

*Remarks for the
Anthrax Press Conference
October 16, 2001*

Good morning. Since the attacks on our country on September 11, we have struggled to maintain a normal routine in our daily lives and work. That routine has been more difficult to keep in recent days, as reports of anthrax being sent through the mail have sparked new fears and false reports.

Today, we are here to address those fears.

The incidents in Florida, New York and yesterday on Capitol Hill have us all concerned, but we can't let these concerns dominate our lives.

It is important for us to exercise caution in handling the mail. At the same time, the terrorists win if they completely disrupt our way of life. We simply can't let that happen.

For us to stay ahead of the game, we need to be prepared to handle any situation. That is why we are here this morning. It is vitally important for the people of Mississippi to have the proper information for dealing with the threat of anthrax.

Yesterday, a set of standards for law enforcement and public safety agencies to follow when handling calls regarding anthrax was produced by the State Department of Health, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, the Department of Public Safety, the Department of Environmental Quality, the

State Fire Marshall's Office and State Fire Academy, the United States Postal Service and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

This morning, we have representatives of those agencies here with us, along with Attorney General Mike Moore.

They include Robert Latham of the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency; David Huggins of the Department of Public Safety; Charles Chisholm or Phil Bass of the Department of Environmental Quality; Colonel L. M. Claiborne of the Mississippi Highway Patrol; Postal Inspector Guy Robinson; Millard Mackey of the State Fire Marshall's Office; Ken Chisholm of the ATF; and Andy Cohegan of the FBI.

I'm proud of the work that's been done by these agencies in recent weeks.

I'd like Dr. Thompson to take a few minutes to outline methods we can follow to protect ourselves. Dr. Thompson?

(Dr. Thompson speaks)

Any individual or group who would send anthrax, or a substitute suspected to be anthrax, through the mail should be, and will be, prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. I'd like to ask Attorney General Mike Moore to address the state's efforts in this area.

(Attorney General Moore speaks)

Each and every day, our world is changing and moving farther away from the security we felt before September 11. A new vigilance is required of us all. We will do everything within our power to protect the public.

As part of this effort, I am also announcing today that I am issuing an executive order to establish a centralized command and control system for emergency operations.

The Occupational Safety and Health

Administration requires the establishment of an incident command system to handle emergency responses, and we will now follow that system at the state level.

Under this system, all state and local emergency response personnel will utilize common terminology, integrated communications, incident action plans, unified command and management of resources during emergencies.

This system will help ensure the state provides the most comprehensive, efficient and responsive protection to the people of Mississippi during emergency situations.

With this executive order, the National Interagency Management System spelled out by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration will now serve as the State Incident Command System during emergency operations in Mississippi.

We'll now open the floor for questions.