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## **U.S. POSTAL SERVICE** **PROPOSES MAIL IRRADIATION FACILITY**

WASHINGTON, DC – The United States Postal Service next week will publish a “Notice of Intent” to begin the Environmental Assessment process that will determine the feasibility of constructing a postal-owned mail irradiation facility in the Washington, DC, area. The preferred site is located on Postal Service property at the Curseen-Morris Processing and Distribution Center on Brentwood Road, NE.

Immediately following the anthrax attacks in October 2001, all mail service to government offices within Washington, DC, was halted until measures could be implemented to assure the safety of the mail. To meet the immediate needs of the federal government, the Postal Service contracted to have government mail irradiated at contractor facilities in Ohio and New Jersey. The irradiation of government mail continues today at contractor facilities in Bridgeport, New Jersey.

Now – as part of an integrated network to improve the overall safety of its employees and the safety of the mail – the Postal Service is re-examining the procedures used to process, transport, and irradiate government mail.

To respond more efficiently and more cost effectively to the continued need to irradiate/sanitize mail delivered to government offices within the 202 to 205 ZIP Code areas, the Postal Service proposes to build a postal-owned mail-irradiation facility within the Washington, DC, Metropolitan Area.

Construction of a local facility would minimize logistics and security requirements currently needed in transporting government mail to a contractor facility in Bridgeport, NJ, and allow the Postal Service to better maintain custody and control of the mail.

Due to operational inefficiencies and the unavoidable delays in irradiating mail prior to its delivery to government offices, the continued use of contractor facilities is not a practical long-term solution in protecting government agencies from acts of bio-terrorism through the mail.

When constructed, this will be the nation's first irradiation facility specifically designed to sanitize mail using electron beam (e-beam) and x-ray technology.

The technology has been in use for more than 50 years, is safe, and does not use or create any radioactive substances or materials.

At the same time it tackled the challenges of sanitizing government mail, the Postal Service announced it would take further steps to safeguard the health of its employees and customers, and to help ensure the security of the mail.

To meet these goals, the Postal Service this summer successfully tested – and will begin nationwide deployment in early 2004 of – Biohazard Detection Systems to detect anthrax sent through the mail. And, to further reduce employee exposure to potential biological threats at its mail processing centers nationwide, the Postal Service early next year plans to install new Ventilation and Filtration Systems.