



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HHS Press Office  
Contact: (202) 690-6343

## HHS preparedness grants help cities plan for anthrax attacks

### Five metropolitan areas plan delivery of anthrax antibiotics through National Postal Model

**August 1, 2011:** Five cities will receive a total of \$400,000 in National Postal Model grants from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response. The grants fund planning and exercises to incorporate U.S. Postal Service employee volunteers into community plans to deliver medication after an anthrax bioterrorism attack.

The Louisville-Jefferson County Metro Government in Kentucky, the Boston Public Health Commission, the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, and the San Diego Health and Human Services Agency will receive \$50,000 grants each for initial planning and exercises. The Minnesota Department of Health, which completed National Postal Model planning and initial exercises earlier this year, will receive a \$200,000 grant to conduct a full-scale exercise simulating an anthrax attack in the metropolitan area.

In the event of an anthrax attack, everyone potentially exposed to anthrax would need to receive an initial supply of antibiotics within 48 hours. USPS letter carriers are being recruited in these cities to voluntarily deliver antibiotics quickly to homes after an anthrax attack. Under the National Postal Model, USPS volunteers would pick up the antibiotic packages at an established location and, protected by law enforcement officers, deliver the antibiotics to homes in predetermined ZIP codes.

This method augments existing dispensing plans, which ask residents and visitors to go to a special medication dispensing site, known as a point of dispensing, to receive an initial supply of antibiotics to treat anthrax. With home delivery of the antibiotics, fewer people would need to travel to a point of dispensing and line up to receive an initial supply of drugs, thereby getting medication to people faster.

“The fatality rate for people whose lungs are infected with anthrax is extremely high if they do not receive antibiotic treatment, which means the quicker health professionals can get antibiotics into people’s hands, the quicker we can protect health and save lives,” said Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response Dr. Nicole Lurie. “The postal model offers an additional tool for local health departments to begin treating people potentially exposed to anthrax.”

Plans developed and exercised under these grants will tailor the National Postal Model for local use. These plans can be examples for health departments across the country that would want to implement the National Postal Model.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration authorized distribution of antibiotics prior to an attack for USPS volunteers, so that the volunteers can deliver medications to the rest of the community. To further assist communities in tailoring the National Postal Model for local use, ASPR is developing an online screening tool for medical screening of USPS volunteers. The screening is necessary to be sure the volunteers can take the medication.

In December 2009, President Obama issued an executive order requiring federal agencies to plan and prepare for the timely provision of medical countermeasures in the event of a biological attack, through a rapid response coordinated with state, local, territorial, and tribal governments. As a result, HHS, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and USPS developed the National Postal Model with participation by the National Association of Letter Carriers and the National Rural Letter Carriers Association.

For more information on the National Postal Model, visit [www.phe.gov/postal](http://www.phe.gov/postal).

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