NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

# Baby infected with disease had visited ABC newsroom

By Dan Janison
STAFF WRITER

The infant son of an ABC News employee has tested positive for anthrax and is being treated with antibiotics, authorities announced last night.

The child, who is expected to recover, has been diagnosed with the type of anthrax that is absorbed through cuts or scratches in the skin, not the more dangerous type that is inhaled, officials said.

The baby, the son of an ABC News producer whose name was not disclosed, is believed to have visited the newsroom at 47 W. 66th St. within the past few weeks, probably on Sept. 28.

ABC President David Westin said the baby, said to be 7 months old, was taken to a hospital a day after the visit and underwent tests that were analyzed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Officials learned of the diagnosis last night.

Westin said the child is "responding well" to treatment. He said no ABC employees have been found to have anthrax.

"There are no other instances that we are aware of," he said.

It marked the second case of anthrax involving a major news organization in New York. Authorities are also investigating a letter that infected an NBC employee with the same form of anthrax last week.

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani said the baby had been in the newsroom for about two hours.



AP Photo

From left, Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and ABC News President David Westin yesterday.

Giuliani and Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik said investigators were interviewing ABC employees in an effort to determine the source of the anthrax. Some employees were undergoing tests for anthrax last night.

Officials said the focus of the ABC investigation was on the second and third floors of the building.

Officials said ABC operations will remain in the building even as testing and interviews take place.

"Would I be here if it were dangerous?" Giuliani asked.

Kerik also disclosed that he had directed investigators to visit other media outlets last night to conduct environmental surveys to see if any contamination exists in their work areas.

Specifically, he said, the investigations were being

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NEWSDAY, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2001

# ABC Employee's Infant Is Infected

BABY from A3

conducted at CNN, CBS, The Associated Press, the Daily News, Fox News and the New York Post.

New York Post Publisher Ken Chandler earlier told staffers in the 10th floor newsroom at 1211 Sixth Ave. in Manhattan that four colleagues had been tested because they had been sick. One result was negative and the others were still awaited, a Post spokesman said. There were no reports of suspicious substances, however.

Kerik described the media surveys as a "strictly precautionary measure" not based on any reported symptoms or complaints by employees.

The child's case was made public last night after city officials confirmed they were examining at least 24 mail packages for anthrax yesterday after a cluster of 911 calls.

Parcels arriving in government buildings were subjected to special screening as well.

Many of the 82 calls to 911 between 7 a.m. and 2 p.m. concerned parcels containing what appeared to be baby powder, possibly sent as pranks, officials said.

Kerik vowed to seek charges against anyone found carrying out such harassment. To underscore his message, Giuliani later stood in the Municipal Building before reporters and photographers to open mail at random.

He picked up one letter with strange scrawl all over the envelope and said: "This looks like the usual stuff I get." The writer was complaining about federal housing in Pennsylvania.

Just the same, officials noted that packages deemed suspicious are drawing special attention. City Hall aides said all mail is X-rayed and sniffed by bomb-sniffing dogs of the U.S. Marshals Service.

At One Police Plaza, the mail room was closed yesterday with plans to reopen today. Headquarters security accompanied messengers inside on deliveries.

At federal court in Brooklyn, supervisors cautioned employees about handling unfamiliar mail. Workers in the clerk's office were instructed to wear surgical gloves when opening mail, which was to be X-rayed.

Specially organized teams of one firefighter, one police emergency-services unit officer and another police officer specializing in hazardous materials responded to 911 calls. Kerik said the teams are dispersed citywide; he declined to say how many.

*Staff writers Patricia Hurtado, Melanie Lefkowitz, Margaret Ramirez and Graham Rayman contributed to this story.*

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