

## Goals Versus Standards: Senate Panel Probes Anthrax Cleanup

### HEALTH

#### SENATE VA-HUD Appropriations

**Subcommittee Chairwoman Barbara Mikulski**, D-Md., said Wednesday she is "troubled" there is only a goal — and not a standard — in determining when an anthrax site has been sufficiently decontaminated.

Mikulski convened a subcommittee hearing to document the chain of command for decontamination efforts at the Hart Senate Office Building and the Brentwood postal facility, the status of the cleanup and the need for any additional resources.

**EPA Administrator Whitman** said the Centers for Disease Control determines when a building is safe, and

said the goal for the Hart building is to have "no viable anthrax spores."

Mikulski, stressing the difference between a standard and a goal, said the fact the CDC has a goal and not standard "presents serious issues."

"It it's not zero, does that mean we don't go [back into our offices]?" Mikulski, who has been locked out of her Hart building suite, asked.

Whitman, refusing to speak for the CDC, said anthrax is a new threat. "I can only assume that's why there is no standard," Whitman said.

Whitman explained that at each anthrax site, a site or incident commander is in charge. This is usually the locality's or state's first responder. In the case

of the Capitol complex anthrax cases, the Sergeant at Arms has been the incident commander, she added. The EPA coordinates with the Office of Homeland Security and oversees the cleanup.

In her opening statement, Whitman said she would like to extend the EPA's indemnification authority as well as the agency's authority to recover costs for anthrax cleanup. The current indemnification authority covers the agency's contractors, but not its subcontractors, which caused recent delays.

And although the Senate said from the beginning it would pay the EPA for the cleanup, the agency cannot recover the costs for cleanup at other sites.

— BY STEPHANIE CORNER