

mid-October, two postal workers had died from anthrax exposure. Public fears escalated into widespread panic. Media coverage was continuous and heightened by reports that several high-profile individuals had been targeted to receive anthrax-contaminated letters, including former NBC News anchor Tom Brokaw, Senator Tom Daschle (D-SD), and Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT). By December 5, a total of twenty-two cases of anthrax had been identified: eleven were confirmed as inhalation anthrax<sup>6</sup> and eleven were cutaneous anthrax.<sup>6</sup> Most of the cases involved individuals who worked at postal facilities in New Jersey and the District of Columbia, where anthrax-contaminated letters were handled or processed. Other cases involved individuals who worked at media companies in New York City or Florida, where letters contaminated with anthrax were handled.<sup>7</sup>

The impact of the anthrax attacks was dramatic. To the general public, nothing seemed to be safe anymore, not even the mail. Citizens became suspicious of the envelopes and packages delivered to them, and those most gripped in panic refused to open their mail at all.

The USPS faced a crisis of confidence from the general population and from its employees. The results of environmental anthrax testing caused the USPS to temporarily close several postal facilities in the Washington, D.C., and Trenton, New Jersey, areas. To allay public fears, the USPS sent a direct mail postcard to every household and post office box in the United States, and to all military Army Post Office and Fleet Post Office addresses.<sup>8</sup> The postcard contained information for handling suspicious or contaminated letters and packages.<sup>8</sup>

For a company like Advo, whose business relies on the USPS and whose clients rely on people opening their mail, the anthrax attacks posed a significant threat to its existence.

### **Advo's Response to the Anthrax Attacks**

By early October, many of Advo's 25,000 clients had expressed concern over the safety of their mailings. They worried that if their advertise-

ments became contaminated with anthrax, they could be put out of business. Advo's top management was concerned that cross-contamination could occur in the company's mail processing facilities. The USPS provided some of the equipment Advo used to process its clients' printed advertising materials. If the equipment were contaminated with anthrax, the spores could be transferred to Advo's mailings.

Advo's CEO, in consultation with the Senior Vice President of Fulfillment, mandated that all of the company's mail processing equipment be cleaned regularly. A cleaning process was established, which called for the use of hand wands to spray a chlorine-based solution on equipment that was hanging up on a conveyor. The process, which had been approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, turned out to be cumbersome, foul-smelling, and potentially risky because it was performed inside of the mail processing facilities.<sup>3</sup> A better process was implemented in which the equipment, upon delivery by the USPS, was cleaned in an adjacent trailer before it was moved inside a mail processing facility.<sup>3</sup>

### **Strengthening Security**

On October 26, 2001, the company's Senior Vice President of Fulfillment was made the Senior Vice President of Security Management.<sup>9</sup> The change in title was significant; it represented the company's commitment to security and it signaled a change in the company's approach. Enterprise-wide security improvements would be made, and the individual in charge of orchestrating those improvements was a member of senior management.

Because there was little in-house expertise to provide necessary guidance, consultants were hired. Kroll, Inc., was hired to do a risk analysis of the company's physical security, and Ernst & Young was hired to do a risk analysis of IT security.<sup>3</sup> Their recommendations included the hiring of additional employees in IT and physical security.