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Risk won't deter postal-job seekers

By ANGELINA CAPPIELLO

New Yorkers are scrambling to get holiday jobs with the Postal Service — saying they're more afraid of being broke than getting infected with anthrax.

Eileen Polanco, an unemployed Spanish teacher with a degree in public administration, was accompanied by her sons, Newton, 6 months, and Aljandro, 1, as she filled out job forms at the Department of Labor.

"I have two kids. I have a lot to worry about, and I'm in need. I don't want to go on welfare," she said.

Martin Lawlor, an unemployed doorman, said anthrax was not an issue in his decision to apply for a position with the Postal Service.

"I need a job ... I'll take anything," he said.

Louise Gardner, a regional administrator for the New York City Department of Labor, which handles recruitment for the Postal Service, said most applicants had only one thing on their minds — getting a job.

"Other things just don't deter them," she said.

Acting on requests, the Postal Service has sent out more than 3,000 application forms for temporary work over the coming months, when mail volume will more than triple because of Thanksgiving Day, Hanukkah, Christmas and New Year.

In New York and the Bronx, for instance, an additional 72 carriers and 458 clerks will be hired to work the holiday season.

"Of course there's a little fear involved," said Ralph Acosta, 30, a former Navy operations specialist seeking a managerial position with the Postal Service.

"But how does anyone deal with this?" Acosta said. "The job has to get done, regardless of the scare. If it was some disease that was incurable then I would be afraid."

Tom Gainor, a Postal Service spokesman, said holiday hires could expect to earn $9 to $11 an hour. Night workers are paid more, and there are ample opportunities for overtime in the rush periods, he said.

But while the salary may appear good, there could be a higher price to pay.

Two Washington postal workers have died of inhalation anthrax. Four others, two from the nation's capital and two from Hamilton, N.J., have contracted inhalation anthrax.

Yesterday, Colorado Gov. Bill Owens ordered two post offices closed until officials can be sure an employee's illness was not caused by anthrax.

Authorities also said yesterday that trace amounts of anthrax were discovered in new locations in two congressional office buildings where the deadly bacteria was detected earlier.

Spores were found in the office of Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-Md.), which is on the sixth floor of the Longworth House office building.

However, the office was closed because it was next to an office where anthrax had been discovered.



MAIL CALL: Postal Service job applicant Eileen Polanco, with sons Newton and Aljandro, is more worried about being out of work than getting anthrax. N.Y. Post Jim Alcorn

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