



By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

U.S. Postal Inspectors are in Champion and the area this week following a report of an attempted robbery and assault late Monday morning at the Champion Post Office.

While the Chase County Sheriff's Office conducted a preliminary investigation after Monday morning's incident, Sheriff Kevin Mueller said the case has now been turned over to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

Mueller said Marjie Buls, 44, an employee of the post office, made a 911 call at 11:20 a.m. stating she needed help at the post office in Champion, located about seven miles southwest of Imperial.

Deputy Dave Ridlen was first on the scene, and found Buls locked inside a bathroom in the post office, where she had reportedly made the call on a cordless phone.

Sheriff Mueller said Buls stated that a male in his early 30's, 5'5" in height, wearing black jeans and a gray shirt and with a mustache entered the post office, jumped the counter, threw her to the ground and demanded money.

She alleged he held a box cutter to her throat and made a two-inch slash to her neck before she got away and he left the building.

Mueller said Buls was transported by Imperial EMS to Chase County Community Hospital in Imperial, where she was treated and released. The wound was not life-threatening, he said.

The sheriff said no money was taken. No arrests had been made or suspects found before the investigation was turned over to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

Steve Ryan, a public information officer with the U.S. Postal Inspection Service in Kansas City, said Tuesday the inspectors are following up on leads, conducting interviews and canvassing the area for a suspect matching Buls' description.

One Champion resident reported seeing four U.S. Postal Inspection Service vehicles in town this week.

Ryan said his office took over the investigation because it occurred on property that houses a U.S. Postal Service operation.

Ryan said anyone with leads or information relative to the case should call the Postal Inspection Service toll-free at 1-877-876-2455 and reference "Champion, Nebraska."

The post office was closed after the incident on Monday and yellow crime scene tape was strung in front of the building, but was removed by mid-morning Tuesday.

Window service remained closed Tuesday, but boxholders could enter the post office to retrieve their mail. Rural mail delivery in that area was not interrupted, according to Ryan.