Anthrax scare at Linn County courthouse investigated

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

ALBANY, Ore. -- Federal and local authorities are continuing an investigation into an anthrax scare when envelopes containing a suspicious white powder were found at the Linn County Courthouse in Albany, Oregon on Monday.

Oregon National Guard 102nd Civil Support Team member 1st Lt. Jessy Claerhout (lower right), consults with CST Commander, Lt. Col. Steve Ferrell (lower left), before Staff Sgt. Jarrell E. Rysavy and Sgt. Joseph K. Plueard, both of the Oregon National Guard's 102nd Civil Support Team, obtained a sample from one of two envelopes discovered by workers, prompting evacuation of the building. Members of the CST obtained samples, which was taken to Hillsboro for analysis. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Nick Choy, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs Office) Oregon National Guardâ€™s 102nd Civil Support Team (CST), Albany Firefighters, Linn County Sheriffâ€™s deputies, and Linn-Benton Regional Region-5 HAZMAT team members all responded to the courthouse at 300 SW 4th Avenue after workers reported finding the envelopes â€“ one near an air conditioning unit at rear of the buildingâ€™s exterior, and another in an interior office.

According to an ONG news release, initial tests suggest the samples taken contained a â€œsugar-likeâ€• substance, although an FBI spokesperson said definite tests will not be available for 48 hours.

Lt. Col. Steve Ferrell, 102nd CST Commander, said the unit's frequent training with simulated anthrax scenarios over the past several years has adequately prepared them to assist first-responders during the incident. "Anthrax training seems to be the most common scenario," he said. "They've done it quite a few times, so they're very proficient in this type of scenario."

By early afternoon, a thorough sweep of the building failed to turn up any additional suspicious packages.

If the person or persons responsible for the â€œscareâ€• is convicted, they face possible prosecution under federal anti-terrorism laws and civil penalties including being held financially responsible for the cost of the emergency response.

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