



Boston Media Center

Press Release

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Boston Neighborhoods Receive US Postal Mail Deliveries As Part Of Emergency Preparedness Exercise

Boston- An exercise to test the delivery of emergency medications to households in two Boston neighborhoods in the event of a bioterrorist attack got underway this morning.

United States Postal Service letter carriers began delivering a small, empty white cardboard box with an informational flyer to about 23,000 households in the South End and West Roxbury.

The cardboard box is intended to represent lifesaving medications that public health officials would distribute to keep people from becoming sick if an act of bioterrorism were to happen.

“As a partner in this important emergency preparedness exercise, we want to assure residents that this is not a real emergency. This is a test,” said Dr. Barbara Ferrer, executive director of the Boston Public Health Commission.

“This exercise is an opportunity for federal, state, and local officials, and the United States Postal Service, to evaluate a way to quickly deliver medications to individuals at home during an emergency,” said Dr. William Raub, senior science advisor to the secretary for the US Department of Health and Human Services. “This exercise is another step forward for public health preparedness and we are grateful to the various Boston and Massachusetts agencies and Boston residents for their cooperation.”

South End residents in zip code 02118 and West Roxbury residents in zip code 02132 are receiving the box and flyer. Because this is a test, there is nothing they need to do. They may, however, recycle the box.

A total of 32 letter carriers are participating in the exercise. Each carrier is being accompanied by a uniformed Boston Police Department officer to mimic the level of

security that would be provided to the carrier during a real activation. The letter carrier is leaving the box and flyer in the mail slot, mailbox, or on the front doorstep of each residence. There are no deliveries to businesses.

“Letter carriers are counted on everyday to accomplish delivery of America’s important communications,” said Charles Lynch, Boston district manager for the US Postal Service. “We are honored to partner in this exercise as we test how our established delivery network may provide federal assistance should a city suffer a biological attack.”

John Casciano, national business agent of the New England region for the National Association of Letter Carriers, said, “Letter carriers are proud to be an active partner in this exercise to determine the best means to quickly and efficiently distribute lifesaving medication to the general public in an emergency.”

The exercise is part of the federal government’s Cities Readiness Initiative, which is an effort to increase the capacity of major metropolitan centers to rapidly deliver medications to help prevent illness in a large-scale biological emergency. The postal carrier method is one potential means to distribute emergency medications, and would supplement existing distribution methods.

The foundation of Boston’s plan is to open up emergency medication sites in neighborhoods across the city where residents would come to pick up medication for themselves and their families.

Boston is the third US city where the federal government has tested the postal carriers’ option for distributing emergency medication. Seattle held a similar exercise in November, and Philadelphia conducted a test in June.

The exercise is sponsored by the United States Department of Health and Human Services and the USPS, with participation from the National Association of Letter Carriers, the United States Postal Inspection Service, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, the city of Boston, the Boston Public Health Commission, and the Boston Police Department.

The test coincides with National Preparedness Month in September.

For more information on this exercise, visit: www.readyboston.org

To learn more about the Cities Readiness Initiative, visit: www.bt.cdc.gov/cri

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