds of workers were decontaminated and offered antibiotics.

But the word "anthrax" still hasn't been uttered to most employees of the Skyline Towers in Baileys Crossroads.

When employees were finally allowed to leave about 9:30 p.m. Monday night, they were told only to wash thoroughly, clean their jewelry, place their clothes and shoes into plastic bags and await word from health officials.

The performance disgusted members of the DC-based legal group Judicial Watch, which represents over 2,000 workers of the once anthrax-infested Brentwood postal facility.

Judicial Watch president Tom Fitton says the postal service and government officials "haven't learned their lesson."

"It's just like four years ago, these folks went home from work not knowing if they brought this stuff home to their families," Fitton said. "The kids run up and hug them, and the parents don't know if they've given the kids a noseful of anthrax."

In October 2003, Judicial Watch filed suit on behalf of 2,000 Brentwood workers who claimed the postal service lied to them about the safety of their workplace. The suit alleged that the postal service knew about the dangers workers faced four days before shutting down the facility.

Two employees died after being exposed to anthrax spores and a third barely survived.

The workers, complaining that they still suffer from anthrax exposure and from the side effects of antibiotics, sought \$100 million in damages.

Earlier this year, a U.S. District Court judge dismissed the lawsuit on a legal flaw, but called the treatment of Brentwood postal workers "outrageous."

Experts say very little is known about anthrax contamination and its effects on the body since few people who have contracted the disease have survived.

"It's such a financial burden for the government to shut down the postal offices," Fitton said. "And the government doesn't want to spread fear about anthrax. So they're willing to put workers at risk to save themselves money and not scare the public."

For more information on this story or to suggest story ideas, please [click here](#) to send Kari Pugh email

Anthrax Tests Return Negative; Skyline To Remain Closed

Written by The Associated Press
Created: 3/15/2005 9:55:35 PM
Last Updated: 3/16/2005 10:17:29 AM

Looks like the anthrax scare in northern Virginia was a false alarm.

Officials said Tuesday that additional tests of suspected anthrax spores came back negative, indicating that it was NOT anthrax.

Still, three buildings in the Falls Church Skyline office complex will remain closed Wednesday, pending further tests of samples taken from the hazmat incident.

Monday, initial tests indicated that deadly spores might have infected the mail.

Responding to what now appear to have been false alarms, officials gave antibiotics to nearly 900 postal workers and closed three mail facilities --two that serve the Pentagon and one in the District that handles mail on its way to the military.

In more than three years since the 2001 anthrax-by-mail attacks, there have been scores of initial tests that falsely reported anthrax in government mailrooms.

MAIL DELIVERY TO CAPITOL HILL STOPPED

Feds Close V Street Postal Facility

POSTED: 10:36 am EST March 15, 2005

UPDATED: 9:04 pm EST March 15, 2005

WASHINGTON -- All mail delivery to Capitol Hill has been stopped as a result of the anthrax scare in the Washington area.

The U.S. Postal Service has shut down the V Street postal facility in northeast Washington. A spokesman said testing is under way to see if there is any contamination in that building.

D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams said in a news conference outside D.C. General Hospital that all mail headed to the Pentagon and Capitol Hill facilities comes through the V Street facility at 3070 V St., N.E.

Williams said about 250 people are employed there.

Dr. Gregg Pane, chief medical officer for the District, said employees were given the antibiotic Cipro as a precaution against possible biohazards. Pane said the antibiotic was distributed from D.C. General and health officials would continue giving it out until all it has been received by all employees.

But health officials said it is up to the individual employee to decide whether they would start taking it.

Three federal mailroom facilities in Fairfax County, Va., have been closed indefinitely until officials in Virginia learn what caused sensors that detect hazardous materials to sound off Monday.

Fairfax County Fire and Rescue spokesman Dan Schmidt said a lab is testing the substance right now and officials hope to have results sometime on Tuesday.

Schmidt said right now authorities don't know what triggered the alarms and they won't know until final testing is complete.

Virginia Department of Health officials said there were signs of a suspicious substance at both a Pentagon mail facility and a Fairfax County military mailroom in the Bailey's Crossroads area. Pentagon officials said 70 tests done in areas around that mail facility have come back negative for anthrax.

The Bailey's Crossroads building was locked down for six hours Monday and 45 workers had to be decontaminated. County health officials said they were given the option to start taking antibiotics, but no one has reported any illness. Workers were locked out of the building Tuesday.

No Anthrax Found at IRS Building

Updated: Tuesday, Mar. 15, 2005 - 11:47 AM

WASHINGTON - Hazardous materials crews determined Tuesday that a powdery substance found in a letter at the IRS building downtown was not anthrax.

But the substance was some type of a poison, possibly something along the lines of rat poison, says Alan Etter, D.C. Fire and EMS spokesman.

"We determined that this material has a biological presence," said Etter. "It has a protein. Precisely what it is, we're not quite sure. It has set off enough alarms for us to send this material out to have it tested further."

The hazardous materials team was called to the scene at 12th and Constitution, NW, Tuesday morning after the substance was found Monday in an Overnight Express envelope on the 7th floor of the IRS building.

Two women who came in contact with the substance inside the envelope have taken every precaution, Etter says.

He says there have been no reports of illness.


Hazardous materials crews also responded Tuesday morning to CNN's offices in the 800 block of First Street, NE, because of a report of a suspicious package.

Etter says a letter was found to have some ammonium phosphate on it, but that is not harmful.

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D.C. Postal Workers Given Antibiotics as Precaution

Updated: Tuesday, Mar. 15, 2005 - 11:20 AM

 [WTOP's Mitchell Miller reports D.C. is working with federal officials to get antibiotics for 250 workers.](#)

WASHINGTON (AP) - Some D.C. postal workers are being given antibiotics as a precaution, after an anthrax scare at two military mail facilities in Virginia.

D.C. Mayor Tony Williams says workers at the V Street postal facility are being offered a three-day course of antibiotics as a precaution. The V Street facility has been closed pending a check by environmental crews.

The city's chief medical officer says there has been no report of any illness but this is a "proper first step."

Signs of anthrax have been detected at mail that passed through the Pentagon and a facility at Bailey's Crossroads. More tests are being done.

The city swung into action because the mail may have passed through the V Street facility.

Hospitals are asked to be on the lookout for any cases of illness that might be suspicious for anthrax.

Two D.C. postal workers died in the 2001 anthrax by mail attacks and two others were injured, including a worker from Stafford County, Va.

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Anthrax scare closes four mail facilities in Washington area

Updated: Tuesday, Mar. 15, 2005 - 2:20 PM

Washington (dpa) - Five mail facilities were closed in the Washington area on Tuesday due to possible release of anthrax, and at least four of them handled mail for the Pentagon, officials said.

A remote mail delivery facility was closed early Monday outside the Pentagon, where at least one "positive detection" of anthrax was determined, according to a statement from the defence department.

"Cultures are being taken from all personnel who may have had contact with deliveries," the Pentagon said. "Those personnel have also been given the option to begin antibiotic treatment if desired."

Three other facilities in Fairfax County, which surrounds the Pentagon, were also closed down after biological and chemical detectors rang an alarm on Monday.

The three buildings were "inter-connected" facilities at the Skyline office complex, according to Fairfax County officials, who said employees had been provided with instructions on anthrax.

"At this time, it is not clear if this is a false positive or a true positive result. Therefore, additional laboratory tests are being conducted, including cultures to confirm the presence of *Bacillus anthracis* and determine if the organisms are capable of causing disease," the county said in a statement.

The health officer for the District of Columbia, where the U.S. capital is located across the Potomac River from the Pentagon, said in broadcast remarks that a mail facility had been closed down, also out of concern of anthrax release.

D.C. officials were in touch with the Pentagon, the Department of Homeland Security and the Centre for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia.

In the weeks after the terrorist attacks in 2001, at least half a dozen people died in a yet unsolved attack of anthrax distributed through the mail in Florida, Washington and New York City.

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March 16:

From ABC 7 News: V Street Postal Facility May Soon Reopen

Location: Washington

Posted: March 16, 2005 10:13 AM EST

URL: <http://www.wjla.com/news/stories/0305/213873.html>

Washington (AP) - The V Street postal facility in Northeast may soon be back in business.

Postal service spokeswoman Deborah Yackley tells WTOP radio they're hoping to get word later this morning on when the facility will be reopening.

The postal facility was closed Tuesday as a precaution after signs of anthrax were detected on mail at military mail facilities at the Pentagon and Bailey's Crossroads. A little over 200 people work at the V Street facility that handles only

government mail. They were given antibiotics as a precaution.

Yackley says the final tests for anthrax at V Street turned up negative. Tests at the other military mail facilities for anthrax also turned up negative.

**From ABC 7 News:
Anthrax Scare Turns Out To Be False Alarm**

Location: Pentagon

Posted: March 16, 2005 1:00 PM EST

URL: <http://www.wjla.com/news/stories/0305/213752.html>

eVideo: Anthrax Tests Come Back Negative

Pentagon (AP) - An apparent mix-up at a Richmond, Va., laboratory is being blamed for the anthrax scare that closed three area mail facilities that handle Pentagon-bound mail, and prompted nearly 900 workers to receive antibiotics.

The two-day scare that recalled the fatal bioterrorism attacks of 2001 turned out to be a false alarm after definitive tests at two facilities came back negative Tuesday for the deadly spores.

Officials believe the confusion stemmed from a mistake at the laboratory that did the initial testing, and the mistaken conclusion was confirmed by a Defense Department laboratory at Fort Detrick, Md.

The working theory is that workers at the initial laboratory, Commonwealth Biotechnology Inc. in Richmond, contaminated the sample taken from the Pentagon with actual anthrax that is kept on hand for comparison purposes, a Homeland Security official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Wednesday. That would explain why the sample came back as positive for anthrax.

That initial sample, possibly already contaminated, was then delivered to Fort Detrick, which confirmed the presence of anthrax. "It had already been handled by the contractor," said Caree Vander Linden, spokeswoman for the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases at Fort Detrick.

Later tests proved negative and officials realized the initial error, officials said.

Robert Harris, chief operating officer of Commonwealth Biotechnology, said it is premature to conclude that there was contamination at his lab and said testing is ongoing.

"The issue of contamination is questionable," he said. He said he still believes that the original sample might have been "a true positive sample" for anthrax. "That's a possibility at this point."

He said his company does daily testing on swabs taken from filters at the Pentagon mail facility.

Warning signs at the two Pentagon mail facilities on Monday led to the comprehensive testing. Nearly 900 workers were given precautionary antibiotics, and officials closed three mail facilities, including two that serve the Pentagon.

"We have nothing to suggest anything remotely like the events of October 2001," said Dr. William Winkenwerder, assistant defense secretary for health affairs, said.

In 2001 anthrax-by-mail attacks killed five people and panicked Americans still raw from the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Since then, scores of initial tests in government mailrooms have falsely reported anthrax.

Anthrax can be spread through contact with the skin.

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Anthrax Scare Was False Alarm

Written by The Associated Press

Last Updated: 3/16/2005 12:45:30 PM

An apparent mix-up at a military laboratory is being blamed for the anthrax scare that closed three area mail facilities that handle Pentagon-bound mail, and prompted nearly 900 workers to receive antibiotics.

The two-day scare that recalled the fatal bioterrorism attacks of 2001 turned out to be a false alarm after definitive tests at two facilities came back negative Tuesday for the deadly spores.

Officials believe the confusion stemmed from a mistake at a Defense Department laboratory at Fort Detrick, Md. Officials there apparently mixed up a sample of actual anthrax that is kept on hand for comparison purposes with the sample taken from a Pentagon mailroom, a senior administration official said.

Later tests proved negative and officials realized their error, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Warning signs at the two Pentagon mail facilities on Monday led to the comprehensive testing. Nearly 900 workers were given precautionary antibiotics, and officials closed three mail facilities at the Pentagon and

in Washington.

"We have nothing to suggest anything remotely like the events of October 2001, and we hope that with further information we'll be able to completely rule out any threat at all," Dr. William Winkenwerder, assistant defense secretary for health affairs, said.

Winkenwerder said some additional tests remained incomplete. All tests that have been completed on samples from both Pentagon facilities have come back negative, he said.

Workers who were advised to take antibiotics would be told to stop if those tests also proved negative, Winkenwerder said.

In the meantime, area hospitals were advised to look out for respiratory problems, rashes and flu-like symptoms that could signal exposure to anthrax.

In 2001 anthrax-by-mail attacks killed five people and panicked Americans still raw from the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Since then, scores of initial tests in government mailrooms have falsely reported anthrax. But this week's alarm was set off by two alert systems that independently suggested the presence of the bacteria - what officials now believe was a coincidence.

First, a filter on a device that screens mail for chemical and biological agents on the Pentagon grounds tested positive for anthrax. Separately, an alert was set off at a nearby satellite mail processing facility. Officials set out to retest the initial filter and gathered additional samples from the facilities for testing.

Initially, tests suggested anthrax might be present, according to a counterterrorism official close to the investigation. Subsequent testing of both the initial filter and of other samples at both locations came back negative, Winkenwerder said.

"We're very encouraged with the information that we now have in hand," he said.

As a precaution, antibiotics were given to 166 employees at a post office processing center in the District of Columbia and to about 700 workers at the facility on the Pentagon grounds in Arlington, Va., and the satellite facility several miles away in Fairfax County, Va.

Virginia officials said they received fewer than 10 calls from concerned residents, perhaps indicating a change in how the public confronts a potential crisis. State homeland security director George W. Foresman said the government response to the scare, on the local, state and federal levels, was far better coordinated than in 2001.

"The unfortunate reality of when we have an event like this is we become better honed in our skill set in dealing with it," Foresman said.

Anthrax can be spread through contact with the skin. A more serious form of the disease, inhalation anthrax, is contracted by breathing in spores. After the 2001 attacks, health officials concluded that some people can contract the disease through exposure to a small number of the microbes.

Mix-Up May Have Caused Anthrax Scare

Written by Emily Schmidt

Last Updated: 3/16/2005 7:02:07 PM

There's new information on the reopening of the military mail facilities after new tests show there are no signs of anthrax in three sites across the area.

Final test results due back Thursday may show if a lab mix-up may have made it look like there was anthrax in the buildings when there really wasn't.

Mail facilities and buildings are reopening although the matter is far from closed.

On Wednesday afternoon, we got the word that most of the Skyline office complex that's been closed all week due to anthrax fears will be back to business as usual on Friday with one exception.

Emily Schmidt's report

It will be almost back to normal at the Baileys Crossroads Skyline complex. The Fairfax County Health Department says there's no health risk to anyone who works in the three buildings.

But one section will stay blocked off and that is the Department of Defense eighth floor mailroom, where sensors picked up hazardous material signals Monday. Final FBI lab results there are still pending.

Meanwhile, officials say the anthrax false alarms at the pentagon's mail facility mean it's safe to reopen DC's V Street postal site and it's safe for postal workers to stop taking precautionary antibiotics.

Now that it seems there will be no national anthrax crisis, local officials want to step in. They blame what they called failed communication lines between the Department of Defense and area agencies.

Eleanor Holmes Norton is calling for a Congressional hearing on this anthrax scare and she's not the only upset voice.

Fairfax County officials say the Pentagon waited hours to say there may be trouble in the air.

Meanwhile, there are no reports of illnesses from anyone in any of the three buildings and Fairfax County says anyone in Baileys Crossroads who bagged up their belongings Monday night can safely use them again.

Click on video to see Emily Schmidt's report.

NBC4.COM

MAIL FACILITIES REMAIN CLOSED

Authorities: So Far, No Anthrax Detected

POSTED: 7:43 am EST March 16, 2005

UPDATED: 8:35 am EST March 16, 2005

BAILEY'S CROSSROADS, Va. -- A federal mail facility near the Pentagon, a Department of Defense mail facility near Bailey's Crossroads, also in Virginia, and the V Street postal facility in northeast D.C. are being screened for the possibility of anthrax contamination.

And police are still guarding the DOD building in Fairfax County, Va., as the testing for possible anthrax continues.

The Department of Homeland Security released a statement that read in part, "An initial sample from the DOD Remote Delivery Facility indicated the possible presence of anthrax. Extensive additional testing has not detected any anthrax from either the DOD, RDF, or the Skyline facility."

But workers in protective gear spent hours Tuesday cleaning the V Street postal facility in northeast Washington, and officials said they were not taking any chances.

U.S. Postal Service spokesman Paul Harrington said, "There was a test at a DOD facility that indicated the possible presence of anthrax. We take that very seriously. We're acting in an over abundance of caution."

Postal employees from V Street were taken to the D.C. General health facility and given Cipro or other forms of antibiotics. In all, 900 people were given medication, just in case.

Dr. Gregg Pane, the top D.C. health officer said, "We think this is the proper first step and we think it's a prudent course of action. I don't think there's cause for panic or undue worry."

The Department of Homeland Security says additional test will be completed in the near future, but so far, no one has shown any signs of being exposed to anthrax.

REPORT: ANTHRAX SCARE IS FALSE ALARM

Tests At Two Facilities Come Back Negative

POSTED: 8:55 am EST March 16, 2005

WASHINGTON -- The anthrax scare in the D.C. region appears to have been a big false alarm, The Associated Press is reporting.

The wire service says definitive tests are back and those tests are negative for anthrax.

A senior administration official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, told The Associated Press that officials at the Fort Detrick lab apparently mixed up a sample of anthrax stored there for comparison purposes with the sample taken from a Pentagon mailroom.

The official said later tests proved negative and lab officials realized their error.

Hundreds of postal workers were given antibiotics such as Cipro on Tuesday as a precaution and three mail facilities in Virginia and the District were closed for decontamination.

This all began Monday when a special mailroom sensor went off at a Pentagon mail facility suggesting that deadly anthrax spores were present.

But Fairfax County Executive Anthony Griffin defended the government's response. "The mix-up comes after the sensors went off," Griffin said. There are testing protocols that need to be followed when these sensors go off and appropriate precautions need to be taken and that's what we've been doing."

Griffin went on to say, "I don't think we overreacted. I think we reacted just the way we're supposed to react."

WTOP:

Anthrax tests at Pentagon negative

Updated: Wednesday, Mar. 16, 2005 - 8:20 AM

WASHINGTON, Mar 15, 2005 (United Press International via COMTEX) -- The Defense Department said late Tuesday 70 tests for anthrax conducted in and around the Pentagon grounds in Virginia, Monday and Tuesday, were negative.

The tests were made following the announcement of an anthrax alert Monday. The alert was issued after a test taken the previous week showed traces of anthrax at a detached mail processing facility located on the Pentagon grounds. The facility processed mail for the Pentagon and DOD offices located in Fairfax, Va., where another, separate anthrax alert occurred Monday.

A Pentagon spokesman could not say if these results were from samples collected Monday and sent to the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases at Fort Detrick, Md. Those results were expected to take 48 to 72 hours.

The 70 tests were specific to the Pentagon and not to the satellite facility. A spokeswoman for the Virginia Department of Health told United Press International that no tests had been returned for the Fairfax site as of 9 p.m. Tuesday. She expected that the three buildings closed Tuesday because of the anthrax alert would remain closed Wednesday.

Anthrax-laced letters sent to members of the media and Congress killed five people, including two postal workers, in 2001.

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Tests find no anthrax spores at 3 mail facilities that were shut down

Updated: Wednesday, Mar. 16, 2005 - 8:40 AM

WASHINGTON -- No anthrax spores have been found in three government mail facilities that were shut down amid concerns that they had been contaminated by the deadly bacteria, Defense Department and Postal Service officials said late Tuesday.

The encouraging test results came a day after episodes in two facilities that handle Defense Department mail led to hazardous-material emergencies that were eerily reminiscent of the anthrax attacks in the fall of 2001. The attacks killed five people in four states and shut down several federal buildings here.

"We have no evidence that there was anthrax material in the mail" or in any other materials received at the Pentagon, said William Winkenwerder, assistant secretary of Defense for health affairs. "The probability is low to very low that we are dealing with a true health threat."

Gerry McKiernan, a Postal Service spokesman, said tests at a third facility in northeast Washington that handles government mail also were negative.

Winkenwerder said additional tests would continue through the night and early today. Decisions to open all three facilities could come today.

This week's scare began Monday at a mail facility near the Pentagon. Routine testing of a filter on a machine that screens mail for contaminants indicated the presence of anthrax.

The sample from the filter had been sent to a private lab last Thursday; the results came back Monday.

Meanwhile, about 6 miles from the Pentagon at a Defense Department building in Falls Church, Va., a biological sensor sounded in a mailroom Monday.

Fairfax County emergency workers locked down the building, keeping several hundred employees there for about six hours while hazardous-materials teams inspected the facility.

The incidents led to the closure of the facility in Washington, which handles mail addressed to government agencies. More than 200 postal workers there were urged to begin a three-day course of antibiotics as a precaution.

The Washington facility has no biological sensors because it receives mail from a New Jersey station that irradiates government-addressed mail, a process that renders anthrax spores inert.

The Washington facility then distributes mail to various agencies.

Defense Department mail goes to the site near the Pentagon, which passes it on to various buildings, including the one in Falls Church.

On Tuesday, scientists at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases at Fort Detrick, Md., conducted a series of tests to determine whether there was anthrax at the facilities near the Pentagon and in Falls Church.

The tests did not focus on a specific letter or package.

Winkenwerder said the tests usually take 11 to 13 hours to show the presence of anthrax, and that after 14 hours, there were no signs of the deadly bacteria.

The mail biological sensors at the Defense Department mail facilities are similar to those in many other federal government buildings that have been installed since the attacks in 2001. No one has been arrested in the attacks.

Glenn Flood, a Pentagon spokesman, said 8,000 pieces of mail received from Thursday to Tuesday are being checked.

Some of the mail had been delivered to the Pentagon and was called back as a precaution, Flood said.

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Anthrax worries not over in Virginia

Updated: Wednesday, Mar. 16, 2005 - 10:20 AM

FAIRFAX, Va., Mar 16, 2005 (United Press International via COMTEX) -- Anthrax tests at U.S. Defense Department office buildings in Fairfax are not complete and the buildings will remain closed, a spokeswoman said Wednesday.

Some 70 tests done since Monday have cleared anthrax worries at the Pentagon, located in Arlington, Va., but results were not in from tests at the separate Defense-leased Skyline office buildings to the west in Fairfax County.

"We're talking two different incidences," said Merni Fitzgerald, spokeswoman for the National Capitol Region Joint Information Center.

"There are two different things -- the Pentagon and Skyline," Fitzgerald told United Press International. "The protocols are on a different timeline because the Pentagon incident was earlier. At the Pentagon, the testing is completed and results were negative. The Skyline protocol is continuing and there are still tests pending at Skyline."

Fitzgerald said the Skyline buildings would remain closed until testing and protocols are completed.

"At that point, the Fairfax County health director will make a decision about the status of the buildings," she said. "Of course, that will be based on the results of the testing and the protocols. I cannot really predict when the tests will come back."

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Anthrax Tests at V Street Post Office Are Negative

Updated: Wednesday, Mar. 16, 2005 - 12:19 PM

WASHINGTON - The V Street post office reopened at noon Wednesday after all tests for anthrax came back negative.

"We did testing yesterday for V Street, and we got the results this morning that everything was negative," Postal Service spokeswoman Debra Yakley told WTOP Wednesday morning.

All postal employees who started taking the antibiotic Cipro as a precaution have been told to stop, says Postal Service spokesman Jerry McKiernan says

The testing was done because V Street handles the same mail as the Pentagon, where there an anthrax scare shut down two Virginia facilities - one at the Pentagon and one in Baileys Crossroadsd.

Anthrax Scare Turns Out to Be False Alarm

Updated: Wednesday, Mar. 16, 2005 - 11:27 AM

By LAURA MECKLER

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - An apparent mix-up at a laboratory is being blamed for the anthrax scare that closed three area mail facilities that handle Pentagon-bound mail, and prompted nearly 900 workers to receive antibiotics.

The two-day scare that recalled the fatal bioterrorism attacks of 2001 turned out to be a false alarm after definitive tests at two facilities came back negative Tuesday for the deadly spores.

Officials believe the confusion stemmed from a mistake at the laboratory that did the initial testing, and the mistaken conclusion was confirmed by a Defense Department laboratory at Fort Detrick, Md.

The working theory is that workers at the initial laboratory, Commonwealth Biotechnology Inc. in Richmond, Va., contaminated the sample taken from the Pentagon with actual anthrax that is kept on hand for comparison purposes, a Homeland Security official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Wednesday. That would explain why the sample came back as positive for anthrax.

That initial sample, possibly already contaminated, was then delivered to Fort Detrick, which confirmed the presence of anthrax. "It had already been handled by the contractor," said Caree Vander Linden, spokeswoman for the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases at Fort Detrick.

Later tests proved negative and officials realized the initial error, officials said.

Robert Harris, chief operating officer of Commonwealth Biotechnology, said it is premature to conclude that there was contamination at his lab and said testing is ongoing.

"The issue of contamination is questionable," he said. He said he still believes that the original sample might have been "a true positive sample" for anthrax. "That's a possibility at this point."

He said his company does daily testing on swabs taken from filters at the Pentagon mail facility.

Warning signs at the two Pentagon mail facilities on Monday led to the comprehensive testing. Nearly 900 workers were given precautionary antibiotics, and officials closed three mail facilities, including two that serve the Pentagon.

"We have nothing to suggest anything remotely like the events of October 2001," said Dr. William Winkenwerder, assistant defense secretary for health affairs, said.

In 2001 anthrax-by-mail attacks killed five people and panicked Americans still raw from the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Since then, scores of initial tests in government mailrooms have falsely reported anthrax.

Anthrax can be spread through contact with the skin.

Contaminated sample may be cause of positive anthrax tests in U.S.

Updated: Wednesday, Mar. 16, 2005 - 3:20 PM

Washington (dpa) - An anthrax scare this week in the Washington area that shook the stock market, disrupted mail deliveries and led to a nationwide alert to doctors might have been caused by a sample mix-up in a laboratory, news reports said Wednesday.

A senior military official said a sample taken from the Pentagon that turned up positive for anthrax might have been contaminated with the bacteria at a contractor's lab in Richmond, Virginia, before being passed on to the Army's biodefence laboratory at Fort Detrick, Maryland.

The official said labs that test for anthrax keep a sample of the bacteria on hand to calibrate equipment, and that sample likely contaminated a swab taken last week for routine testing from a biohazard detector's filter at a Defence Department shipping centre.

Positive anthrax tests were reported at both the Virginia and Maryland labs, causing the alerts Monday and Tuesday at four mail-handling centres in Washington and suburban Virginia.

Since then, however, 70 tests done on swabs from surfaces, air filters and machinery in and around the Pentagon have come back negative, the Pentagon's top physician said.

Dr. William Winkenwerder Jr., assistant secretary of defence for health affairs, called the negative tests "reassuring".

The two positive tests led to fears of a replay of the anthrax scare of 2001 when five people died and 17 were sickened by anthrax sent in letters to the U.S. Congress as well as media outlets in Florida and New York City and sent through a mail centre in New Jersey.

During that tense period, Winkenwerder said, "There were multiple positive tests from the environment, sort of all over the place. We don't have any of that at this time despite a lot of testing."

Nearly 1,000 postal and Pentagon workers were told they should take antibiotics to combat possible infection by anthrax and were told to keep taking them until all testing is finished, probably this week.

March 17:

From ABC 7 News: Fairfax Co. Buildings in Anthrax Scare Reopen

Location: Bailey's Crossroads, Va.

Posted: March 17, 2005 7:25 AM EST

URL: <http://www.wjla.com/news/stories/0305/213963.html>

Bailey's Crossroads, Va. (AP) - It's back to work Thursday for employees in three office buildings in Bailey's Crossroads that were shut for an anthrax scare.

The Department of Homeland Security says the buildings in the 5100 of Leesburg Pike will re-open in the morning. The only exception is that one suite in one of the towers will remain closed, while more tests are done.

Hundreds of workers were detained Monday night because of fears there might have been anthrax. That now appears to have been a false alarm. But between 40 and 50 people who were close to the Department of Defense mail room were given antibiotics as a precaution.

Officials also say people who were told to put their clothes and other belongings

in plastic bags can now take them out and re-use them.

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Buildings Involved in Anthrax Scare to Reopen

Updated: Thursday, Mar. 17, 2005 - 4:37 AM

BAILEYS CROSSROADS, Va. - It's back to work Thursday for employees in three office buildings in Baileys Crossroads that were shut for an anthrax scare.

The Department of Homeland Security says the buildings at 5109, 5111 and 5113 Leesburg Pike will reopen Thursday morning. The only exception is that one suite -- Suite 810 in Skyline 5 -- will remain closed, while more tests are done in the mailroom.

Dr. Gloria Addo-Ayensu, director of the Fairfax County Health Department, determined that there is no health risk to the people who work there.

Hundreds of workers were detained Monday night because of fears there might have been anthrax. That now appears to have been a false alarm. But between 40 and 50 people who were closest to the Department of Defense mail room were given antibiotics as a precaution.

Officials also say people who were told to put their clothes and other belongings in plastic bags can now take them out and use them again.

Officials Sort Out Anthrax Scare Aftermath

Updated: Thursday, Mar. 17, 2005 - 12:01 AM

By LAURA MECKLER

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - Federal officials began to sort through their handling of this week's anthrax scare, which closed three mail facilities and prompted nearly 900 workers to take antibiotics.

Problems included lack of coordination among many agencies involved and what appeared to have been a serious laboratory error that wrongly suggested the presence of anthrax at a Pentagon mail facility, according to officials close to the events.

The Pentagon said Wednesday it was investigating how the error was made. The FBI, called in to handle a potential criminal case, was instead examining what went wrong, said Debra Weierman, spokeswoman for the FBI's Washington field office.

Investigators are trying to figure out why two lab tests suggested anthrax was present at the Pentagon mail processing center. They also were looking at why a sensor went off at a second military mail facility, indicating the presence of a suspicious biological substance.

The scare evoked memories of the 2001 anthrax attacks, which killed five, sickened 17 and have yet to be solved.

After further testing, military officials said late Tuesday they were confident no anthrax was present.

But that information came after officials had closed both military facilities as well as a Postal Service center that handles mail on its way to the Pentagon and had distributed three-day supplies of antibiotics to nearly 900 workers as a precaution. On Wednesday, the Postal Service reopened its processing center, and authorities said the Pentagon buildings were expected to reopen on Thursday.

Officials do not know for certain what triggered the false alarm.

The working theory is that employees at the lab that did the initial testing, Commonwealth Biotechnology Inc. in Richmond, Va., contaminated the sample taken from the Pentagon with actual anthrax that is kept on hand for comparison purposes, a Homeland Security Department official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Wednesday. That would explain why the sample came back as positive for anthrax.

That initial sample, possibly already contaminated, was later delivered to a Defense Department laboratory at Fort Detrick, Md., which confirmed the presence of anthrax. "It had already been handled by the contractor," said Caree Vander Linden, spokeswoman for the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases at Fort Detrick.

When later tests proved negative, officials concluded the initial results were wrong.

Robert Harris, chief operating officer of Commonwealth Biotechnology, said that is a premature conclusion. He said it is not clear whether there was contamination at his lab, which does daily testing on swabs taken from filters at the Pentagon mail facility. He said testing was trying to figure out what happened.

"The issue of contamination is questionable," he said. He said he still believes that the original sample might have been "a true positive sample" for anthrax. "That's a possibility at this point."

One question under discussion is why this testing was performed by a lab that is not part of the federal Laboratory Response Network, which includes some 140 labs that are trained to respond to possible bioterror incidents. The federal protocol for handling possible anthrax attacks involves using a network lab.

Also unclear is when and how and when various officials were notified about the potential anthrax.

Harris said his lab had the initial positive result back on Friday. The lab was told by the principal contractor, Vistronix, to perform further tests over the weekend to see if the initial results were confirmed, according to officials at both companies.

Pentagon spokesman Glenn Flood said Pentagon officials were not told of the positive test until Monday morning, three days later. Federal health authorities and officials at the Postal Service were not notified until Monday afternoon.

The delay is worrisome because had it been real anthrax, antibiotics should have been started as soon as possible after exposure.

The Postal Service, where two workers died of inhalation anthrax in 2001, is particularly sensitive to this.

"What we learned in 2001 is as much as a threat that anthrax may pose ... if you do timely medication of the exposed individuals you really can virtually eliminate any complications," said Tom Day, vice president for engineering.

Anthrax-linked closings lifted in Virginia

Updated: Thursday, Mar. 17, 2005 - 8:20 AM

WASHINGTON, Mar 16, 2005 (United Press International via COMTEX) -- Three buildings in Fairfax County, Va., that were closed Monday after a positive test for anthrax, were to reopen Thursday, March 17, officials announced.

Workers in the office complex were locked down well into the evening Monday after equipment in a mail room alerted workers to the possible presence of anthrax. The alert came only hours after a similar alarm shut down a mail facility on the ground of the Pentagon, about four miles away.

Although the cause of the alerts has not been clearly identified officials are optimistic there is no health risk. There have been repeated tests at both facilities since the original alarms, all of which were negative, and the mail was irradiated prior to reaching either facility. The irradiation would have killed any live anthrax spores. The sensors are sensitive enough to still detect dead spores.

Hundreds of people stayed home because of the alarms and hundreds were given antibiotics. The precautions have become routine after anthrax-laced letters infected 17 people and killed five others in the fall of 2001.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 14, 2005

For More Information Contact

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**HEALTH DISTRICTS RESPOND TO POSITIVE SCREENING SIGNALS FOR ANTHRAX
FROM DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE SITES**

(Richmond, Va.)—The Fairfax and Arlington health districts in coordination with federal, state, and local officials are responding to positive screening signals for *Bacillus anthracis*, the agent that causes anthrax, detected by two Department of Defense air sampling sensors.

“These results are considered preliminary and additional confirmatory testing is underway,” said State Health Commissioner Robert B. Stroube, M.D., M.P.H. The sensors were located in mail facilities at the Pentagon and an office building in Fairfax County.

At this time, it appears the general public is not at risk of exposure. Health officials have spoken with employees and occupants from both of the facilities.

Health officials are monitoring the situation and will provide more information as it becomes available. Local health departments are coordinating and disseminating information to medical providers throughout the region so that they may respond appropriately to any questions or concerns from these employees.

“We understand that people will be concerned about this situation, and we are doing everything we can to respond appropriately,” said Dr. Stroube.

Anthrax is a disease caused by bacteria that create spores. People can get sick when spores enter the body. Spores can enter the body in different ways and cause different types of illness. When the spores enter through a cut or a sore, a skin infection can occur. When the spores are breathed in, they may cause serious breathing problems.

For more information about anthrax, log on to http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/EPR/Agents_Biological_Anthrax.asp In addition, you can log onto the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/anthrax/needtoknow.asp>.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 15, 2005

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**HEALTH DISTRICTS CONTINUE RESPONSE TO POSITIVE SCREENINGS
FOR ANTHRAX**

(Richmond, Va.)— The Fairfax and Arlington health districts continue to coordinate with federal, state, and local officials to respond to yesterday's reports of positive screenings for *Bacillus anthracis*, the agent that causes anthrax. These signals were detected by two Department of Defense (DOD) air sampling sensors.

Forty-two DOD postal employees at a Skyline Facility in Fairfax County, called the Skyline Postal Facility are being counseled by Department of Defense health officials and offered a three day supply of antibiotics. Risk of exposure in these employees is considered very minimal, and antibiotics are being prescribed as a precautionary measure until further laboratory test results are available.

A laboratory test conducted by the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases in Fort Detrick, M.D. last evening on specimens collected at the Pentagon Remote Distribution Facility identified genetic material indicative of anthrax. Further laboratory testing and confirmation to determine if the genetic material is dead or alive are underway.

Virginia health officials believe that the risk of anthrax exposure is very low and any risk there may be is limited to people who were specifically involved in the mail handling facilities within the two identified buildings. The general public does not appear to be at risk of exposure.

“These results are still considered preliminary and additional confirmatory testing is currently in progress,” said State Health Commissioner Robert B. Stroube, M.D., M.P.H. “We understand that the public will have concerns, and we are responding diligently and aggressively to the situation,” said Dr. Stroube.

Additional laboratory tests are pending and will likely be available over the course of the next few days.

For more information about anthrax, log on to http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/EPR/Agents_Biological_Anthrax.asp In addition, you can log onto the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site at www.bt.cdc.gov.

###



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Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs

12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 551

Fairfax, VA 22035-0065

703-324-3187, TTY 703-324-2935, FAX 703-324-2010

March 14 , 2005

Fairfax County Announces the Community Emergency Alert Network

The Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management and the Office of Public Affairs announce the creation of the Community Emergency Alert Network, or CEAN. The CEAN will be used by county officials to deliver important emergency alerts, notifications and updates to county residents during a major crisis or emergency. Messages will be delivered to e-mail accounts, cell phones (text messaging costs may apply; check with your service provider), text pagers, satellite phones and wireless PDAs registered on the system.

Persons registered on the CEAN will be provided a personal connection to real-time updates, instructions on where to go, protective actions that need to be taken, and other important information.

Alerts may include personal safety, weather, major accidents involving utilities or roadways, or disaster notification such as a terrorist attack. In addition, residents may also register for any or all of the additional CEAN alert categories: county government closings/schedule changes, severe traffic disruptions, severe weather 24/7 and severe weather 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., Monday - Friday.

To register for the Community Emergency Alert Network , visit the Fairfax County Web page, www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cean. For additional information on the CEAN, contact the Office of Emergency Management at 703-324-2362, TTY 711.

Fairfax County Government offers the CEAN as a public service that will be used in conjunction with other public notification methods, such as cable Channel 16; the Fairfax County Government Web site; the Fairfax County Government Emergency Information Line (703-817-7771, TTY 711) and area media, both radio and television.



Note to Editors : [High Resolution CEAN logo](#)

FAIRFAX COUNTY IS COMMITTED TO A POLICY OF NONDISCRIMINATION IN ALL COUNTY PROGRAMS, SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES AND WILL PROVIDE REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS UPON REQUEST. TO REQUEST SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS, CALL 703-324-3187, TTY 703-324-2935. PLEASE ALLOW FIVE WORKING DAYS IN ADVANCE OF EVENTS IN ORDER TO MAKE THE NECESSARY ARRANGEMENTS.



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12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 551

Fairfax, VA 22035-0065

703-324-3187, TTY 703-324-2935, FAX 703-324-2010

March 14, 2005

10:45 p.m.

County Responds to Hazmat Incident

Fairfax County, in coordination with federal, state, and regional officials, is responding to the activation of a Department of Defense detection system at the Skyline office complex in Fairfax County, located at 5111 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church. The mail facility is a part of an inter-connected building with addresses at 5109, 5111, and 5113 Leesburg Pike.

Fairfax County health and public safety officials responded to the scene this afternoon and provided employees and occupants of the facility information and instructions on anthrax. County officials are also monitoring the situation and will provide more information as it becomes available.

At this time, it is not clear if this is a false positive or a true positive result. Therefore, additional laboratory tests are being conducted, including cultures to confirm the presence of *Bacillus anthracis* and determine if the organisms are capable of causing disease.

As a precautionary measure, county health officials indicate that all three buildings at the scene will be closed until further notice when appropriate testing has been completed. However, health officials stress that the general public is not at risk of exposure.

The health department is also advising medical officials in the county and region of the circumstances in order to respond to questions from occupants of the Skyline facility.

Anthrax is a disease caused by bacteria that create spores. People can get sick when spores enter the body. Spores can enter the body in different ways, resulting in different types of illness. When the spores enter through a cut or a sore, a skin infection can occur. When the spores are breathed in, they may cause serious breathing problems.

For more information about anthrax, visit the Virginia Department of Health Web

page at www.vdh.virginia.gov/EPR/Agents_Biological_Anthrax.asp and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site at www.bt.cdc.gov.

The Fairfax County Health Department has set up a 24-hour, recorded information line at 703-246-2411, TTY 703-591-6435. It will be updated as information becomes available. Additional information can be found on the Health Department Web page at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd.

FAIRFAX COUNTY IS COMMITTED TO A POLICY OF NONDISCRIMINATION IN ALL COUNTY PROGRAMS, SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES AND WILL PROVIDE REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS UPON REQUEST. TO REQUEST SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS, CALL 703-324-3187, TTY 703-324-2935. PLEASE ALLOW FIVE WORKING DAYS IN ADVANCE OF EVENTS IN ORDER TO MAKE THE NECESSARY ARRANGEMENTS.



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National Capital Region News Release
March 15, 2005
3:40 p.m.

NCR Opens Joint Information Center

The National Capital Region has opened, in coordination with federal, state, regional and local jurisdictions, a Joint Information Center to address the ongoing situation at the Skyline Office Complex.

The Joint Information Center is located at the Fairfax County Alternate Emergency Operations Center, which is located at the county Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax.

The Joint Information Center will provide support to the media and should be the source media officials contact for information on the ongoing incident at the Skyline office complex.

Media calls should be directed to 703-502-6082, TTY 711.

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National Capital Region News Release
March 15, 2005
9:26 p.m.

Skyline to Remain Closed Pending Further Test Results; NCR JIC Reopens Tomorrow

Three buildings in the Falls Church Skyline office complex will remain closed Wednesday, March 16, pending further tests of samples taken from the hazmat incident. These buildings, located at 5109, 5111 and 5113 Leesburg Pike, are also known as Skyline 4, 5 and 6. The initial hazmat alert occurred Monday, March 14.

All test results received today, March 15, for anthrax have been negative, according to information provided to the Fairfax County Health Department as of 8 p.m. today. County health officials have closed the affected buildings as a cautionary measure until final testing is completed. County health officials emphasize that the general public is not at risk of exposure.

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Information for Employees of Leesburg Pike

you are here: [homepage](#) > [health department](#) > employee information



Health Department Information Update:

Information for Employees/Visitors of 5109, 5111, and 5113 Leesburg Pike

March 14, 2005

Updated March 15, 2005

Health
Department
10777 Main Street
Suite 203
Fairfax, Va
22030-6903

Media Contact:
Kimberly Cordero

Phone: 703-246-2411
Fax: 703-273-0825
TTY: 703-591-6435

You have been identified as a person who was not in the immediate vicinity of the mail processing machines at the time of the signal. (If you were in the immediate vicinity of the mail processing machines at the time of the signal please notify your supervisor immediately). Please follow these instructions:

-As soon as possible, wash your face, hands, and other skin that would have been exposed to the air at work. Any exposed jewelry (such as rings, bracelets, watches, necklaces) and eyeglasses should also be washed.

-Go directly home.

-Once at home, remove all of your clothing and shoes, taking care to not shake your clothes or generate excessive air movement when doing so.

-Place your clothing in a plastic bag and tie it. Keep this bag in a safe place and do not open or disturb it until you receive further instructions.

-Shower and shampoo your hair. Should there be any hazardous substances on the skin, showering with warm soap and water and cleaning systematically from the head down is widely considered the most effective and preferred method for removing them.

-You may be asked to complete (or may have already completed) a form asking for demographic information and your location in the building at the time of the shelter-in-place order. This information will be used to contact you for public health follow-up, if necessary.

-Await further instructions from your work supervisor and/or the public health department.

If you have questions, please call your supervisor or the Fairfax County Health Department at 703/246-2411. Information about medication follow-up, if necessary, will be distributed via the media and will be available via a recorded message at 703/246-2411.

As of this date there is no change in the situation and no new information except that 5109, 5111 and 5113 Leesburg Pike will continue to be closed tomorrow Wednesday March 16th, 2005.

[Update Skyline Bldg](#)- March 16, 2005
[County News Release](#) - March 14, 2005
[CDC information on Anthrax](#)



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National Capital Region News Release
March 16, 2005
3:45 p.m.

Skyline Office Complex to Reopen Thursday Morning **Department of Defense 8th Floor Mail Room, Skyline 5, to Remain Closed**

The three buildings in the Baileys Crossroads Skyline complex will reopen Thursday, March 17, for normal business operations based on negative laboratory tests. These offices, located at 5109, 5111 and 5113 Leesburg Pike, also are known as Skyline 4, 5 and 6.

Suite 810, Skyline 5, 5111 Leesburg Pike, will remain closed pending further test results being coordinated by the FBI.

Dr. Gloria Addo-Ayensu, director of the Fairfax County Health Department, has released the facilities to the property owners. Dr. Addo-Ayensu, in consultation with local, regional, state and federal health officers, determined that there is no health risk to building occupants based on the laboratory results. Skyline employees with questions about returning to work should contact their employers.

On Monday, March 14, the Health Department provided instructions to individuals in these buildings regarding removal and storage of personal items in their home. At this time, all of those items are considered safe.

Individuals who have personal effects in the custody of investigators will be contacted by the Defense Department Building Manager.

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NCR Joint Information Center to Close at 6 p.m., Wednesday, March 16

The National Capital Region will close its Joint Information Center today, Wednesday, March 16, at 6 p.m.


After 6 p.m., please direct all media inquiries regarding this incident to the Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs at 703-324-3189, TTY 711. For more information about the most recent test results, please contact the U.S. Department of Homeland Security at 202-282-8010, TTY 711.

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Emergency Notice

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Hazmat Incident Information

March 17, 2005
8:38 a.m.

The three buildings in the Baileys Crossroads Skyline complex reopened today, March 17, for normal business operations based on negative laboratory tests. These offices, located at 5109, 5111 and 5113 Leesburg Pike, also are known as Skyline 4, 5 and 6.

Dr. Gloria Addo-Ayensu, director of the Fairfax County Health Department, released the facilities to the property owners. Dr. Addo-Ayensu, in consultation with local, regional, state and federal health officers, determined that there is no health risk to building occupants based on the laboratory results. Skyline employees with questions about returning to work should contact their employers.

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News Releases

[Skyline Office Complex to Reopen Thursday Morning; Department of Defense 8th Floor Mail Room, Skyline 5, to Remain Closed](#)

[Skyline to Remain Closed Pending Further Test Results; NCR JIC Reopens Tomorrow](#)

[Health Districts Continue Response to Positive Screenings for Anthrax](#)

[NCR Opens Joint Information Center](#)

[County Responds to Hazmat Incident](#)

[Arlington Responds to Potential Anthrax Exposure at the Pentagon](#)

[Health Districts Respond to Positive Screening Signals for Anthrax from Department of Defense Sites](#)

Additional Information/Resources

[Fairfax County Health Department](#)

[Virginia Department of Health - anthrax information](#)

[Centers for Disease Control - anthrax information](#)

[Department of Defense Military Health System](#)

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**Arlington County, VA Government
For Immediate Release**

Monday, March 14, 2005

Contact: Charles Taylor 703-228-7943 (voice), 703-228-4611 (TTY)

Arlington Responds to Potential Anthrax Exposure at the Pentagon

ARLINGTON, Va. – Arlington officials have been working with the Pentagon since the afternoon of March 14 in response to the detection of the presence of anthrax bacteria at a mail facility at the Pentagon.

The incident in Arlington was confined to the Pentagon complex and grounds, and the general public is not at risk of exposure, according to Arlington Public Health officials.

Federal, state and local officials are monitoring the situation and are awaiting further test results from the facility. Additional information will be provided as it becomes available. To view a press release issued by the Pentagon, click [here](#). The Virginia Department of Health's press release is available [here](#).

Arlington Public Health is disseminating information to local medical providers in the area so they can respond appropriately to any questions or concerns raised by Pentagon employees, should they choose to follow up with their primary care doctors.

More information about anthrax, is available from the Virginia Department of Health at www.vdh.virginia.gov/EPR/Agents_Biological_Anthrax.asp. In addition, you can visit the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site at www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/anthrax/.

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Arlington, Va., is a world-class residential, business and tourist location that was originally part of the "10 miles square" parcel of land surveyed in 1791 to be the Nation's Capital. It is the geographically smallest self-governing county in the United States, occupying slightly less than 26 square miles. Arlington maintains a rich variety of stable neighborhoods, quality schools and enlightened land use, and received the Environmental Protection Agency's highest award for "Smart Growth" in 2002. Home to some of the most influential organizations in the world – including the Pentagon – Arlington stands out as one of America's preeminent places to live, visit and do business.

The Official Date and Time of this Release is: 3/14/2005 10:39:50 PM



Apr. 11, 2005

[War on Terror](#)[Transformation](#)[News Products](#)[Press Resources](#)[Images](#)[Websites](#)**U.S. Department of Defense**

Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs)

News Release**On the Web:**<http://www.defenselink.mil/releases/2005/nr20050314-2230.html>

Media contact: +1 (703) 697-5131

Public contact:<http://www.dod.mil/faq/comment.html>

or +1 (703) 428-0711

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DoD N**Advi****Con****Live****Pho****Rele****Slid****Spe****Tod:****Tran****Ameri****News****Artic****Tele****Spe****DoD S****About****News****News****Other****Sourc****IMMEDIATE RELEASE****No. 255-05
March 14, 2005****Positive Initial Detection for Anthrax at Pentagon**

During routine mail operations the Pentagon had a positive detection for the presence of anthrax bacteria at the Remote Delivery Facility (RDF). The RDF was evacuated while tests were conducted to determine if anthrax was present. Subsequent tests have proven negative, however, the Department is taking precautionary measures while further testing is conducted.

Cultures are being taken from all personnel who may have had contact with deliveries. Those personnel have also been given the option to begin antibiotic treatment if desired.

The RDF will resume normal operations upon the conclusion of all testing. DoD personnel can obtain additional information in the attached document at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2005/d20050314anthrax.pdf>.

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NEWS



RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**March 16, 2005
OPA 086/05
3:45 p.m.**

Skyline Office Complex to Reopen Thursday Morning Department of Defense 8th Floor Mail Room, Skyline 5, to Remain Closed

The three buildings in the Baileys Crossroads Skyline complex will reopen Thursday, March 17, for normal business operations based on negative laboratory tests. These offices, located at 5109, 5111 and 5113 Leesburg Pike, also are known as Skyline 4, 5 and 6.

Suite 810, Skyline 5, 5111 Leesburg Pike, will remain closed pending further test results being coordinated by the FBI.

Dr. Gloria Addo-Ayensu, director of the Fairfax County Health Department, has released the facilities to the property owners. Dr. Addo-Ayensu, in consultation with local, regional, state and federal health officers, determined that there is no health risk to building occupants based on the laboratory results. Skyline employees with questions about returning to work should contact their employers.

On Monday, March 14 the Health Department provided instructions to individuals in these buildings regarding removal and storage of personal items in their home. At this time, all of those items are considered safe.

Individuals who have personal effects in the custody of investigators will be contacted by the Defense Department Building Manager.

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NCR Joint Information Center to Close at 6 p.m., Wednesday, March 16

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After 6 p.m., please direct all media inquiries regarding this incident to the Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs at 703-324-3189, TTY 711. For more information about the most recent test results, please contact the U.S. Department of Homeland Security at 202-282-8010, TTY 711.

#

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Montgomery County | Prince George's County

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
City of Alexandria | Arlington County | City of Fairfax | Fairfax County | City of Falls Church | Loudoun County | City of Manassas | City of Manassas Park | Prince William County

APPENDIX D: DOD CONFERENCE CALL PARTICIPANTS

In addition to the following call log, the following phone calls were made: March 14 approximately 6:00 p.m. and March 15 at approximately 5:00 a.m. Two phone calls from TSA were made; one phone call was made on March 16 around 6:00 p.m. with the private mail carriers and one on March 17 around 12:00 p.m. This included HHS/CDC/TSA and the mail carriers possible delivering mail to the DOD facilities. DOD had contacted these carriers on Monday after the first tests came back positive. No time threshold on this call.

Participants of Conference Calls Discussing Pentagon Mail Facilities Incident

AGENCY	3/15 1300	3/15 1700	3/16 1100	3/16 1700	3/17 0700
DHS					
DHS	X	X	X	X	
DHS (State & Local)	X	X			
DHS (BioWatch)			X		
DHS (NCR)			X	X	X
FEMA (NEOC)			X		
FBI					
FBI	X	X		X	
FBI (Washington Field Office)	X	X	X	X	
FBI (WMD)	X				
FBI (Chem Bio)					X
FBI (WFO)					X
FBI (Labs)			X	X	X
USPS	X	X	X	X	
HHS					
HHS (OPHEP)	X	X	X	X	X
HHS (CDC - DEOC)	X	X	X		
HHS (CDC - SNS)	X	X			
HHS (ATSDR)	X	X		X	
HHS (OFRD)				X	
HHS (FDA)	X	X			
NDMS	X		X		
DoD					
DoD	X	X	X	X	X
DoD (US Army Med Research Institute for Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID))			X		
DoD (Army Surgeon General)		X	X		
DoD (Navy Med Research)					
DoD (Walter Reed Army Med Ctr)			X		X
DoD (OSD - Homeland Defense)	X	X	X	X	
DoD (Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine (CHPPM))	X	X			
DoD (Pentagon Police)				X	
EPA	X	X	X	X	
HSC	X	X	X		
OPM	X	X		X	
State Dept (Diplomatic Security)	X	X	X	X	
US Secret Service	X	X			
White House	X				
CIA	X				
TSA					
TSA	X			X	X
TSOC	X				
FPS	X	X		X	
Association for State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO)	X				
Kaiser Permanente	X				
District of Columbia					
DC Emergency Management Agency	X				
DC Department of Health	X	X	X		
DC Hospital Association	X		X		
DC Mayors Office	X				

**“Anthrax” Incidents
in the National Capital Region**

Participants List continued...

AGENCY	3/15 1300	3/15 1700	3/16 1100	3/16 1700	3/17 0700
Maryland					
MD EOC	X	X			
MD Emergency Management	X				
MD Dept of Health	X	X	X	X	X
Virginia					
VA EOC	X	X		X	X
VA Dept Public Safety	X	X	X		
VA State Police	X	X	X		
VA Dept of Mental Health	X	X			
VA Dept of Health	X	X	X	X	X
VA Emergency Management	X				X
Alexandria Co. Dept of Health			X		
Arlington Co.	X		X		
Arlington Co Department of Health	X				
Fairfax Co Department of Health	X		X		X
Fairfax Co EOC	X	X		X	X
Chicago Department of Health	X				
New Jersey	X	X			