

Trenton, NJ Update

Questions & Answers

Monday 10.20.03

Following are answers to frequently asked questions about the upcoming decontamination of the Postal Service's Trenton New Jersey Processing and Distribution Center, including responses to questions raised during earlier Trenton community town-hall meetings.

Health & Safety

1. Once the fumigation begins, will it pose any threat to those living or working near the postal facility? If not, how can you be sure?

We do not expect the fumigation to endanger anyone who lives or works in the area surrounding the building.

First, the gas that will be used, chlorine dioxide, is not flammable or explosive in the concentrations that will be used at the facility. Chlorine dioxide will be produced on site and distributed as a gas only within the sealed building.

Second, chlorine dioxide is a known chemical that has been safely and widely used for more than 70 years to disinfect the nation's food and water. More than 900 water treatment facilities around the nation use the chemical every day.

Third, over the past several months, contractors have carefully sealed the entire building. Cracks and seams on the building envelope have been sealed with foam sealant or caulking and covered with sealing tape. Floor drains have been sealed. Windows on outside walls have been covered. Penetrations in the roof and wire conduits and piping leading to the exterior have been sealed. The truck dock areas have been framed and covered with polysheeting.

Fourth, several systems will be in place to monitor the air in the area surrounding the building, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) mobile laboratory Trace Atmospheric Gas Analyzer (TAGA) bus that can measure chlorine dioxide well below any harmful levels. The EPA TAGA bus will be in direct communications with the fumigation team and will report any detected levels of the

gas in the surrounding area so corrective actions can be implemented, including shutdown, prior to reaching any harmful levels of chlorine dioxide.

2. Will there be any temporary weather monitoring stations? Should people living in the neighborhood be concerned about any risk of the gas – or even anthrax particles – escaping into the surrounding community during the cleanup process?

A weather station will be erected on the premises and will be connected to a computer for constant updates on wind direction, temperature and barometric pressure. Regarding neighborhood concerns, the NJ Department of Environmental Protection has stated that:

The highest predicted concentration of chlorine dioxide at the fence line of the Hamilton Post Office was less than the Reference Concentration, indicating that there would be a very low risk of health effect to a person standing at the fence line of the Hamilton Post Office during the fumigation. The model was also used to predict chlorine dioxide concentrations at several schools, day care centers, shops and homes in the vicinity of the Hamilton Post Office. The analysis confirmed that the concentrations of chlorine dioxide at these locations were even lower than at the worst-case fence line location, and therefore, even less likely to result in any health effects to those who are at those locations during the fumigation process.

For additional assurance, the monitoring systems and EPA TAGA mobile laboratory monitoring bus will be continuously analyzing the air outside of the facility and throughout the neighborhood for any sign of potentially released gas, should a leak occur. In addition testing will be performed to ensure that no anthrax spores are released during the decontamination effort.

3. Despite all the precautions, if gas from the fumigation somehow escaped from the building, how much of a risk would it be to anyone living or working nearby?

Any risk has been greatly minimized by the engineering controls on the system, the real-time data being collected by multiple air monitoring systems in place, including the EPA TAGA mobile laboratory monitoring bus, and the ability to immediately perform corrective actions or shut down the system should they become necessary.

Throughout the fumigation process, personnel from the following agencies will be on-site to monitor the process with the USPS: the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services; the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection; the New Jersey State Police Office of Emergency Management; and the Hamilton Township Office of Emergency Management.

4. What type of air monitoring will take place to make sure that a gas leak doesn't endanger the neighboring area – especially if it's cloudy or during the night, when there is no sunlight to break down the gas?

Ambient air monitoring will be performed from fixed locations and by mobile monitoring stations that will continuously analyze the air for any sign of chlorine dioxide – both immediately outside the building as well as throughout the neighborhood and surrounding area – to immediately determine if any leak occurs. The monitors will be operated not only by the contractor, but also the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency also will be closely monitoring the air using its own mobile laboratory, the TAGA (Trace Atmospheric Gas Analyzer) bus. The fixed monitors will operate continuously and the EPA TAGA bus will circle the area taking air samples throughout the fumigation period. Weather monitoring will take place and will be utilized to help direct the mobile monitoring station and EPA TAGA bus in the direction any potential leak would travel. All of the monitoring systems perform equally well regardless of temperature, weather or sunlight conditions.

5. Would the air range being monitored include Washington Township?

The EPA TAGA mobile laboratory monitoring bus has the capability to travel as far as necessary to confirm any level of chlorine dioxide in the air.

6. Will a safety zone be set up around the building to keep people out of the immediate area during the actual fumigation – just in case something goes wrong?

The facility and immediate property within Klockner Road and Route 130 will not be accessible to the public. A coordinated effort between the USPS Postal Police, the Hamilton Police Department and New Jersey State Police will establish and maintain the safety perimeter under all conditions.

7. How will I be notified if there is a leak of chlorine dioxide?

In the very unlikely event of a leak emergency management officials on-site will immediately notify any residents or businesses that might be affected. Emergency management officials who will be on-site during the fumigation include representatives from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), NJ Department of Environmental Protection, NJ Department of Health and Senior Services, the New Jersey State Police Office of Emergency Management and the Hamilton Office of Emergency Management.

8. Assuming the worst case, if chlorine dioxide leaks from the building, how far could it travel?

The EPA TAGA mobile laboratory monitoring bus will continuously provide real-time data from any area necessary to determine if harmful levels of chlorine dioxide are present. The dispersion of any gas can vary widely depending on atmospheric conditions and wind direction. The EPA TAGA can perform dispersion modeling utilizing weather station information and data from the Ambient Air Monitoring locations to help focus its monitoring efforts. The process will be closely monitored by on-site federal, state and local officials to ensure that operations are proceeding in compliance with established state environmental parameters and that corrective actions are implemented before the gas can reach a harmful level.

9. Will road closures, air traffic restrictions or evacuation of nearby homes and businesses be necessary in the vicinity of the building while the fumigation is taking place?

We do not anticipate the interruption of regular activities, businesses or traffic during the fumigation. Security measures are being coordinated with state and local law enforcement officials. In the unlikely event of an emergency, we are working with federal, state and local emergency management officials, who will have emergency response plans in place.

10. Are these chemicals explosive or flammable, and do they pose any risk to area motorists?

No. As a safety precaution, the fumigation was designed in order to avoid the use of chemicals in concentrations that are at explosive or flammable levels.

11. If someone is chemically sensitive, how will the chlorine dioxide affect him or her?

The ambient air standards developed with the NJ Department of Environmental Protection take into account the sensitive members of the community, including those with asthma, children and the elderly. In addition, chlorine dioxide has been tested and approved by the EPA and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for drinking water treatment and many food-handling applications. The gas will be confined to the building's interior, and even in the event of a leak, the lowest concentrations would be detected at the perimeter of the building and corrective actions would be taken to avoid harmful levels to the surrounding community.

12. How long does it take for the chlorine dioxide to become harmless?

The gas within the building will be rendered harmless immediately after the fumigation, when it will be neutralized and removed from the building. At that point, the gas will be converted into harmless salts.

13. Are there any side effects related to chlorine dioxide? Will postal employees who return to the facility be safe?

Chlorine dioxide will be completely removed from the building prior to any interior operations. The gas will be converted into harmless salts and extensive testing will be conducted prior to refurbishment of the building. In addition, postal officials will work closely with the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to develop a Health and Safety Plan. This includes sampling during the building refurbishment to ensure that adequate health and safety measures are in place prior to opening the building for regular operations.

14. What type of exposure would I have had to anthrax by living within two miles of the Trenton mail-processing facility?

Anthrax is an acute disease, therefore if no symptoms were identified within three months of the exposure, it does not exist. The building has been closed since October 18, 2001 and since that time extensive measures have been taken to seal the building and testing has been performed to ensure that any additional exposure to anthrax following the bio-terrorist actions is minimized.

15. Who is or who will be monitoring the postal workers' health?

As always, employees should see their personal physician if they have any health concerns whatsoever. However, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has been working with employees' doctors to monitor overall health progress. Employee questionnaires from CDC will help federal health officials to quickly spot and stay on top of any medical issues that happen to arise among Trenton employees.

Decontamination Process

16. When will the fumigation of the Trenton mail facility take place, and when will it reopen?

The fumigation is expected to take place within 15 days following the issuance of the Crisis Exemption by the Environmental Protection Agency. The decontamination will be followed by a period of air and surface sampling and analysis with results provided to the independent Environmental Clearance Committee (ECC). After the ECC deems the building is clean, using the standard of "no growth," it will then approve the building for reentry. We will then begin refurbishment before restoring regular operations. We do not anticipate the return of operations to the Trenton facility before summer, 2004.

17. Why has it taken so long to decontaminate this facility?

The Postal Service decided that it's more important to do this decontamination right than to do it quickly. To do it correctly and safely has taken time, but the process has been successfully implemented in Washington and is proceeding within the current schedule at this facility.

18. Has anything been done at the Trenton facility since it closed?

Significant work has been going on inside this facility for months to prepare it for final decontamination:

- Mail was packaged and removed for decontamination through sanitization.
- Rolling stock, mail bins and trays were decontaminated and removed from the building.
- Mail-processing equipment was cleaned and wiped down with a solution of chlorine bleach.
- Items that were identified as trash were decontaminated and removed for disposal.
- Vending areas were wiped down with a solution of chlorine bleach.
- Carpets throughout the facility were subjected to a solution of chlorine bleach and removed for disposal.
- Doors to offices will be opened during fumigation, and fans will be used to ensure gas penetration to all areas.

In April of this year, the gas delivery system used during the Washington fumigation project was shipped to the Trenton facility, where it was reconstructed and commissioned in order to perform the fumigation later this year. Construction is now complete, and a preliminary system test of low level chlorine dioxide on October 11 proved that the equipment is working properly – giving us the green light to seek a Crisis Exemption from the EPA, the last step necessary for the actual fumigation to take place.

19. Who is coordinating this decontamination, what other government agencies were involved in the planning, and will they have any role during the actual decontamination process?

The USPS as the lead agency set up an Incident Command Structure (ICS) to safely and effectively manage the decontamination effort.

Throughout the entire process, the USPS and its contractors have been and will continue to be assisted by experts representing federal, state and local agencies, including: the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services; the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection; the New Jersey State Police Office of Emergency Management; the Hamilton Township Office of Emergency Management; the

United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health; and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). They will continue to help support the USPS during the actual fumigation and until the facility is ultimately reopened for operations.

20. Who has been hired to do the actual decontamination?

The Postal Service awarded contracts to Ashland Inc. of Covington, KY, Sabre Oxidation Technologies Inc. of Odessa, TX, and Shaw Environmental & Infrastructure Inc. of Baton Rouge, LA. This is the same team of experts that has successfully completed the decontamination of the Washington DC facility using the same technology.

21. Why did the USPS decide on these companies, and how experienced are they in biohazard cleanup?

Only two large facilities have undergone extensive anthrax decontamination in our nation's history – the Washington mail-processing center last December and the Hart Senate Office Building in December 2001 and January 2002. These three companies played major roles in the successful decontamination of both buildings. They originally were selected based on an EPA evaluation of the latest cleanup technologies available. They are experienced suppliers who can provide the necessary services, equipment and chemicals required for this cleanup.

22. Exactly what has been done to seal the building, to prevent the gas from escaping?

The entire building has been sealed. Cracks and seams on the building envelope have been sealed with foam sealant or caulking and covered with sealing tape. Floor drains have been sealed. Windows on outside walls have been covered. Penetrations in the roof and wire conduits and piping leading to the exterior have been sealed. The truck dock areas have been framed and covered with polysheeting.

23. When will the cleanup be conducted? Will it be on a weekend? If not, should we take our children out of school?

The fumigation will be the first weekend following the issuance of the Crisis Exemption by the Environmental Protection Agency. If it becomes necessary to postpone, we will reschedule. Regardless of when the fumigation occurs, there is no reason for children to miss classes because of it. We don't anticipate the interruption of regular activities, business or traffic during the fumigation.

24. How many days will the actual fumigation take?

We have targeted the fumigation to take approximately 48 hours, including the generation of chlorine dioxide, maintaining the required concentration within the facility, and removing the chlorine dioxide and rendering it harmless.

25. What is the ventilation period after fumigation is completed?

The chlorine dioxide will be removed and scrubbed from the air inside the facility as part of the 48-hour fumigation process.

26. What will happen to the gas or byproducts from the fumigation, once it's complete?

After the decontamination, the gas will be neutralized and removed. At that point, the only byproducts will be harmless salts. Wastewater will be carefully sealed in tanks and disposed of in accordance with federal, state and local standards and regulations.

27. Just in case the gas escapes into the neighborhood, what does chlorine dioxide smell like?

Even when monitoring indicates safe levels, it is possible that you will be able to smell chlorine dioxide in the area surrounding the building. The closer you are to the building, the more likely you are to smell it. Smelling the gas does NOT mean you are in any danger. The gas smells similar to the chlorine used to disinfect swimming pools. The chlorine dioxide gas will be completely neutralized and removed from the building upon completion of the fumigation.

28. Exactly what are the various steps that are being taken to decontaminate the building?

- Seal the building.
- Clean known areas of contamination.
- Remove non-permanent items (rolling carts, chairs, etc) for decontamination.
- Build the treatment plant for the fumigation.
- Fumigate building to kill anthrax spores with chlorine dioxide and monitor the concentration, temperature and humidity inside facility. Remove the gas from the building.
- Test to ensure anthrax spores have been killed.

29. Exactly how will the fumigation itself be performed?

Based on tests by the EPA in October and November 2001, as well as the decontamination of both the Washington postal facility and the Hart Senate Office

Building, chlorine dioxide gas was selected as the best available technology to treat the Trenton mail facility.

Fumigation of the building will involve exposing all interior areas of the building to chlorine dioxide to kill the anthrax spores. It is expected that the total fumigation and treatment gas evacuation process will not exceed 48 hours duration. The chlorine dioxide treatment gas will be generated on-site and then injected into the building at multiple locations to ensure even distribution of the gas throughout the building.

To avoid chlorine dioxide escaping the building during fumigation, a negative pressure will be maintained throughout the building by continuous exhausting of air from the building through multiple control devices. Anthrax spores are cylindrical in shape, with dimensions of 1 to 1.2 micron in width and 3 to 5 micron in length. High efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters will capture any anthrax spores that might come out with the air exhaust from the building. The chlorine dioxide gas will ensure that any spores collected on the HEPA filters are dead. The exhausted air will then pass through two systems of packed tower scrubbers and activated carbon filters to remove the gas used for the fumigation.

30. Is chlorine dioxide gas dangerous?

Chlorine dioxide is a known chemical that has been safely used for more than 70 years, including regular use at more than 900 water treatment facilities around the world. The gas is not flammable or explosive in the concentrations that will be used in Trenton.

31. Are they going to just clean the machines in the center or get rid of them?

The entire building and its remaining contents will be decontaminated during the fumigation with chlorine dioxide. Following the fumigation, extensive testing and sampling will be performed to ensure that it was successful and the building and its contents are safe to be refurbished and reutilized.

32. Why doesn't the USPS level and burn the building, instead of cleaning it?

That may sound like an easy solution, but it's not. Even if we were to abandon a contaminated facility, we still would be responsible for decontaminating it using the same process we are using. Abandoned buildings don't stay abandoned. Eventually someone will need to use them, so we cannot leave them contaminated to become a public health hazard. The same is true for demolishing the buildings without first decontaminating them, which would expose the surrounding community to anthrax.

Also – even if we were to abandon or demolish the building, we still would have to construct a new replacement facility – at greater additional cost, assuming a suitable site could be found.

We have no choice but to clean this building. We know from the experience at the Washington postal facility and the Hart Senate Office Building that the Trenton facility also can be successfully cleaned – using the same decontamination process. We are not in any hurry to do this; we will take our time to make sure the decontamination is done correctly and thoroughly.

33. How will we be notified when fumigation is about to begin?

Residents and businesses in the building's vicinity will be notified by public outreach and meetings. Notices will be provided through the media and also posted on the USPS Web site at www.usps.com.

34. What one government agency is going to be responsible for determining when the postal workers will return to the site?

An independent committee of health and environmental experts has been formed for this purpose. This committee is called the Environmental Clearance Committee (ECC). The ECC will review all the fumigation and the related sampling and monitoring data and results before providing a recommendation on reoccupying the building. With this recommendation, the U.S. Postal Service will make the final decision about when to reopen the facility.

Anthrax and Future Risk

35. Once cleanup is completed, what preventative measures are being taken to prevent another anthrax attack of the mail?

As part of its continuing efforts to protect the safety of its employees, its customers and the mail, this summer the U.S. Postal Service conducted a four-week test of a state-of-the-art Biohazard Detection System (BDS) at 15 mail processing and distribution centers around the country.

The test period provided valuable data to evaluate the performance of the Biohazard Detection System, to assist in the rollout of the system to other mail processing facilities nationwide beginning in 2004. The Trenton mail processing facility will be among the first to receive the new equipment.

The system operates in conjunction with mail-canceling equipment and continuously collects samples of air as letters move through the equipment. Airborne particles are injected into a sterile water base, and a DNA test is performed to determine if anthrax is present. The fully automated, on-site tests occur during each hour of machine operation and provide immediate notification of test results to facility management, allowing for quick emergency response to possible exposure.

36. Where could I get more info on anthrax?

In addition to your state or local public health department, you also may contact the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) by calling toll-free 1-888-246-2675, or visiting their Web site at www.cdc.gov.

37. What happened to the anthrax spores that some postal employees may have inhaled? Are they lying dormant in their lungs?

Throughout the anthrax ordeal, the USPS has relied upon top medical experts to provide the most knowledgeable answers available to health-related issues that are of concern to our employees or customers. We encourage anyone with specific concerns about past anthrax exposure to discuss those concerns with their physicians, or if they have more general questions they may wish to contact the CDC at 1-888-246-2675.

38. How long are people at risk for anthrax after possibly inhaling the spores?

(Please see answer to #37 above)

39. After the building is reopened, what other testing will take place?

Postal officials will work closely with the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to develop a Health and Safety Plan, including sampling during the building refurbishment to ensure that adequate health and safety measures are in place prior to opening the building for regular operations.

(For details about how the USPS is protecting against the threat of any future anthrax attack, please see answer to question #35 above.)

40. When was the latest anthrax testing conducted at the facility, and what were the results?

Extensive sampling and testing have been performed by the state, CDC and USPS to characterize the anthrax contamination within the facility. Sampling on an as needed basis will continue to monitor the health and safety of the workers involved in the decontamination effort.

41. How do I get answers to additional questions that are not addressed here?

Call toll-free 1-800-527-0741 anytime to leave a recorded message, and someone will return your call within 24 hours on the next business day. Deaf and hearing-impaired individuals may call 1-800-418-5301. If an answer to your question is not immediately available, it may require research. In this case, you will be instructed during the call when to expect an answer – usually within an additional 24 hours.