



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Washington, DC 20415

The Director

Friday, November 2, 2001

MSG 2001-092b

MEMORANDUM FOR: Human Resources Directors

Subject: The Department of Health and Human Services Recommendation for Building Closures and Preventive Antibiotic Dispensing for Exposure to Anthrax Spores

Recommendations for Preventive Antibiotics

1. If testing of the building shows no exposure to anthrax, persons on antibiotics who are working in that area may discontinue taking the antibiotics.
2. If sites tested within the building show the presence of anthrax spores, persons on antibiotics should continue their antibiotic treatment, pending additional confirmatory environmental testing.
3. If a further assessment of the tested areas indicate a risk of inhalation anthrax disease, workers in the affected areas would require treatment with antibiotics for a 60-day course.
4. Persons who come in contact with letters from a mailroom that has shown exposure to anthrax spores appear to be at negligible risk of developing inhalational anthrax disease and do not require treatment with antibiotics.

It is important to note that all antibiotics are associated with some risk and should not be taken without a specific reason. Though it is uncommon for people to experience serious side effects, there have been reported cases of people having significant and severe reactions to antibiotics. In addition, taking antibiotics unnecessarily increases the risk of many types of antibiotic-resistant illnesses.

The Centers for Disease Control and the Federal Occupational Health Agency will continue to monitor the health and safety of all federal workers and will provide clinical and environmental updates, as necessary.

Building Closures

1. Buildings in which persons have developed disease due to inhaling anthrax spores are assumed to have anthrax spores in the air. These buildings, for example the Brentwood Post Office facility, will be closed for clean up.
2. In buildings where the results of these environmental tests may indicate a more than minimal exposure, but not enough to suggest that an outbreak has occurred, HHS, working in partnership with the affected federal agency, may initiate judicious testing of other, potentially affected, work areas.

3. If areas within a building which had previously been closed awaiting the results of testing show no exposure to anthrax spores or low risk of anthrax in the air, those areas will be reopened and will be scheduled for cleaning.
4. If testing in buildings that have remained open show no indication of exposure to anthrax spores or low risk of anthrax spores in the air, those areas should remain open.