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February 18, 2004

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News Release No. 04-015
www.usps.com

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE MAY DELIVER MEDICINE IN THE EVENT OF CATASTROPHIC INCIDENT

WASHINGTON – Under a plan presently being developed, the U.S. Postal Service could be called upon to deliver antibiotics from the Strategic National Stockpile directly to residential addresses in the event of a catastrophic incident involving a biological agent for which antibiotic use is appropriate.

The plan is being structured to supplement the public health system in the event of such a catastrophic emergency. The procedures under consideration would augment, not replace, local plans. Local public health agencies would also dispense initial and follow-up supplies of antibiotics and relevant information in the affected area.

The draft plan is being developed at the Federal level jointly by the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Homeland Security and the United States Postal Service. The Postal Service was approached because of its extensive delivery reach and the trust its carriers have in the nation's neighborhoods. Individual postal employee participation would be on a voluntary basis.

Further discussion of the plan with state and local officials will be required to determine the feasibility of incorporating these capabilities into municipalities' emergency planning.