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At NY Post, 4th City Case

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A staffer at the New York Post who had developed a lesion on her finger nearly a month ago has tested positive for anthrax, making her the fourth person in New York City to be diagnosed with the deadly bacteria.

Also, officials at The New York Times, which had received a hoax anthrax letter, confirmed Friday that a letter sent from New York City to their bureau in Rio de Janeiro appears to have tested positive for anthrax. It's unknown if any workers in that office were infected.

A second U.S. Postal Service employee working in the Trenton facility through which at least one letter used in those anthrax attacks passed also tested positive, and it's "almost certain" that a third postal employee also has contracted the disease, officials said Friday.

In addition, FBI investigators believe they've identified the New Jersey mailbox from which that letter and at least one other, an anthrax-laced missive to Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle's Washington, D.C., office, was sent.

In New York, Johanna Huden, 32, an assistant to Post editorial page editor Bob McManus, first noticed what she thought was a bug bite on her finger on Sept. 22. Six days later when the rash worsened, she went to a doctor, who started her on antibiotics, officials said.

On Oct. 12, after it was announced that an assistant for NBC News had had tested positive for anthrax after being contaminated by the substance from a letter sent to the network, Huden contacted Department of Health officials who started her on the anthrax antidote ciprofloxacin.

A biopsy originally came back negative because the wound had been cleaned, officials said. However, on Thursday night, results from blood tests confirmed the woman's finger lesion had been caused by coming in contact with anthrax, they said.

Her boss, McManus, said Huden has recovered and was back at work yesterday.

"She's been real brave," he said. "The original wound was scary, but she's fine now."

It's unknown how Huden, who handles mail sent to the tabloid's outspoken editorial pages, contracted the disease. She doesn't remember opening any suspicious letters or packages, officials said. In addition to Huden, three other Post workers and 11 workers for News Corporation, the umbrella organization for media mogul Rupert Murdoch's holdings, were tested for anthrax after complaining of flu-like symptoms. All those tests were neg-

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ANTHRAX from A2

ative, Post officials said. Col Allen, executive editor of the Post, whose paper's headline Thursday chided the leaders of the House of Representatives as "WIMPS" for evacuating the congressional building in Washington, D.C., after anthrax was detected there, said his workers stayed put Friday.

"Everyone is working normally, and everyone is fine," Allen said.

All of the New York anthrax cases have been connected to media companies, officials have said.

- An assistant for NBC's nightly news tested positive on Oct. 12 for anthrax after having a severe rash break out near her neck and shoulder. A letter postmarked Sept. 18 from Trenton and sent to anchorman Tom Brokaw later tested positive for the substance.
- A 7-month-old boy who had visited his mother's office in the ABC News complex on Sept. 28 had a bad rash break out on his arm. The infant tested positive this week for anthrax. The source is unconfirmed.
- An assistant of CBS newsman Dan Rather tested positive for anthrax, it was announced Thursday. She went for testing after noticing a small bump on her face.

All are expected to make complete recoveries.

In other cases, tests confirmed Wednesday that trace amounts of anthrax were found in an office of Gov. George Pataki's 633 Third Ave. headquarters, though no one there contracted the germ.

Nationwide, 31 people in the Senate building in Washington, D.C. tested positive for exposure to anthrax Wednesday after the substance was sent to Daschle's office. That letter had been postmarked Sept. 18 in the same Trenton postal facility as the letter sent to Brokaw.

Two weeks ago in Florida, a photo editor for a media company that publishes The National Enquirer died after inhaling anthrax, and another became ill. It's unknown how the workers came in contact with the substance.

Officials said it's unknown if any of the anthrax cases were related to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center or Pentagon.

Friday, officials in New Jersey announced that a second postal employee has tested positive for skin anthrax. Thursday, it was confirmed that a letter carrier who has a route in Ewing N.J. had contracted the deadly bacteria. A 35-year-old man who works as a mail sorter in the Hamilton Township, N.J., postal facility also tested positive for cutaneous anthrax and was in stable condition yesterday at a hospital, officials said.

Officials also said "it's almost certain" that a third employee, who also works in the mail-sorting facility, has contracted anthrax.

In the latest case at The New York Times, a preliminary test suggested that a letter sent to the paper's bureau in Rio de Janeiro contained spores of anthrax. The letter was postmarked from a mail facility in New York City on Oct. 5 and received by the Times on Oct. 16, a spokesperson said.

Catherine Mathis, a spokeswoman for the Times, said workers became suspicious because the letter, which had a typed label, did not have a return address. The workers did not open the letter but instead called Brazilian officials, who tested it. Mathis said the four employees working in the office have started to take ciprofloxacin as a precaution. Test results were pending.

The Times in New York City had received a letter with a white powder in it on Oct. 12, but that letter proved to be a hoax.

In another hoax, federal officials said Friday they arrested a Newburgh man on charges he put white powder in a a paycheck envelope, causing a bank to be evacuated.

Staff writers Joshua Robin and Patricia Hurtado contributed to this story.

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