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# **Letters, Power Lines, and Other Dangerous Things**

## **The Politics of Infrastructure Security**

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## Acknowledgments

This book began with a snap. In 2003 I was working in a post office in Brookline, Massachusetts, as a letter carrier. During my first day on the job, I noticed another worker methodically putting on latex gloves before picking up the mail. *Snap*. A nearby coworker must have noticed my confusion. He leaned over and offered a tart explanation: *anthrax*. And then we all went about our day and delivered the mail. That morning offered a glimpse into how terrifying fears and moments of disruption become translated into routine practices. The anthrax attacks that had run through the postal system were, at this point, roughly 18 months in the past. Yet traces still lingered. That morning stuck with me. Although I did not know it at the time, this book started that day.

This project would not have been possible without the support and mentorship of a large number of people and institutions. This book began as my doctoral project at the Department of Communication at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). My advisor and mentor Robert Horwitz is the inspiration for this book. I would not have been able to write it without his assistance, encouragement, and wisdom. Robert was my first and best reader. I owe him more than I can pay. While at UCSD I started working with Lewis Branscomb. Lew helped me rethink my doctoral project at a time when I was grasping for a direction. Lew continued to provide unfailing support as I left UCSD and began my academic journey. The text was substantially revised during fellowships at Stanford University's Center for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC) and the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs and at my current academic home, Northeastern University's Communication Studies Department. At Stanford I had the privilege of working closely with Charles Perrow. Perrow's work was and remains a key touchstone for my thinking. Getting to work with Chick was an honor and thrill that I cherish. His comments on the text

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An earlier version of chapter 4 appeared as "Creating a Secure Network: The 2001 Anthrax Attacks and the Transformation of Postal Security" in the *Sociological Review*. The short discussion of E-COM in chapter 2 is expanded in my earlier article "The Premature Death of Electronic Mail: The United States Postal Service's E-COM Program, 1978–1985" in the *International Journal of Communication*; a discussion of some of the governance issues noted in chapter 6 previously appeared in my article "Regulating Cybersecurity: Institutional Learning or a Lesson in Futility?" in *IEEE Security & Privacy*.

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