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Interrogatory OCA/USPS-182

Categories 3 and 4 Library Reference

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**USPS Handbook PO-250, Consumer Answer Book,
August 1994**

**USPS Handbook, PO-102, Retail Vending Operational
and Marketing Program, Chapter 8, Customer
Complaints**

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**Consumer
Answer
Book**

Handbook PO-250
August 1994



Consumer Answer Book

Handbook PO-250

August 1994
Transmittal Letter 2

- A. Explanation.** This handbook is designed for postmasters to use when responding to customer complaints or inquiries. The handbook contains suggestions that can be the basis for written correspondence to Postal Service customers. It is emphasized that these letters and paragraphs are suggestions only and that each response should meet the needs of the customer.
- B. Instructions.** This transmittal letter (TL) supersedes TL 1 dated September 1988.
- C. Distribution**
1. **Initial.** This handbook is being distributed to all post offices.
 2. **Additional Copies.** Order by using Form 7380, *MDC Supply Requisition*, from your materiel distribution center.
- D. Comments and Questions.** Address all questions and comments on the content of this handbook through channels to:

CONSUMER ADVOCATE CUSTOMER RESPONSE
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
475 L'ENFANT PLZ SW RM 5821
WASHINGTON DC 20260-2202

- E. Effective Date.** This revision is effective upon receipt.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ann McK. Robinson".

Ann McK. Robinson
Vice President and Consumer Advocate



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Introduction

This handbook was designed for you to use as a reference when responding to customer inquiries and complaints. It contains examples of concise, clear language in paragraphs and letters that can be used individually or in combination to prepare written responses to customer correspondence. However, because postal policies and procedures are constantly changing, always review the text for accuracy before use. The chapters containing written communication guides have been organized after the new *Domestic Mail Manual* to allow easy cross-reference. You can use the language in chapters 1 through 9 as the basis for written correspondence to Postal Service customers. You can use Appendices A and B to help you answer frequently asked questions.

The way you handle inquiries or complaints influences customer perceptions. The way you respond to customers is affected by your emotions and your interpersonal skills. Exercise judgment, tact, flexibility, and innovation in determining the best course of action. You must address each and every customer concern, making sure that empathy and care come through in every way. Your individual response, however, should be dictated by the unique situation, your experience, and the interaction between you, your fellow postal employees, and the customer. These letters, paragraphs, and caller responses are *SUGGESTIONS ONLY*. Tailor the completed message to suit individual problems and issues affecting your local area. Each of your responses should meet the needs of the individual customer.

Finally, throughout the process of accepting and handling customer inquiries and complaints, the goal is to satisfy or exceed the expectations of our customers. The Postal Service will then be recognized by those customers for the unsurpassed quality of all we do.



1 Characteristics and Content

11 GENERAL MAILABILITY

111 Nonstandard Surcharge

The surcharge is applied only to nonstandard First-Class Mail that weighs 1 ounce or less and to single-piece-rate third-class mail weighing 1 ounce or less. This is because postage rates for these weight increments are not sufficient to cover the added cost of handling nonstandard mail. Postage rates for heavier pieces are sufficient to cover the extra cost.

The surcharge on oversized and odd-shaped pieces reflects the extra costs of manually handling them. Because of their dimensions, they usually cannot be mechanically processed. The prohibition on smaller mailing pieces and flimsy cards is because they frequently become trapped with or tear other mail and they jam mail processing machinery which, in turn, damages even more mail.

There are two reasons for the nonstandard mail surcharge. It compensates the Postal Service for the added cost of manually handling nonstandard mail, and it encourages the use of standard size (machinable) mailpieces.

Although I understand you wanted this particular piece of mail delivered quickly and object to its return to you, I must affirm that nonstandard mail is properly returned to the mailer. Proper postage is the responsibility of the mailer. Previously, the Postal Service processed mail through to the addressee endorsed, "Postage Due." However, feedback from companies and individuals about this practice convinced us it was in our customers' best interests to return this mail to the sender for proper postage.

112 Size Standards

Thank you for providing this opportunity to explain our size standard policies. The Postal Service has processed most mail by mechanical or automated means for many years. To use modern equipment to the greatest extent possible, the Postal Service introduced standard sizes in 1973. At that time,

a nominal surcharge was prescribed for nonstandard size mail to cover the costs of manual handling.

The enclosed brochure, *A Consumer's Directory of Postal Services and Products*, has two sections on "Minimum Size Standards" and "Nonstandard Size Mail," which provide more information about the sizes of mail that can be processed at the regular First-Class Mail rate.

The clerk who took your envelope should have advised you that the envelope was not standard size and did not qualify for the regular First-Class Mail rate.

Thank you for calling this matter to our attention, and please accept our apologies for any inconvenience you have been caused.

12 **RESTRICTED MATTER—LIVE ANIMALS**

Postal regulations covering the mailability of live animals are based on the ability of the animal to survive without food or water while in the mail, the health hazards that they can present to postal employees, possible damage to other mail and equipment, and our ability to cover the costs of providing this service.

Certain live, day-old poultry, adult fowl and chickens, small, harmless cold-blooded animals, bees, and other nonpoisonous and nondisease-conveying insects may be sent through the mail, when properly prepared, during April through August each year. The term "live, day-old poultry" includes only baby chickens, ducks, geese, guinea fowl, turkeys, and pheasants. These do not require food or water for 72 hours after hatching. Adult turkeys, guinea fowl, doves, pigeons, pheasants, partridges, quail, and chickens may be sent by Express Mail, when properly prepared, if next-day service is available. Cold-blooded animals survive quite well for the time required for delivery. Bee and insect shipments are normally provided with a small amount of food by the mailer, which allows them to survive for as long as 2 weeks.

In summary, the Postal Service could not cover the costs that would be involved in the humane handling of animals other than those currently carried, nor could it provide the protection for postal personnel that would be necessary if other animals were to be sent through the mail.

Thank you for your inquiry.

13 **NONMAILABLE WRITTEN, PRINTED, AND GRAPHIC MATTER**

131 **Lottery Mail**

We understand your disappointment that you cannot purchase lottery tickets through the mail. Federal law, 18 U.S.C. 1302, prohibits the mailing of various categories of lottery matter including: letters, packages, postal cards, and circulars concerning a lottery; publications containing lottery advertisements or lists of prizes awarded in a lottery; payments for the purchase of lottery tickets; and any lottery ticket or paper claiming to be or to represent a ticket or interest in a lottery.

Congress has enacted limited exemptions from this prohibition, including some that allow such material for a lottery conducted by a state of the United States to be mailed to addresses in that state. No exemption has been enacted that would make it lawful for a foreign lottery enterprise to use the U.S. postal system, or cause it to be used, to operate, promote, or enter one of its lotteries.

Thank you for providing this opportunity to explain this issue.

132 **Sexually Oriented Mail**

I understand your concern about the transmission of sexually oriented matter through the mails. Years ago the Postal Service had the authority to refuse such mail. However, this authority was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1971.

There are, however, two federal laws that provide protection for postal customers who do not desire to receive this type of mail. The Sexually Oriented Advertisement statute (39 U.S.C. 3010) allows customers to place their names, and the names of children under 19 living with them, on a list of persons who do not wish to receive matter that the statute defines as "sexually oriented."

To take advantage of this law, customers must complete and file a Postal Service Form 2201, *Application for Listing Pursuant to 39 U.S.C. 3010*. You can obtain this form from your postmaster.

After a customer has filed an application, his or her name and address will be placed on a Postal Service list. Any mailer who sends unsolicited sexually oriented advertisements to a postal customer after his or her name has been on the list for 30 days can be subject to civil action or, for willful violations, criminal penalties.

A person's name and address must be retained on the list for 5 years, unless a request for revocation is filed sooner. At the end of the 5-year period, to keep the list manageable, we require a new application.

A second statute, 39 U.S.C. 3008, allows any postal customer to obtain a "prohibitory order" against any person who has mailed to him or her an advertisement for matter the addressee considers "erotically arousing or

sexually provocative." After 30 days from the effective date of the order, the person against whom the order is issued is required to discontinue all mailings to the addressee.

Thank you for providing this opportunity to explain these laws. While use of these remedies does not make it impossible for you to receive further sexually oriented mail, the Postal Service will actively seek to enforce orders prohibiting such mailings.

2 Deposit, Collection, and Delivery

21 COLLECTIONS

211 Collection Box Distribution Based on Local Conditions

The number of street collection boxes installed, their locations, and the frequency of collection service depend primarily on the mailing patterns and the volume of mail generated by the individual community. As these and other local conditions change, collection service is modified and adapted accordingly.

212 Curbside Receptacles

On a rural or curbside city delivery route, carriers pick up prepaid outgoing mail from any approved mail receptacle that has the flag raised even though no mail is available to be delivered. However, for door delivery stops on city delivery routes, the carriers will collect outgoing mail only from those receptacles for which there is a delivery. Postal collection boxes are provided in areas receiving city delivery services.

Our congressional mandate requires the Postal Service to provide the American public with efficient and economical mail service. To strike a balance between these two objectives, we must be ever mindful of costs. Our single highest cost is labor (80 percent). We must, therefore, be extra cautious when considering any policy involving the use of labor. In examining our current city collection policy, we must multiply individual cost components by approximately 79.7 million city and 23 million rural delivery points. In view of this, and the fact that the Postal Service collects mail at nearly 493,000 locations nationwide, we believe the current policy is valid and justified.

213 Door Receptacles

I understand your concern about our carriers not checking each mailbox located at the door every day for outgoing mail. However, since 1929 postal policy has required a city delivery carrier to collect mail from a mailbox on the house only when there is mail to deliver to that box.

This policy is necessary because without it a carrier would have to check every mailbox on the route for outgoing mail. Mailboxes located at the door

do not have the red signal flag, as do rural and curbside mailboxes. Therefore, the carrier would be required to walk to each door whether or not there was mail to be delivered. The workday would be extended to the point where customers at the end of the route would receive their mail much later in the day. This would be unfair to those customers, and it would add overtime costs or additional employee salaries to our payrolls.

Please be assured that we shall continue to collect from your box when making deliveries. I hope this information clarifies the matter for you.

22 DELIVERY INTERRUPTED OR DELAYED

221 Day After a Holiday

We regret that you experienced delayed delivery of your mail after the **(insert holiday name)** holiday. You can be assured that every effort is made to process and deliver the mail entrusted to us in a timely manner, and it is disappointing to learn that we failed to provide the service you expected.

Because we strive to provide you the best possible service, we are constantly refining our processing and delivery systems to handle the ever-increasing mail volume. Like similar service organizations (grocery stores, banks, and the telephone companies), we try to anticipate and plan for the increases in volume caused by the holidays. We use the latest, state-of-the-art, automated mail processing equipment to process your mail more efficiently at reduced cost. Regrettably, the extremely heavy mail volume during a holiday can still result in some delays.

We apologize for the inconvenience this has caused you.

222 Dog Problems

I regret that the Postal Service is unable to provide mail delivery service to you because your dog is not properly restricted. While our goal is to provide the best possible delivery of your mail, we also must be mindful of the welfare and safety of our employees. Therefore, we instruct our carriers not to enter an area where they believe they are in danger of being attacked by an animal.

Dog bites, regardless of the extent of damage, are traumatic experiences and are constant hazards to the well-being of our carriers. Last year, more than 5,000 postal employees were attacked while delivering the mail. Some of these attacks resulted in the need for extended rehabilitative leave as well as costly and painful medical treatment.

The annual estimated cost of injuries is over 1 million dollars. These costs are included in the price of your postage stamps, and they are costs that we must reduce. Homeowners can be sued for damages in animal-attack cases,

and our general counsel recommends that we pursue 3,000 to 4,000 damage claims each year.

I understand your concern, especially since you have never known your dog to be vicious or to bite anyone. However, studies on dog bites show that the problem is not vicious dogs, so-called watchdogs, or dogs running loose. Most dog bites occur on the property of the owner, on the front porch or inside the house, and frequently inside a fenced yard. In most cases, the dog had never bitten anyone and was not thought to be a hazard to anyone by the owner.

We realize that it is human nature for customers to suggest that their domesticated pets are harmless, but the facts say otherwise. Dogs are territorial by nature and can be fiercely loyal to their owners and their property. This is precisely why dogs are used by military forces, police and security forces, and by millions of citizens hoping to protect their homes and property.

It is the responsibility of dog owners to control their dogs, and most communities have ordinances that require this. Postmasters frequently request that customers confine their dogs during regular delivery hours and are sometimes forced to discontinue service when this problem continues, but injuries have continued to increase.

223 **Hazardous Conditions**

Delivery service can be delayed or interrupted whenever streets or walkways present hazardous conditions to our carriers or vehicles. The Postal Service interrupts delivery only after careful consideration, and only as a last resort. We appreciate your understanding of our responsibility to our employees as well as to our customers.

224 **Lawn Crossing**

Letter carriers are expected to cross lawns while making deliveries if the customers do not object and if there are no hazards to the carriers. In most cases, deliveries can be made more expeditiously where carriers are permitted to cross lawns, especially in suburban developments. Normally, the passage of one person per day does no injury to a mature lawn. We are pleased to report that many of our customers recognize the cumulative savings potential in such short cuts and permit their carriers to walk the most direct route from one delivery to another.

I appreciate your concern in this matter and assure you that your wishes will be respected. Your carrier will be instructed not to cross your lawn when delivering mail.

I regret the concern this issue has caused you.

225 Mailbox Blocked by Snow

Customers are required to maintain proper access to mail receptacles. Proper access includes the removal of large accumulations of snow from the area around curblin receptacles and from sidewalks leading to doors or house-mounted receptacles. Without such access, the safety of the carrier is jeopardized. While the safety of the carrier is a primary concern, injury to the carrier could delay or interrupt service to remaining customers on the route.

If your mail cannot be delivered because accumulated snow prevents the carrier from reaching your box, there are alternatives you can choose: you may arrange with a neighbor to receive your mail; you may put up a suitable temporary mailbox (e.g., a sturdy box); you may meet the carrier at your box; or you may pick up your mail at the post office. I will be pleased to discuss these alternatives with you so that you may select the one most convenient for you.

226 Mailbox Blocked by Vehicle

Letter carriers will leave their vehicles to make delivery if the mailbox is temporarily blocked by a vehicle over which the customer *has no control*. However, if the carrier continually experiences a problem in serving curblin or rural boxes where the customer *is able to control* on-street parking, the postmaster may withdraw delivery service until the situation is corrected.

227 Misdelivery

Thank you for telling us about the incident of misdelivered mail you experienced. We consider misdelivered mail a very serious problem and do not tolerate repeated errors of this nature. When customers report this problem we take immediate corrective action.

Accordingly, the employee who was responsible for misdelivering your mail has been cautioned that future incidents of this nature will result in appropriate corrective action.

We regret any inconvenience you experienced because your mail was misdelivered. Although we have aggressive quality control programs to guard against misdeliveries, occasional mistakes are made. If this occurs again, please call **(insert name of person to call and telephone number)** at once. In that way, we can identify the employee making the error and take appropriate steps.

23 DELIVERY METHODS

231 **Central Point: Colleges and Universities (see DMM D042.5.0)**

Thank you for your letter concerning your **(insert son's/daughter's/etc.)** delivery service at **(insert name of institution or address)**.

Although we understand your concern, I would like to explain that most schools, hospitals, hotels, and many apartment buildings have central delivery points. A central delivery point receives mail in bulk for residents, and the responsibility of the Postal Service ends at that point. The receiving organization must then distribute the mail to individuals and forward their mail when they leave. This method usually provides quick and efficient service to everyone.

232 **Curb vs. Door**

The growth of suburban areas and the shift of population from one geographic area to another have created new challenges for the Postal Service. To meet these challenges, delivery regulations were changed in 1978 to eliminate door delivery as an option for residential areas. Current delivery options are curbside or centralized delivery provided by motorized carrier.

We do make exceptions, however, under certain circumstances. Delivery can be made to the door of a new house if it is between houses that already receive door delivery service. We also make exceptions for customers when service by existing methods imposes an extreme physical hardship on that customer.

Although you may not now qualify for door delivery service, you still benefit in the way of lower postage costs. If every household in the country were to receive door delivery, postage costs would be much higher.

I understand your concern that the Postal Service does not provide the same type of delivery service to all customers. However, the establishment of curbside or centralized delivery service instead of door delivery is proper and in accordance with postal policy.

Federal courts have considered whether it is unconstitutional or illegal for the Postal Service to provide central delivery service to some customers while providing curbside and door delivery service to others within the same city. Each case supported postal officials' responsibility to authorize appropriate delivery service. It was determined that the different types of delivery resulted from the unique way in which each area developed.

Where local city ordinances prohibit curblin mail receptacles, mailboxes may be placed at the edge of the customer's property, or in clusters of curb boxes at the nearest intersection or driveway. While this arrangement is not always as convenient as regular curblin delivery, it has been followed in some instances to maintain good relations with the local authorities.

233 **General Delivery (see DMM D930.10)**

When carrier delivery is unavailable, general delivery is primarily intended for those customers who prefer not to use post office box service. At offices with carrier delivery service, general delivery is available for up to 30 days for transients and customers who are not permanently located. After that time, the customer should have mail delivered by carrier or rent a post office box.

When carrier delivery is unavailable, customers entitled to general delivery should certainly not be discouraged from using this service. If you tell us of instances where this has been the case, we will see that corrective action is taken.

Delivery of mail without charge to the recipient is available to all postal customers. Where delivery service is authorized, it is provided by means of city carriers, rural carriers, and in some instances highway contractors. General delivery is also available at post offices that do not provide carrier service.

Postmasters may extend general delivery indefinitely to customers who are experiencing problems receiving their mail because of theft or vandalism. If you are interested in obtaining general delivery service, please contact your postmaster and state the reasons you cannot receive proper delivery of your mail at your residence. The postmaster will review the matter and advise you of the decision.

234 **Options for New Developments**

The Postal Service offers two delivery options for newly developed areas, such as new residential housing. These options are:

- Delivery to a mailbox located at the curblin (or sidewalk).
- Centralized delivery.

Centralized delivery involves the grouping or clustering of mail receptacles at one delivery point. Our delivery personnel can then serve the mail receptacles more efficiently. Familiar examples of this kind of service include post office boxes in postal facilities, apartment mail receptacles, and several mailboxes grouped together on single posts.

We also provide centralized delivery through another method that we call Neighborhood Delivery and Collection Box Units, or more simply stated,

cluster box units (CBUs). With this service, customers enjoy greater mail security because each unit has its own key. Convenience is increased because regular collection of outgoing mail is made, and parcel lockers, where needed, can save trips to the post office. In addition, CBUs are more aesthetically pleasing than groups of curblin boxes, and our customers are spared unnecessary expense because the Postal Service provides and maintains them.

Although we do not normally change a delivery method after it has been established, customers may request that their door or curblin delivery be changed to CBUs. All requests will be considered, but CBUs will be installed only where they benefit both the customers and the post office.

We appreciate having the opportunity to serve you.

Postmasters have discretion to establish Neighborhood Delivery and Collection Box Units, also called cluster box units (CBUs), in new areas. Factors that are considered include customer convenience, the aesthetics of the area, and the economy of postal operations. Because the type of delivery to be provided is determined before many residents move into a development, the Postal Service usually consults the developer, rather than prospective residents, before a decision is made about the method of delivery.

Centralized delivery to CBUs is by far the most cost-effective method of delivery, so the Postal Service tries to use this method whenever appropriate. For example, our cost analyses indicate that service to CBUs is less costly than curblin delivery, saving us about \$20 per individual delivery per year. A decision to install CBUs at a specific location is made only when it is determined that this offers the most efficient type of delivery service for the particular situation.

Cluster box units provide unique advantages to postal customers. The Postal Service bears the entire expense of purchasing, installing, and maintaining them. These lockable, watertight units provide far more security than regular mailboxes. Also, CBUs can be compatible with the aesthetic design of the community.

We appreciate having the opportunity to serve you.

235

Post Office Box Service

235.1

Why Are There So Many Different Rates?

This is in response to your recent letter asking about the differences in post office box fees. I understand your confusion about these differences, and appreciate the opportunity to explain why post office box fees differ across the country.

You probably know that the Postal Service is charged with responsibility for providing an efficient and equitable postal service to the nation. Because

there are such differences in communities throughout the nation, the Postal Service has to make adjustments when circumstances warrant. Accordingly, box rental fees are divided into three groups.

Post offices that provide city carrier delivery service are referred to as Group 1 offices, and they are the most expensive of the three groups. For this group, a post office box is an alternative to city or rural carrier delivery service. Semiannual fees range from \$19.50 to \$130.00, according to the size of the box rented.

Group 2 fees are charged at post offices where customers are eligible only for rural or highway contract route delivery. Annual fees range from \$7.25 to \$50.

Group 3 fees are applicable at Community Post Offices and contract stations or branches of post offices that do not offer any form of delivery service. Group 3 boxes have a flat rental rate of \$2. The only alternative available to customers in this group is general delivery.

Thus, the three groups reflect the degrees of convenience afforded by alternative delivery services. The greater the level of service offered by the free alternative, the higher the post office box fee.

Thank you for the opportunity to clarify this issue.

235.2 **Why Do I Have to Pay for a Post Office Box When Other Customers Get Free Delivery Service by Carrier?**

The seeming disparity between those who receive mail at their homes and those who receive mail through post office boxes is often difficult to understand. Customers who receive home delivery are not charged for delivery service because it is already paid for in the form of postage.

However, postage alone does not pay for the operating costs of maintaining post office boxes. Box service requires the maintenance of extra facilities and equipment. Such premium service is voluntary, and we feel the cost should be paid for by the users.

236 **Prisons**

This is in response to your letter concerning mail service at your institution.

We understand your concern, but the situation you describe does not come under the authority of the United States Postal Service. The pertinent regulations under which we operate are as follows:

Domestic Mail Manual D042.5

Mail addressed to patients or inmates at institutions is delivered to the institution authorities. If the addressee is no longer at that address, the mail must be redirected to the current address, if known, or endorsed appropriately and returned by the institution to the post office.

We suggest that you contact authorities at your institution about internal mail regulations or pursue applicable grievance procedures.

You may wish to contact a representative of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) about this issue. Write to:

NATIONAL PRISON PROJECT
ACLU
1875 CONNECTICUT AVE NW STE 410
WASHINGTON DC 20009-5728

You can obtain a booklet entitled "The Rights of Prisoners" from:

DEPARTMENT L
ACLU
POST OFFICE BOX 794
MEDFORD NY 11763-0794

24 DELIVERY SCHEDULES

241 Customer Suggests We Reverse Route

Many customers have suggested, as you have, that we reverse our routes periodically. Experience has shown that such changes are not practical and increase sorting and delivery errors significantly. As a result, everyone receives less efficient service during the transition.

No matter how we structure our routes, someone must always be at the end. There is no practical solution to this problem. If we were to reverse your route this week, I would soon be responding to letters from your neighbors who are now at the beginning of the route. You can be assured that we will continue to make every effort to provide you the earliest possible delivery.

242 Customer Wants Earlier Delivery

I understand your desire to have early mail delivery, and appreciate being given this opportunity to explain why many customers receive their mail later in the day.

Carrier routes are established on the basis of providing each letter carrier a full 8 hours of work daily. This, of course, precludes providing early delivery of mail to all customers because, no matter how we structure a route, somebody must always be first and somebody must always be last. We do, however, carefully consider the volume of mail for each route so that we can deliver the greatest amount of mail at the earliest possible hour. Also, special attention is paid to energy conservation measures and the most efficient use of carrier workhours.

Your location on a carrier's line of travel determines the time of day you receive delivery. The top priority of the Postal Service is to provide mail service in the most efficient manner possible. Because delivery costs are one

of our biggest expenses, you can be assured that careful thought and continuous evaluation are given to each delivery route.

We regret the inconvenience to those customers who desire early mail delivery. To give them the service they need, however, we provide alternative delivery services, such as window caller service or post office box service, which will provide them access to their mail earlier and throughout the day. Should you wish to consider these alternate delivery services, your local postmaster will be glad to answer any questions you have.

While we cannot provide early delivery to everyone, we carefully review each area to ensure that the route is the most efficient possible. In this way, we can control our costs, which means savings for you and other customers.

243 **Route Recently Reviewed**

Carrier routes are established to provide the most efficient pattern of delivery. Periodically, routes are examined and adjusted when warranted by changing mail volumes or community growth. Because of a recent route adjustment, you should now normally receive delivery by **(insert time)**. Please understand, however, that there are occasions when unscheduled employee absences, unusually large mail volumes, and other factors can result in later delivery times.

In designing carrier routes, it is inevitable that some customers will receive earlier delivery than others. You can be assured that every effort will continue to be made to provide you the earliest possible delivery.

25 **RURAL ROUTE EXTENSIONS**

Customers may request extension of rural delivery service by submitting their request to the postmaster of the office from which the route operates. Extensions should serve an average of at least one family per mile of additional travel, including any retrace. Roads generally should be public, must be maintained in good condition, and must be passable for vehicles year-round. Extensions of service on private roads may be considered for two or more families, contingent on the customers' written agreement to maintain the road to permit safe travel by the carrier. Extensions of service will not be made along private driveways.

Rural delivery service, which exists in **(insert name of town)**, is not provided in front of customers' homes that are within a quarter-mile radius of the post office, unless those homes are on the direct line of travel of the rural carrier. Customers within this quarter-mile radius whose homes are not on the carrier's line of travel do not have to rent a post office box. They may place a

rural box on the carrier's line of travel, or they may elect to receive mail from general delivery without charge until they qualify for delivery service.

26 **UNWANTED BULK BUSINESS MAIL**

This is in response to your recent inquiry about advertising mail.

In discussing this matter, it is important to recognize that the American system of government places a high value on the right of its citizens to receive information and the right of businesses to provide information. Advertising mail generates more than \$200 billion a year, with over half of the American population—more than 100 million adults—buying through direct mail each year. Those orders translate into jobs. Jobs mean buying power for families, economic growth for our nation, and tax revenue for government at every level.

Mail order also provides individuals with a way to shop when they want, at a place they find comfortable. This convenience cannot be overlooked in an era where two-worker families and single-parent households are commonplace. A common misconception is that advertising mail is to blame for the nation's solid waste disposal problems. The truth is that if none of the 3.8 million tons of advertising mail produced each year were recycled, if none were shipped overseas, and if none were converted into post-use energy, it would still represent only two percent of the garbage we throw out each year.

From our perspective, advertising mail helps us to keep postage rates stable. We have very high fixed costs and the more volume over which these costs can be spread, the more beneficial it is for the Postal Service. Advertising mail is important to the Postal Service because of its contribution to the absorption of the fixed expenses in the same way that advertising is important to the television industry in that it helps to pay for the quality programs that are brought to you over the airwaves.

Nonetheless, direct marketing companies recognize that some customers just don't like advertising mail and would like to reduce the amount that is deposited into their mail receptacles. Since 1971 the Direct Marketing Association has sponsored the Mail Preference Service, which has been helping consumers to limit the national advertising mail they receive. To receive less national advertising mail you can simply send your name and address to:

DMA MAIL PREFERENCE SERVICE
POST OFFICE BOX 9008
FARMINGDALE NY 11735-9008

The Direct Marketing Association tells us that consumers should be aware, however, that when a name is placed on the DMA Mail Preference Service listing, mailings will no longer be sent about new products, magazines, books, new records, or tapes that are offered at mail order prices. Holiday catalogs will disappear, and there will be no more free product samples. It is

important to recognize that, when you request that your name be removed from advertisers' mailing lists, you cannot pick and choose which advertising mail you want to eliminate.

There is no comparable organization representing local advertisers. However, many businesses will gladly remove a customer's name from their local listings if asked, and many clearly announce this service on their customer information pages or on the order form itself. At this point, it is important to recognize that the Postal Service is required by federal law to deliver the nation's mail. We do not have the authority to deny business mailers the service for which they have paid any more than we can deny your right to deliver your mail on which you have paid postage.

On the other hand, federal law does give us the right to help you curtail sexually oriented advertisements. To do this, ask your local postmaster to assist you in filing a Postal Service Form 2201, *Application for Listing Pursuant to 39 U.S.C. 3010*. This will result in your name and address being placed on a national list to which all mailers of sexually oriented mail are required to refer before mailing. Any mailer who sends unsolicited sexually oriented advertisements to persons on this list may be subject to civil action or, for willful violations, criminal penalties.

You have the right to stop sexually oriented advertisements from a specific mailer. You can do this by completing Form 2150, *Notice for Prohibitory Order Against Sender of Pandering Advertisements in the Mails*, at your post office. Completion of this form will cause an order to be placed against a specific mailer prohibiting the mailer from mailing sexually oriented advertisements to you.

Finally, you do have the right to refuse to accept mail at the time it is *offered* for delivery. Or, *after* delivery, you may mark any mail matter, except registered, insured, certified, or COD mail, "REFUSED" and return it unopened to the mailstream.

3 Eligibility

31 **DETACHED LABEL MAIL**

I understand your concern about the mail on which it appears no postage has been paid. At the same time you received this mail, you should have received a card that explained that postage on the circulars received with the card had been paid. This card identifies the mailer (usually a large-volume mailing house), and also has an address label affixed to it. Such mail is commonly known as shared mail, and it provides a means for many advertisers to "share" their advertisements for delivery through a single mailing agent.

32 **EXPRESS MAIL**

321 **Guarantee and Insurance**

Express Mail carries a service guarantee and insurance coverage. The service guarantee provides that Express Mail will be available for pickup or delivered by a specified time. If it is not, the customer's postage is refundable.

Express Mail is insured against loss, damage, or rifling up to \$500 at no extra cost. In addition, document reconstruction insurance up to \$50,000 is included in the basic rate.

322 **Tracking System**

Thank you for asking about our point-to-point tracking system for Express Mail packages and letters.

We did not initially include a tracking feature in our Express Mail service because at the time such a system was too costly. However, customer demand and the economies inherent in advancing technology prompted us to reconsider this decision, and on February 6, 1991, we signed a 5-year, \$128 million contract with Systemhouse Federal Systems, Inc., of Arlington, Virginia, to provide a Comprehensive Tracking and Tracing (CTT) system so that customers can know the status of their Express Mail shipments on a timely basis.

If you have a question about the status of your Express Mail item, you may call our toll-free telephone number: 1-800-222-1811. The number is staffed on a 24-hour basis and provides the latest available information concerning all Express Mail items. This number also provides access to our Express Mail Inquiry Center where assistance with Express Mail questions and problems is provided. Major users of Express Mail can access the system through a computer connection.

33 **PRESORT**

I understand why you feel that it is unfair that the mailer did not pay full postage, while you have to pay 29 cents. I appreciate the opportunity to explain. This type of mail is called Presort, and many business firms use this service.

The Postal Service has offered discounts since 1976 to First-Class mailers who perform certain mail sorting functions. These mail sorting functions save the Postal Service processing costs, and, of course, we pass a part of the savings on to the mailer.

For example, the company that mailed you the envelope at the discount rate prepared the mail in such a manner that the Postal Service eliminated the tasks of collecting, facing, postmarking, sorting, and bundling the mail. They also took the mail to their post office, which eliminated collection costs. To qualify for the discount, businesses must pay an annual fee of \$75, mail at least 500 pieces, and presort all mail by ZIP Code. These efforts justify a discount in their postage costs.

We appreciate having the opportunity to serve you. Enclosed is *A Consumer's Guide to Postal Services and Products*. You will find it helpful in selecting the service that will get the best value for your mailing dollar.

34 **PRIORITY—WHAT IS PRIORITY MAIL?**

Priority Mail was originally designed for expedited movement of parcel mail, and it was and still is handled separately within the distribution and transportation systems. It has also evolved to become a good, reliable way of purchasing expedited mail service for any size item. Our service standards for Priority Mail primarily call for 2-day delivery nationwide; however, we have designated some outlying areas where the commitment is 3 days.

In essence, Priority Mail has replaced our old air mail service. Air mail was discontinued as a separate type of domestic service in May 1977. At that time, all long-distance First-Class letter mail was provided air transportation automatically at the regular First-Class rate. However, not long after domestic

air mail was discontinued, mailers began asking whether they could use the service to speed up delivery of lightweight items that would normally be thought of as letter mail or flats. Because Priority Mail is a subclass of First-Class Mail, there is no restriction on its use for lightweight letter mail if the mailer is willing to pay the appropriate Priority Mail rate in exchange for the expedited handling. The minimum Priority Mail rate is \$2.90 for all items up to but not exceeding 2 pounds. Many mailers choose Priority Mail service to take advantage of the faster delivery standards.

Thank you for providing this opportunity to explain our Priority Mail service.

35 **THIRD-CLASS**

351 **Value of Advertising Mail**

Thank you for asking us about third-class advertising mail. We believe this mail offers many benefits to our customers.

First, advertising mail is important to you because the revenue received from advertising mailers has helped us keep your postage rates reasonably low. Let me explain why. If your mail carrier brings you a single piece of First-Class Mail, the Postal Service receives 29 cents in revenue from this stop at your residence. If, at the same time, two basic rate pieces of bulk third-class mail also are delivered, the total revenue to the Postal Service is increased to 68.6 cents (2 x 19.8 cents for the third-class pieces and 29 cents for the First-Class piece).

Second, advertising mail is important to our national economy. The direct mail advertising industry employs more than three million Americans and contributes an estimated \$150 billion to the economy.

Third, advertising mail is important to the Postal Service. The industry provided \$9 billion in revenue to the Postal Service last year.

Thank you for providing this opportunity to discuss this issue with you.

352 **Why Third-Class Rates Are Lower**

The reason bulk third-class rates are less than those for First-Class Mail is because third-class mail is less costly to handle. It must be presorted, sacked, labeled, and delivered to the post office by the mailer. Third-class bulk mail does not have to be collected, faced, or postmarked by Postal Service employees. ~~It is given deferred service in handling, and it is not forwarded or returned to the sender unless the mailer has agreed in advance to pay additional postage.~~

In determining postage rates, the Postal Service is required to recommend rates and fees that will fully cover the direct and indirect postal costs

attributable to each class or type of mail. The members of the Postal Rate Commission, who are appointed by the President, are responsible for holding public hearings and ensuring that the rates and fees meet the congressional mandate that they reflect actual costs. Our current rates and fees were established through this statutory procedure.

It might also interest you to learn that third-class rates were increased significantly as a result of the last general rate increase. This compares with a lesser increase for the basic First-Class rate. In addition, the basic rate for third-class advertising mail has increased from 4.2 cents to 19.8 cents since the Postal Reorganization Act of 1971. Had First-Class postage increased at the same rate, the current First-Class stamp would cost 37.7 cents.

4 Forwarding and Related Services

41 **BASIC SERVICES—DIRECTORY SERVICE**

411 **Background Letter**

Until 1950, the Postal Service provided directory service for all First-Class letters. Knowing that the Postal Service would deliver the letter regardless of the address on the envelope, few people bothered to correct their mailing lists.

As our society became increasingly mobile and as the volume of mail multiplied, the amount of incorrectly addressed mail increased dramatically and the cost of directory service became prohibitive.

The Postal Service has, therefore, increased its efforts to educate customers about the importance of using correct, complete, and current addresses. As a part of this effort, we provide, free of charge, the new address of customers whose forwarding orders have expired within the previous 6 months.

At the same time, we have increased our public awareness program to stress the importance of addressing mail carefully. To make sure that mail is delivered, an address must include:

- Name of intended recipient.
- Street number and name with apartment or suite number, post office box number, rural or highway contract route and box number, or general delivery.
- City, state, and ZIP Code.

I hope that I have helped you better understand our position on this issue. While we try to deliver mail to the intended recipient, we also have an obligation to keep our costs, which are passed on to the postal customer, at a minimum.

Until the early 1950s, post offices provided directory service on regular mail that lacked complete address information. However, with the increasing mail volume, this service was discontinued because of its very high cost and the virtual impossibility of maintaining accurate reference directories. Directory service is still given to registered, certified, insured, COD, Express Mail, special delivery, and special handling mail. It also is provided for obviously perishable items as well as noncircular international mail and overseas Armed Forces mail.

412 Why We Didn't Look Up the Address

We understand why you feel we should take the time to look up the address for each piece of mail. Many years ago, when mail volume was much lighter, we provided directory service for all First-Class letters. Now, we provide directory service for obviously perishable items, noncircular international, registered, insured, certified, COD, and Express Mail.

Directory service is very costly and we had to limit it to the special service mail listed above. Besides the high cost, we also found that as long as we provided directory service for regular First-Class letters, many mailers never bothered to correct their mailing lists.

42 FORWARDING

421 Fourth-Class Rates—One Way Only

Unlike First-Class postage, which provides for the free return of undeliverable mail, fourth-class (parcel post) rates provide only one-way service. If a parcel cannot be delivered as addressed, it is returned to the sender, and the sender is required to pay the cost of the return trip. Although this policy causes added expense to mailers of returned parcels, we believe it is the fairest possible system. If we had to include the cost of possible return postage in our fourth-class rate structure, the rates for all mailers would be increased substantially. Under the current system, only those requiring return service are asked to pay for it.

I hope this clarifies our policy.

422 Not Provided Central Point Delivery (see also DMM D042)

The Postal Service does not provide forwarding service for individuals who receive their mail at a bulk or central delivery point, such as a hospital, hotel, institution, corporation, or college. Responsibility for forwarding mail addressed to central delivery points rests with the management or administration of the hospital, hotel, etc.

When the Postal Service delivers in bulk to an apartment, hotel, boarding house, etc., it also enters into an agreement with the management to ensure that the management will forward mail for its former tenants.

423 Receiving Agent Responsible for Forwarding

This is in response to your recent letter concerning the forwarding of mail that was addressed to you in care of a commercial mail receiving agent.

While we understand and appreciate your concern, we must reaffirm that mail that is addressed to you at a commercial mail receiving agency must be delivered to that address. The agent is then responsible for remailing any mail that is received for you.

Postal Service policy states that when a customer wants his or her mail delivered to a commercial mail receiving agency, he or she must sign Postal Service Form 1583, *Application for Delivery of Mail Through Agent*. This form must be signed by both the commercial agent and the addressee. The addressee and the agent agree that:

No change-of-address order will be filed with the post office when the agency relationship is terminated;

The forwarding of mail intended for the addressee is the responsibility of the agent; and

When remailed by the agent, the mail is subject to payment of new postage because delivery is deemed to have been made when the mail was delivered to the agent.

We regret any misunderstanding that you or your agent have about this agreement, but hope that we have helped you better understand it. To avoid further disruption, please be sure to notify your correspondents of your new address.

424 Time Limit

Free forwarding of First-Class Mail is provided for a period of not over 1 year. This is not true for the remaining classes of mail, such as magazines, publications, or newspapers. Forwarding of such mail will be provided for 60 days. After that time, this mail is processed according to the sender's endorsement.

America has become an increasingly mobile society. Two out of every five Americans change their residence every 5 years. Last year the Postal Service recorded 41 million changes of address and forwarded 2.35 billion pieces of mail. It costs us 35 cents to forward each piece of mail. Since these costs must be factored into the rates we charge for service, forwarding mail ultimately drives up the cost of postage for all customers.

Forwarding mail has a negative effect on subsequent mailings because there is no incentive for the customer to ensure that the proper address is used. At present, we forward mail for a full year and then provide a corrected address to the sender for an additional 6 months, all at no additional cost to the mailer or to the addressee. We purge an average of five million forwarding addresses from our files each month. I am sure you can imagine the

astronomical task we would have if we retained the additional addresses indefinitely.

The Postal Service believes that the 1-year forwarding period is the best balance between cost and service and provides ample time for customers to notify regular correspondents of the change in address.

425 **Why Did You Send Me the New Address Instead of Forwarding My Letter?**

The Postal Service forwards mail for a period of 1 year. After the 1-year period, the mail is returned to the sender. At one time, we returned all such mail and simply marked it, "Forwarding Order Expired." However, at the request of mailers who would like to update their address lists, we programmed our computers to retain the new address for an additional 6 months.

With this change, we can now provide updated address information to mailers so that they can maintain contact with their friends and associates who have moved more than a year ago. We have received many compliments from individuals who appreciate this added service.

5 General Information

51 AUCTIONS

This is in response to your recent inquiry.

Auctions of unclaimed loose-in-the-mail items are held periodically at each of our mail recovery centers. The scheduling and announcement of these sales is made by the managers of the various centers. In order to determine when sales will be held at the various locations, you should write the general manager at one of the mail recovery centers listed below:

MAIL RECOVERY CENTER
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
730 GREAT SOUTHWEST PKY
ATLANTA GA 30336-9590

MAIL RECOVERY CENTER
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
2970 MARKET ST RM 531A
PHILADELPHIA PA 19104-9652

MAIL RECOVERY CENTER
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
180 KELLOGG BLVD EAST
ST PAUL MN 55101-9514

MAIL RECOVERY CENTER
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
390 MAIN ST
SAN FRANCISCO CA 94105-9602

Thank you for your interest in the Postal Service.

52 CARRIER ALERT PROGRAM

Through our Carrier Alert Program the Postal Service works with a local sponsoring agency to offer an alert mechanism to elderly and handicapped customers. The local sponsoring agency notifies the post office of persons who have applied to participate in the service.

A decal is placed in the participant's mailbox as a signal to the letter carrier. The carrier then will be alert to an accumulation of mail that might signify a sudden illness or accident. Through locally developed procedures, the accumulation will be reported to the social service agency for follow-up action.

"Carrier Alert," an all volunteer program, is a natural extension of the care that individual letter carriers traditionally have exhibited for their customers — not just in the delivery of their mail — but in a genuine concern for their well-being. It has been customary for letter carriers to show particular consideration for customers on their routes who, because of ill health or advanced age, required a little extra special attention.

53 CONSUMER SERVICE CARD

I regret that you did not receive a reply to your Consumer Service Card of **(insert date)**. Our office does not have a record of your earlier correspondence; however, we will use this opportunity to address your concerns.

I regret that you did not receive a reply to your Consumer Service Card of **(insert date)**. I enclose a copy of the letter we sent you on **(insert date)**. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at **(insert telephone number)**.

The Consumer Service Card is designed to serve three purposes. First, it provides customers with an easy method to communicate their concerns, suggestions, or compliments with local postmasters. Second, it provides Postal Service managers with useful information about service performance so that improvements can be made. Third, the four-part card was designed to support a built-in tracking system that ensures effective response handling.

54 EMPLOYEE COURTESY

The issue you raise about employee courtesy is one that concerns every postal employee. The postmaster general continually stresses this subject. Our employees receive the message through training, job discussions, employee publications, and written correspondence.

Many times managers are unaware of incidents of discourtesy toward customers; therefore, we must rely on our customers to let us know. We appreciate your help in promptly reporting any acts of discourtesy to the **supervisor or postmaster on duty**. The specific information you provide is critical in allowing us an opportunity to correct unacceptable behavior.

55 NATIONAL SMOKING POLICY

Thank you for asking about our smoking policy.

We understand and appreciate your concern about breathing secondary tobacco smoke. Simply stated, our national policy prohibits smoking by employees or customers in any area of a postal facility. "THANK YOU FOR NOT SMOKING" signs or posters are usually on display in lobbies of all post offices. All ash receptacles have been removed, except those at lobby entrances.

We value you as a customer and thank you for sharing your thoughts with us.

56 PHILATELIC ISSUES

561 Cancellations

561.1 Heavy Cancellations

Please accept our apologies because your philatelic mail was canceled with a heavily inked cancellation. Many philatelists have expressed their concern to us about heavily inked cancellations. With the tremendous volume of mail that is processed daily by the Postal Service, it is necessary to properly maintain the canceling machines. Regrettably, when a new supply of ink is added, some stamps can receive a darker, and sometimes smeared, cancellation. We train our technicians and clerks to adjust the machines properly and to clean the hand-cancelers regularly to reduce the number of poor cancellations.

561.2 Pen Cancellations

Many philatelists have expressed concern about pen cancellations. Carriers and clerks are instructed to use a pen to cancel stamps that somehow come through the mail system without proper cancellations. This is necessary to protect postal revenue.

It is our goal to reduce the number of uncanceled stamps so that we can reduce the need for pen cancellations.

561.3 Poor Cancellations

We realize that improper cancellations on philatelic mail are of genuine concern to collectors, and we are determined to correct this problem. In an effort to eliminate poor cancellations, we have initiated a new program to train postal employees on the importance of good, clean, clear cancellations on all philatelic mail. Our employees must be fully aware of the importance of

good cancellations to the collector and the importance of the collector to the U.S. Postal Service.

562 **Eliminate Commemorative Stamps**

It would not be practical or economically wise to eliminate our commemorative stamp program. There are an estimated 20 million stamp collectors in the United States who purchase large numbers of commemorative stamps and never claim the delivery service purchased. As a consequence, the Postal Service receives \$200 million annually from stamps and other philatelic products kept by collectors. Because this revenue is applied against the general operational costs of the Postal Service, it benefits all mailers.

Thank you for your inquiry and your interest in the Postal Service.

563 **Advertising on Stamps**

We appreciate your suggestions for helping the Postal Service find means to raise revenue. Similar proposals have been evaluated many times in the past but have been rejected.

There are several reasons why the idea of advertising on postage stamps has met with so little success. The primary point on which the issue always turns is one of maintaining the dignity and tradition of the Postal Service. Our postage stamps have always been used to describe our nation's achievements, honor our heroes, reflect our culture, display the natural wonders of the country, and commemorate outstanding events. This tradition is longstanding, and considerable efforts have been made over the years to ensure that the highest standards of propriety, art, and workmanship are maintained.

57 **POSTAL SAVINGS**

Thank you for your recent inquiry regarding the Postal Savings System.

I regret to inform you that the Postal Savings System has been liquidated. The period for redeeming certificates ended on July 13, 1985.

The United States Congress liquidated the Postal Savings System in 1966. Later, Congress passed Public Law 98-359, which established July 13, 1985, as the final filing date for all claims.

Unfortunately, there is no further claim you can make against the government. However, many stamp collectors also collect postal history items such as certificates of deposit. You may wish to contact a stamp dealer or other collectibles dealer to determine if the certificate has any value as a collectible.

58 RETAIL ISSUES

581 Long Lines

Our Customer Satisfaction Index data and customer research consistently show that waiting in line at post offices can contribute to customer dissatisfaction with the Postal Service. Most offices and retail clerks provide fast, efficient service. However, there are offices where long lines have been a problem. This can contribute to the negative public perception that we are striving to overcome. In 1993, the Postal Service began nationwide implementation of two customer service initiatives entitled, "Service in Five Minutes or Less" and "Adjusted Window Hours."

Successful implementation of the programs depends upon an initial review and adjustment of retail window staffing and scheduling, use of such strategies as having a "lobby director" to assist customers with forms, inquiries, etc., diverting time-consuming transactions (setting of postage meters, passport applications, etc.) away from the regular retail counter, more effective placement of postal vending equipment, and promotion of such programs as Stamps by Mail, Stamps by Phone, and Stamps on Consignment.

The implementation of "Service in Five Minutes or Less" will vary among offices. This service standard will be particularly challenging at our larger, busier offices, and may not be consistently achieved at all times. Nevertheless, the Postal Service is committed to achieving this service standard at least 95 percent of the time.

582 Private Vendors Charge Too Much for Stamps

We have no control over the pricing policies of private entrepreneurs. Since they must pay full price for the stamps they buy for resale, they may, of course, charge a higher rate in order to earn a return on their investment of capital and effort. The prices they charge are, no doubt, established on the basis of their needs and market evaluations.

Most people use private vending machines only when they have an immediate need for a small quantity of stamps and a trip to a postal outlet is inconvenient. Customers can avoid paying these higher prices by purchasing stamps at their post office, through our Stamps by Mail, Stamps by Computer, or Stamps by Phone programs, Postal Service vending machines, or from one of the many retail stores that now sell stamps at face value on consignment.

583 Stamps Sold at a Discount by Food Chains

The postage stamps sold by (insert name of store chain) stores in their product promotions were purchased from the Postal Service at face value. (Insert name of store chain) paid the same price for the stamps that you do

when you go to your post office. The reason (**insert name of store chain**) is able to offer a discount to you is because they agreed to sell the stamp at or below face value as part of the consignment agreement offered to the store by the Postal Service. Many times, stores will sell below face value to entice you to shop at their store, similar to the in-store coupons that feature various products.

The agreement made between (**insert name of store chain**) and the Postal Service to sell postage stamps at their checkout counters makes it more convenient for our customers to buy stamps. This program complements our other convenient programs such as vending machines, Stamps by Mail, Stamps by Computer, Stamps by Phone, and express lines at post office lobbies.

59 ZIP CODE DIRECTORIES

The current edition of the *National Five-Digit ZIP Code and Post Office Directory* can be purchased from our National Customer Support Center or through the Government Printing Office located in 20 major cities throughout the United States. Customers wishing to purchase the directory may do so through the mail. The price for our soft-cover version is \$15 per set or \$120 for a case of eight sets. A limited edition of hard cover directories, such as the ones currently found in postal lobbies, is also available for purchase at \$20 per set.

Customers can order the directory by sending a check or money order payable to "US Postal Service" in the amount of \$15 for each regular soft-cover copy or \$20 for each hard-cover version to:

NATIONAL FIVE-DIGIT ZIP CODE DIRECTORY ORDERS
NATIONAL CUSTOMER SUPPORT CENTER
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
6060 PRIMACY PKY STE 101
MEMPHIS TN 38188-0001

Customers who need assistance with their orders may call our toll-free telephone number 1-800-331-5746, ext. 640.

6 International Mail

61 CLAIMS

We regret your concern about the delay in processing your claim. Processing international claims and inquiries differs greatly from processing domestic claims. Resolving international claims often takes a long time because the rules governing their processing are based on detailed international agreements. Consequently, the United States Postal Service cannot settle a claim until it receives the appropriate information from the other country's postal administration.

62 CUSTOMS DUTY

Under an agreement of the Universal Postal Union, of which the United States is a member, the Postal Service is authorized to collect a nonrefundable service charge of \$3.40. This charge reimburses the Postal Service for the cost incurred in processing parcels through customs and ultimate delivery to the addressee. Duty assessments, however, are outside the control of the Postal Service. The Customs Service assigns duty and has the authority to change the amount of assessments.

63 INTERNATIONAL INSURANCE

Insurance service on packages to many international destinations is not available. Each nation determines which services they will offer for international mail entering their country. **(Insert country name)** does not offer insurance service. As a consequence, the United States cannot offer you this service.

64 POSTAGE DUE

We understand your concern about the postage due charge assessed on your letter from **(insert name of country)**. However, the charge was made in accordance with international agreement of the Universal Postal Union.

Please examine the envelope again and note that there is a notation "T" followed by a fraction. This annotation was made by the **(insert name of country)** postal officials to indicate the piece was short paid. The fractional number consists of a figure representing the short payment written above the surface letter rate of postage to the United States. When such mail is received at our foreign exchange offices, we are obliged to compute the amount due by multiplying the fraction by the U.S. international surface letter rate of postage for the first weight unit (70 cents). We also add to this amount a 42-cent handling charge. In the case you sent, the amount due equals **(insert amount)** cents plus the 42-cent handling fee.

Thank you for providing this opportunity to explain the postage-due fee you were charged. As stated above, this charge was properly computed in accordance with an agreement of the Universal Postal Union.

65 NOT GUARANTEED

I regret that the clerk who accepted your shipment misinformed you about our guarantee. Although domestic Express Mail service does provide a promised time and date of delivery with a full postage refund if we fail, no service guarantee is made for International Express Mail.

The reason we cannot extend our domestic service guarantee to Express Mail International Service is that we are dealing with more than 100 different handling procedures. International Express Mail is processed and dispatched within the United States with the same speed given to domestic Express Mail. However, once the mail is turned over to foreign administrations, a wide variety of postal and customs handling procedures are in effect. As a consequence, it is not possible to provide the time of delivery guarantee as we do for domestic mail.

It is not possible to provide the time-of-delivery guarantee that we do for domestic mail. Instead, we publish service standards of the normal expected time of delivery as a guide for our customers. In most cases, if the item does not have to go through customs, it will be delivered in 2 days to Canada and ~~major European countries. Delivery to the Pacific Rim countries and other~~ destinations is generally 3 days. If the item must go through customs, 1 day should normally be added to the delivery time to allow for customs clearance.

66 PAQUEBOT MAIL

Mail posted aboard commercial vessels on the high seas may bear postage stamps of the country whose flag the vessel flies. On arrival at a port, an officer of the ship gives the mail to the post office of the foreign city.

That post office cancels the stamps and dispatches the items. If the stamps are foreign, the post office must use a special "Paquebot" postmark or apply in ink or with a rubber stamp the word "Paquebot" to the envelope.

Mail sent on U.S. ships on the high seas, or aboard any ship while in a U.S. port, must bear U.S. stamps and is not entitled to "Paquebot" cancellation at a U.S. post office.

67 TYPES OF INTERNATIONAL MAIL

International mail is divided into three categories: Postal Union mail, parcel post, and Express Mail International Service.

- **Postal Union Mail.** Postal Union mail is mail governed by agreement of the Universal Postal Union of which the United States is a member. Postal Union mail includes the following classes of mail:
 - LC, an abbreviation of the French words *Lettres et Cartes* (letters and cards), includes letters, letter packages, postcards, and aerogrammes.
 - AO, an abbreviation of the French words *Autres Objets* (other articles), includes regular printed matter, books and sheet music, publishers' periodicals, matter for the blind, and small packets.
- **Parcel Post.** Parcel post, sometimes referred to as CP mail, an abbreviation of the French words *Colis Postaux* (postal parcels), includes one classification generally equivalent to domestic fourth-class zone-rated parcel post.
- **Express Mail International Service.** Express Mail International Service is exchanged with other countries under agreements and memoranda of understanding with the postal administrations of those countries. Two types of services are provided: Custom Designed and On Demand.



7 Postage and Payment Methods

71 POSTAGE DUE POLICY

Our policy about mail without postage took effect in 1974. Under this policy, all unpaid mail is returned directly to the sender with no attempt to deliver. Although at the time this policy was implemented it was described as new, it was in reality only a more consistent enforcement of a 1934 federal law that subjects a person to a \$300 fine for mailing an item with the intent to avoid payment of postage.

It had been our position since 1934 that most material mailed without postage was done so accidentally. This position was progressively challenged as the amount of mail being deposited without postage continued to climb. Finally, in 1974, with losses to customers and the Postal Service reaching \$24 million, we were forced to assume a stricter position.

Under our current policy, unpaid mail received at any post office is returned to the sender. Mail that does not contain a return address is forwarded to a mail recovery center for processing. At that center, the mail is opened to determine the name and address of the sender so that his or her property may be returned. If the sender still cannot be determined, the piece is delivered as addressed upon payment of postage due.

We realize that some customers may not agree with the policy of delivering the mail as addressed when we are unable to identify the sender. In formulating this policy it was decided that most people would rather receive such mail even though it involved paying an additional fee. Our only other alternative would be to destroy it as dead mail.

Thank you for taking the time to write. I hope the preceding clarifies this policy.

8 Service Failures (Loss, Delay) and Damage Issues

81 DAMAGE

811 Damage to First-Class Mail

I have examined the items you sent to us and, although I can only speculate as to the cause of damage, it appears that your mail was damaged by an equipment jam.

To provide our customers with the most efficient method of processing their mail, the Postal Service uses high-speed mechanized and automated mail processing equipment. Occasionally, mailers will enclose hard objects in mailing envelopes. If our employees are unable to separate such items from the mailstream before they reach this equipment, the objects become lodged in the machine. Although the equipment is programmed to shut down automatically when a jam occurs, the piece of mail containing the object is often damaged, as well as several other pieces of mail being processed simultaneously. Because many of these objects are very small, such as paper clips or keys, they are difficult for our employees to identify among the large volume of mail being processed.

We are constantly working to eliminate such incidents, for equipment jams not only disappoint our customers, but can cause damage to expensive mail processing equipment. Because the costs of our operations are borne directly by our customers in the form of postage rates, it is in the best interest of both our customers and the Postal Service to educate all customers about proper packaging of such objects.

We regret any inconvenience you may have experienced from this incident and appreciate the opportunity to respond to your concerns.

812 Damage to Fourth-Class Mail

Please accept our apologies for the disappointment you experienced because your parcel was damaged while in our care. You can be assured that Postal Service employees are concerned about mail damage, and we are attacking the problem on several levels. For example, we have instituted quality control programs, improved our mail processing equipment, and provided additional training for all our mail handling employees.

Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention. Although there is nothing I can do to undo the disappointment this incident has caused, I assure you that your unfortunate experience has increased our awareness of this problem, and we will intensify our efforts to eliminate the causes of mail damage.

813 **Damage to Second-Class Mail**

Please accept our sincere apologies for the disappointment you experienced because some of your magazines were damaged while in our care. Certainly, no mail should ever be damaged, and I can assure you that damage reduction is one of our top priorities.

The Postal Service is attacking this problem on many levels. In addition to working with publishers to ensure proper packaging and mail preparation, we are constantly improving our mail processing equipment and training our employees to handle all mail more carefully.

Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention. Although there is nothing anyone can do to undo the disappointment this incident has caused, I assure you that your unfortunate experience has increased our awareness of this problem, and we will intensify our efforts to eliminate the causes of mail damage.

814 **Importance of Proper Packaging**

We are doing everything possible to minimize the occurrences of lost parcels. However, a great deal depends on proper packaging by the mailer. Most parcels are now processed by automated machinery; therefore, it is essential that parcels be adequately wrapped, cushioned, and enclosed in sturdy containers. Proper packaging allows articles to withstand the shaking and tumbling that occurs during mechanical processing and transportation. For your information, I am enclosing a copy of our pamphlet *Packaging for Mailing*. We also suggest that customers include their names and addresses inside parcels to assist us in identifying articles that can be separated from their wrappers.

82 **DELAY**

821 **Delayed Government Check**

This is in response to your letter about the delay of your (Veterans Administration disability, Social Security, Railroad Retirement, Civil Service Annuity) check.

Your checks are distributed by the United States Treasury Department. The Treasury Department is responsible for accurately addressing your check before giving it to the Postal Service. Before the checks are given to the

Postal Service, the Treasury Department also sorts them by ZIP Code, places them in sealed mail sacks, and tags the sacks showing the post office of delivery.

The sacks travel *unopened* directly from the Treasury Department to the post office indicated on the tag. As a consequence, if the checks have been misaddressed, or placed in the wrong sack, the error will not be discovered until the sack is opened.

If Treasury checks arrive at an incorrect post office, the envelope is then endorsed on the back to show it was misdirected. The check must then be sent on to the correct post office.

When you receive your next check, please notice whether your address and the ZIP Code are correct. If not, please notify the issuing agency immediately. If they are correct, but the envelope has been postmarked in another city, you should also let the issuing agency know. Your notification will let the agency know it placed your check in the wrong sack.

If your address and ZIP Code are correct and there is no postmark by a different city, please note the date of receipt on the envelope and take it to your postmaster for examination. You may be assured every effort will be made to determine and correct the cause of delay.

Thank you for taking the time to tell us about this problem. The Postal Service values customer feedback because it helps us measure our performance and improve our services and products.

822 **Fourth-Class Is a Deferred Service**

We regret that you were disappointed about the length of time it took for your parcel to reach you. However, we should have advised you that fourth-class mail is our least expensive parcel service. Fourth-class mail is transported exclusively by surface transportation, and it moves more slowly through the system than First-Class Mail.

The Postal Service offers two other services that provide faster service but cost proportionately more. Priority Mail provides expedited delivery throughout the contiguous United States for only a few dollars more than fourth-class. Express Mail provides overnight delivery to most locations for \$9.95 for up to 8 ounces or \$13.95 for up to a 2-pound package.

Again, we regret that your parcel took longer to arrive than you expected.

823 **Mail Left in Empty Equipment**

A number of factors could have contributed to the delay, but there is no evidence to determine exactly what happened to your letter. However, I believe it may have been left in a mailbag, overlooked by the clerk who emptied the contents.

Occasionally, an envelope may stick to a seam inside a bag. Although postal clerks are instructed to examine mailbags carefully after emptying them, on

rare occasions an envelope may be left behind when the bag is sent to storage.

Sometimes the bag remains in storage for several weeks before it is needed again. If mail is found inside, the envelope is marked "Found in Supposedly Empty Equipment" and sent to the addressee. Although your envelope was not so marked, it may have gone unnoticed again when the bag was being refilled.

Whatever the circumstances, I want you to know we share your concern whenever an error like this occurs. The Postal Service is working very hard to eliminate such mishaps. Quality service is our goal, and we want to know when we fail so that improvements can be made.

824 **Missort**

We understand your frustration and disappointment, and we apologize for the delay. As you mentioned, your letter was delayed because it was erroneously sent to the wrong delivery post office. This type of error is called a missort.

We agree that missorts should not happen, and we are concentrating efforts to prevent them. Human error accounts for some missorts, and machine malfunctions cause others. Supervisors monitor both factors daily, and they schedule remedial training or machine adjustments accordingly. We will continue these efforts.

Quality service is our goal. To achieve that, we want to know when we fail so that improvements can be made.

825 **We Need a Pattern**

I share your concern about the problems you have encountered with delayed mail and assure you this is not typical of the service we normally provide. We are constantly striving to improve service, and it is often through letters such as yours that we first learn of a problem.

You can help us with our efforts to improve service by promptly reporting any future delays you may encounter. We need you to help us establish a pattern of delay. Patterns of delay (that is a series of letters delayed between two specific points) usually indicate a defect in the system that we can identify and correct. Unrelated individual delays, like the one you brought to my attention, are more indicative of human error. Please document your reports with envelopes showing postmarks and dates of delivery.

Thank you for taking the time to write and for bringing this matter to my attention.

826 **OCR Error**

Thank you for sending the envelope that was delayed because it was misrouted to (insert place name). This misrouting occurred because the

address was misread by our high-speed optical character reader equipment and an incorrect barcode was printed on the envelope.

The introduction of our automated mail sorting equipment using barcodes has had a major impact on our mail processing operations because the equipment can now read the mail and sort it in a fraction of a second. On rare occasions, however, because of directory changes or mechanical errors, an incorrect barcode is applied to a letter. When this happens, the letter is sent to the wrong post office and delivery is delayed.

To eliminate this problem, we are currently testing a new computerized quality control system to identify incorrectly coded mail. The system enables us to backtrack through the processing and coding of the mail to determine where and how the error was made. Your correspondence and envelope, therefore, are being referred to **(insert originating city)** for review and necessary corrective action.

827 Private Meter

Thank you for sending the delayed envelope. An examination reveals that it was postmarked by a private postage meter and may have entered the mail system later than the date shown. Mail that is metered by the post office always enters the system the same day as indicated in the postmark.

However, sometimes mail postmarked with a private meter bears a postmark that differs from the date the mail actually enters the mail system. The Postal Service monitors metered mail. When we notice that a mailer is depositing mail later than the postmark date on the meter imprint, we take corrective action.

The example of delayed mail you sent was postmarked and dated by a private postage meter. Such mail is not postmarked by the Postal Service like other mail and we regret that we cannot confirm when it was mailed.

828 Second-Class Erratic Delivery

We share your concern about the erratic deliveries you have encountered with your **(insert publication name)**. I assure you that it is our desire to provide you the best service possible.

However, there are many steps between the printing and delivery of magazines and newspapers, and a deficiency at any one point can delay delivery. For example, delays can occur if the publisher misses the cutoff time at the post office, the bundles are misaddressed, or the post office misroutes a bundle.

~~The best way we have found to correct these problems is to establish a~~ publication watch. I have, therefore, referred copies of our correspondence to **(insert name)**, Manager, Consumer Affairs and Claims. I have asked that a publication watch be established in an attempt to discover where the delay is occurring.

Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention and for your continued patience while the publication watch is being conducted.

83 SUSPECTED LOSS

831 Insured

We were disappointed to learn that your parcel has not yet reached its destination and share your fears that it may have been lost. Certainly, such things should not happen.

If, after 30 days, your parcel has not reached its destination, we recommend that you immediately go to the closest post office and file an indemnity claim (Postal Service Form 1000). We require customers to wait 30 days before filing a loss claim in the event your parcel was misrouted to a far distant post office and may still be in the mailstream. If we accepted loss claims earlier, both our customers and our employees would expend their time and effort for no purpose in many instances.

Thank you for taking the time to bring this matter to our attention. Although there is nothing we can do to undo the disappointment this incident has caused, I assure you we continue making every effort to eliminate incidents of delayed or lost mail.

832 Uninsured

We were disappointed to learn that your parcel has not yet reached its destination and share your fear that it may have been lost. Certainly, such things should not happen. Statistically, the amount of mail lost is very small when measured against our overall volume.

If your parcel has not reached its destination by the time you receive this letter, we recommend you immediately file a Postal Service Form 1510, *Mail Loss Report*. Completion of this form triggers a search for the missing mail. Copies of Forms 1510 are available, and may be filed, at any post office. For your convenience, we are enclosing a copy of this form. (**Enclose a copy of Form 1510**).

Thank you for taking the time to bring this matter to our attention. Please accept our sincere apologies for this most unfortunate incident.

9 Special Services

91 CONVENIENCE-COLLECT ON DELIVERY

I understand why you believe the Postal Service should allow a Collect on Delivery (COD) mailer to either accept the addressee's check or require that payment upon delivery be made in cash or other certified funds. This proposal was considered by the Postal Rate Commission in 1987, and I would like to explain why the Commission rejected the proposal.

The Commission initiated the 1987 change in COD procedures as a means of eliminating a serious problem of fraudulent use of COD service. In 1985, approximately 600,000 COD parcels were proved to be directly connected to deceptive schemes. It was estimated that consumers were bilked out of between \$13 million and \$77 million dollars in fiscal year 1985.

Before 1987, the Postal Service reimbursed the mailer the amount collected for a COD package regardless of whether the payment was made in cash or by check. The method of reimbursement was, of course, a Postal Service money order. While our money order was always good for payment, the recipient's check was not—particularly if the merchandise received was less than represented. The Postal Service was then obligated to enforce collection procedures and, in effect, became an unwilling accomplice in fraudulent mail order schemes.

The procedures governing the acceptance of payment for COD articles were changed to protect the consumer. We recognize the difficulty that legitimate mail order houses face because of this change. However, the Postal Service is making every effort to protect those merchants by checking two sources of identification before accepting checks or releasing COD packages.

92 HANDLING

921 Special Delivery

921.1 Defined

I regret that you were dissatisfied with the service provided your special delivery letter. However, the letter was delivered within our service objectives.

I would like to explain what our special delivery service provides. Although special delivery mail does not necessarily travel any faster than ordinary First-Class Mail, it is separated at the point of origin and identified for expeditious handling at transfer points and, most importantly, at the addressee's post office where the "special" delivery is performed. Special delivery is processed first at the receiving office, and delivery is provided immediately by the fastest available means. The advantage of special delivery is not in transportation to the delivery office, but in final delivery from the delivery office to the addressee.

It is also important to remember that delivery standards are goals, not guarantees. The only mail for which a promised time of delivery is given is our Express Mail. We have been so successful in meeting our commitment for Express Mail that we provide a full postage refund if we fail to deliver by the hour and date promised.

Please accept our apologies for any inconvenience this misunderstanding about our special delivery service might have caused. We appreciate having this opportunity to explain this service.

921.2 By Regular Carrier

Sometimes the regular carrier provides the fastest means of delivery. If a special delivery letter reaches the delivery post office after the departure of the special messenger but before the departure of the regular carrier, a faster delivery can often be made by the regular carrier. Apparently this is what happened to your letter. Had the postmaster waited until the special messenger returned, the letter would have been delivered even later in the day.

921.3 In Rural Area

The Postal Service does not provide the same type of special delivery service in rural areas as it does in the city. In city delivery areas, special delivery mail is immediately delivered to the addressee by a special delivery messenger or the regular carrier, if the carrier can reach the address early on his or her regular trip. On rural routes, special delivery mail is delivered by the carrier on the carrier's regular trip. The "special" service provided in rural delivery areas is limited to delivery to the residence, as opposed to the normal delivery to the rural box.

922 Special Handling**922.1 My Bees Died in Shipment**

I regret the disappointment that you were caused because of the incident described in your letter. The Postal Service makes every effort to transport live bees promptly and carefully; however, mailers of live bees must understand that a certain risk is involved. Live bees are very fragile and, although we do our best, we simply cannot give any guarantees.

Our major competitors in the parcel delivery field do not carry bees. The reason, of course, is that private carriers are not willing to assume responsibility for live shipments of any kind. The Postal Service does take the risk, and we do our best. However, because of circumstances beyond our control, some bees, on occasion, may be lost.

Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention. You can be assured that we value your business and will continue to do our utmost to ensure safe delivery of your bees.

922.2 My Chicks Died in Shipment

I regret the disappointment that you experienced because of the incident described in your letter. The Postal Service makes every effort to transport baby chicks promptly and carefully; however, mailers of baby chicks must understand that a certain risk is involved. Baby chicks are very fragile and, although we do our best, we simply cannot give any guarantees.

Our major competitors in the parcel delivery field do not carry chicks. The reason, of course, is that private carriers are not willing to assume responsibility for live shipments of any kind. The Postal Service does take the risk, and we do our best. However, because of circumstances beyond our control, some chicks, on occasion, may be lost.

Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention. You can be assured that we value your business and will continue to do our utmost to ensure safe delivery of your chicks.

93 MISCELLANEOUS SERVICES—MONEY ORDERS

931 Stop Payment

I regret that we are unable to honor your request that payment be stopped on your money order. This hold is not possible because the Postal Service has no control over where a money order will be cashed.

In addition to our 40,000 post offices, stations, and branches, banks, savings and loans, credit unions, and thousands of retail and convenience stores

routinely cash our money orders. The administrative cost of maintaining lists of money order redeemers and of distributing stop payment orders throughout the nation would be prohibitive. Such costs would, by law, have to be reflected in the money order fees we charge our customers.

932 **Replacement**

Please accept our apologies for the inconvenience you have been caused by the waiting period required for replacement money orders. Our regulations state that we will send a replacement order within 60 days after receipt of an inquiry. An inquiry may be filed at any time, and should the money order be cashed at any time during the 60-day wait period, we will gladly provide you with the date the money order was cashed and, if necessary, a photocopy of the cashed money order.

94 **SPECIAL POSTAL SERVICES**

941 **Certified Mail**

941.1 **Not Insured**

I regret the loss of your letter while it was in our care. However, because it was sent by certified mail, and because that service does not include indemnity insurance, there are no provisions for compensating you for the loss.

The Postal Service cannot honor claims for loss of or damage to mail unless the item was insured at the time of mailing. Such insurance is available with our registered mail service, our insured mail service, COD, and Express Mail.

941.2 **Not Tracked Through the System**

Certified mail service does not provide for a detailed accounting of the movements of the mail as it travels through the postal system. We provide tracking of individual pieces of mail only for registered mail and Express Mail. Certified mail provides a receipt to the mailer at the mailing office and a record of delivery at the delivery office. It is sent and handled in transit as ordinary mail. As a consequence, it is generally not possible to trace a piece of certified mail when customers report it missing.

942 Insured Mail**942.1 It Is Important to Keep Your Receipt**

The only record of an insurance transaction is the mailing receipt given to the customer when an insured item is mailed. We do not keep a duplicate receipt because the cost of maintaining such records would have to be passed on to our customers in the form of higher insurance rates. Because only a very small percentage of the total number of parcels mailed are lost, and because only a very small number of these involve mailers who have lost their receipts, we do not believe it would be fair to ask all insurance purchasers to underwrite the cost of maintaining the duplicate records.

It is also true that we cannot accept a claim for indemnity unless the customer can provide evidence of insurance. In the case of a damaged parcel this would be either the mailing receipt or the parcel wrapper showing an insured number. For lost articles, the customer must produce the mailing receipt as evidence of insurance.

I regret that I cannot provide a more favorable response to your inquiry. Should you locate the mailing receipt at some later date, we will provide every possible assistance in expediting your claim.

942.2 What Insurance Means

I would like to give you some information about insured mail. Postal insurance no more prevents loss of or damage to a parcel than automobile accident insurance prevents a loss or accident.

Insured and uninsured parcels travel together through the entire system, and the only time the insured mail is handled differently is at the point of delivery where the recipient is required to sign for the parcel if the value exceeds \$50. Insurance cannot prevent accidents; however, it does provide indemnity in the event of loss or damage.

942.3 Why Not Free Insurance

I understand your viewpoint about our current insurance program. What you suggest is that the Postal Service should provide universal insurance coverage to all mail. This could be provided, and we have considered the idea in the past. The problem with providing universal insurance is that you take away the public's choice because the cost of providing this "free" insurance would have to be reflected in increased basic postage rates. We believe it is better to permit those mailers who desire insurance coverage to purchase it, rather than to force all mailers to pay for the coverage whether they desire it or not.

943 Registered Mail**943.1 Explained**

The movement of registered mail is controlled throughout the postal system. It is accounted for by number from the time of mailing to delivery and transported separately from the other mail. It is not dispatched from one post office to another unless the means of transportation can provide the security guaranteed for registered mail. This security feature sometimes can cause registered mail to take longer in delivery time than ordinary mail, and this may have been the case with your letter.

943.2 Must Declare Full Value

Postal regulations prevent the payment of any claim for lost registered mail unless the sender declared its full value at the time of mailing.

Registered mail is the most secure service offered by the Postal Service, and the fees charged are based on the value of the item. When a customer does not declare full value, he or she is not paying the full fee for the service received. To protect the financial viability of the registry system, the Postal Service has chosen to continue to refuse to pay claims for indemnity if the full value of the item is not declared at the time of mailing.

Thank you for your inquiry.

944 Restricted Delivery (Signed by Agent)

I regret that you were unaware that addressees of restricted delivery mail have the option of appointing authorized agents to sign for their restricted delivery mail.

The reason for this policy is that many individuals receive large volumes of restricted delivery mail, and they simply do not have the time to sign for every piece individually. For example, the President of the United States, who receives hundreds of pieces of accountable mail each day, would have to spend hours signing receipts if we did not allow appointed agents.

945 Return Receipts**945.1 Customer Received an Unsigned Return Receipt**

I regret that you did not receive a completed return receipt from a certified letter you mailed to **(insert name)**, and appreciate your letting us know. We are aware of the importance of return receipt service to customers, and we do our best to monitor performance in this area.

Occasionally a return receipt becomes detached from the accompanying letter during mail handling and transportation. It appears this may have been the case with your return receipt, and I have already sent it to the postmaster

at **(insert city)**, with a request that it be promptly completed and returned to you.

Please accept my apologies for any inconvenience you have been caused.

945.2 Left by Carrier for Later Signature

We share your concern about the proper handling of return receipts. Our *regulations require that carriers obtain signatures on return receipts at the time of delivery and all completed return receipts must be turned in on a daily basis.*

Your report that these procedures are not being followed in **(insert city name)** is disturbing and I am referring this matter directly to **(insert name)**, District Manager, Customer Service and Sales. **(insert name)** will refer this to the **(insert name of other District)** with a request that the deficiency be corrected.

Thank you for calling this matter to our attention.

945.3 We No Longer Postmark Return Receipts

The purpose of return receipt service is to provide the mailer with evidence of delivery. The postmark affixed to pre-1983 editions of return receipts frequently reflected the date the receipt was processed by the Postal Service rather than the actual delivery date. The redesign of the return receipt has eliminated any conflict between the date shown as the delivery date and the cancellation date.

946 Return Receipt for Merchandise

The Postal Service offers a return receipt service for merchandise mailed either as Priority Mail, third-class mail, or parcel post. This is a stand-alone feature that does not require another special service. This feature has been available since April 1988. This service uses the existing return receipt form with a form that looks like the one used for certified mail except with a brown background color. This service has the added feature of inclusion of a waiver of signature.



Appendix A

Talking Points

GOVERNMENT CHECKS

The information contained in this section can be used to assist customers who report missing government checks. Should you encounter any situation not addressed, please call your District Manager, Consumer Affairs and Claims.

MISSING SOCIAL SECURITY CHECK

Customer Question/Inquiry:

"I have not received my Social Security check. What can you do for me?"

Questions You Should Ask

"Is this your first check?"

If it is the customer's first check, advise the customer that the check may not have made this month's mailing and explain that the customer should call the local Social Security office. (Number can be found in local telephone directory under "U.S. Government" or "Social Security Administration.")

"Have you changed your address recently?"

If the customer answers yes, you must determine whether the customer filed a change-of-address with the former post office and the Social Security Administration (SSA). The SSA advises that a change-of-address action requires 30 days.

Actions You Should Take

- Check the carrier's case for "sleepers."
- Check with customer's carrier to determine whether the carrier has any knowledge about the check.
- Check the throw-back case.
- Telephone the plant manager at your distribution center to determine whether there has been any mass loss of Social Security checks. (You will usually have heard of this before the scheduled delivery date.)
- If you receive a large number of customer inquiries about missing checks, report this immediately to your plant and the District Manager, Consumer Affairs and Claims. Mail processing has a special procedure for reporting mass losses to the Social Security Administration.
- Explain to the customer that the check has not arrived but that you will place a watch with the carrier. Ask the customer for a telephone number and assure him or her that you will call immediately if the check arrives. Follow up on this watch every day, and advise the customer immediately if the check arrives.
- Tell the customer that the Social Security Administration has told the Postal Service that Social Security recipients should wait until the 6th of the month before reporting nonreceipt of the check.

- After the 6th of the month, if the check has not arrived, customers should report the nonreceipt to the local Social Security office by telephone.
- As additional information, the Social Security Administration has advised the Postal Service that if the recipient has knowledge that the check has been lost or stolen, the recipient should report the loss or theft immediately to the Social Security Administration without waiting until the 6th of the month. The Postal Inspection Service should be notified if the check is known to have been stolen.
- The Social Security Administration can issue duplicate checks, but you should caution customers that it does take time. *Do not give the customer an estimate about how long it may take to have the check reissued.* This information must be obtained by the customer from the Social Security office.

MISSING CIVIL SERVICE RETIREMENT ANNUITY CHECK

Customer Question/Inquiry:

"I have not received my Civil Service annuity check (or government pension or retirement check). What can you do for me?"

Questions You Should Ask

"Is this your first check?"

If this is the customer's first check, advise the customer that the check would not necessarily be dated the first of the month, as regular, recurring checks would be dated. The customer may call the Office of Personnel Management at (202) 606-0500 for information.

"Have you changed your address recently?"

If the customer answers yes, you must determine whether a change-of-address was filed with the former post office and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The payment will be forwarded to the new address if the answer is yes. OPM advises that changes of address require 30 to 60 days to process.

"Did you sign up for Direct Deposit?"

Annuitants can specify that Civil Service annuity payments be sent directly to their banks. If they signed up recently, they should check with their bank to determine whether the payment was deposited into their account.

Actions You Should Take

- Check the carrier's case for "sleepers."
- Check with customer's carrier to determine whether the carrier has any knowledge about the check.
- Check the throw-back case.
- Telephone the plant manager at your distribution center to determine whether there has been any mass loss of Civil Service checks. (You will usually have heard of this before the scheduled delivery date.)
- If you receive a large number of customer inquiries about missing Civil Service checks, report this immediately to your plant manager and the district Consumer Affairs Manager. If there appears to be a mass loss, your Consumer Affairs Manager will verify the loss with Mail Processing. Mail Processing has a special procedure for reporting mass losses to OPM.

OPM will provide information about responding to further customer inquiries when a mass loss is reported, and will remain in touch with your manager of Consumer Affairs and Claims until the matter is resolved.

- Explain to the customer that the check has not arrived but that you will place a watch with the carrier. Ask for the customer's telephone number and assure him or her that you will call immediately if the check arrives. Follow up on this watch every day, and advise the customer immediately if the check arrives.
- Tell the customer that OPM has advised the Postal Service that Civil Service retirees must wait until the 5th delivery day after the date of the check before reporting nonreceipt of the check.
- If the check has not arrived by the 5th delivery day after the check date, customers should report the nonreceipt to the OPM by writing to the following special address:

CHECK LOSS
OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
PO BOX 7815
WASHINGTON DC 20044-7815

In their letter, customers should be sure to give the date of the check that was not received (the 1st business day of the month), and they should be sure to include their Civil Service retirement claim number (a seven-digit number beginning with 0, 1, 2, 3, 7, or 8 preceded by CSA or CSF).

- OPM has advised the Postal Service that if the recipient has knowledge that (1) the check was delivered and (2) has since been lost or stolen, the recipient should report the loss or theft immediately by writing to the address shown above. There is no reason to delay in such cases. Notify the Postal Inspection Service if the check is known to have been stolen.
- OPM advises that anyone who reports nonreceipt of a payment will be advised of the status of the claim as soon as possible, and that a replacement check will be issued if the circumstances warrant. However, you should caution customers that it does take time. *Do not give the customer an estimate of how long it may take.*

MISSING VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA) INSURANCE CHECK

Customer Question/Inquiry:

"I have not received my VA insurance check (death award, disability payment, dividend). What can you do for me?"

Questions You Should Ask

"What was the check for?"

Determine whether the check was one of the following:

- An annuity payment to a beneficiary.
- A TDIP (total disability income provision) payment.
- Annual dividend payment.
- Lump-sum beneficiary payment.

(If not one of the above, see next section.)

"Has payment been authorized by VA?"

If the customer answers no or does not know, advise the customer to call Veterans Affairs at the toll-free number, 1-800-669-8477, to determine whether the check has been sent.

If the customer answers yes, find out whether the customer has contacted a Veterans Affairs Regional Office and Insurance Center (VARO&IC) at the toll-free number listed above to determine whether there was a problem with the insurance policy that prevented the release of the check or whether the check was returned.

"Have you changed your address recently?"

If the customer answers yes, determine whether a change-of-address was filed with the former post office and the VARO&IC. The VA advises that a change-of-address for insurance payments must be submitted 3 weeks before the release of the check to ensure receipt at the new address.

Actions You Should Take

- Check the carrier's case for "sleepers."
- Check with customer's carrier to determine whether the carrier has any knowledge about the check.
- Check the throw-back case.
- Telephone the plant manager at your distribution center to determine if there has been any mass loss of Veterans Affairs checks. (You will usually have heard of this before the scheduled delivery date.)
- Explain to the customer that the check has not arrived but that you will place a watch with the carrier. Ask for the customer's telephone number and assure him/her that you will call immediately if the check arrives. Follow up on this watch every day, and advise the customer immediately if the check arrives.
- Tell the customer that the VARO&IC has advised the Postal Service that recipients of TDIP payments, annuities, or dividend checks must wait until the 6th day after the effective date before reporting nonreceipt of the check.
- After the 6th day, if the check has not arrived, customers must report the nonreceipt to the VARO&IC by calling toll-free 1-800-669-8477.

Additionally, the VARO&IC has advised the Postal Service that if the recipient has knowledge that the check has been lost or stolen, the recipient should report the loss or theft immediately to the VARO&IC by calling the toll-free number listed above. Notify the Postal Inspection Service if the check is known to have been stolen.

- The VARO&IC can issue duplicate checks, but tell customers that it does take time. *Do not give the customer an estimate of how long it may take to have the check reissued.* This information must be obtained by the customer from the VARO&IC.
- If customers have any additional questions not covered in this checklist, direct them to call the VARO&IC, Philadelphia, PA, at the toll-free number 1-800-669-8477.

MISSING VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA) COMPENSATION, PENSION, AND EDUCATION CHECKS

Customer Question/Inquiry:

"I have not received my VA benefit check (e.g., compensation, pension, education). What can you do for me?"

- **Note:** If missing check is an insurance check, see above.

Questions You Should Ask

"Is this your first check?"

If this is the customer's first check, advise the customer that the check would not necessarily be dated the 1st of the month, as regular, recurring checks would be dated. The customer should be advised to call the local VA Regional Office. The number can be found in the local telephone directory under "U.S. Government" or "Veterans Affairs."

"Have you changed your address recently?"

If the customer answers yes, you must determine whether a change-of-address was filed with the former post office and the VA. The payment will be forwarded to the new address if the answer is "yes." The VA advises that changes-of-address for compensation, pension, or education payments require 30 to 60 days to process.

"Did you sign up for Direct Deposit?"

Only VA compensation or pension payments may be sent directly to a beneficiary's bank account. If they signed up recently, they should check with their bank to determine whether the payment was deposited into their account. If they canceled Direct Deposit recently, they should also check with their bank to determine whether the payment was deposited or returned to the government.

Actions You Should Take

- Check the carrier's case for "sleepers."
- Check with the customer's carrier to determine whether the carrier has any knowledge about the check.
- Check the throw-back case.
- Telephone the plant manager at your distribution center to determine if there has been any mass loss of Veterans Affairs checks. (You will usually have heard of this before the scheduled delivery date.)
- Explain to the customer that the check has not arrived but that you will place a watch with the carrier. Ask for the customer's telephone number and assure him/her that you will call immediately if the check arrives. Follow up on this watch every day, and advise the customer immediately if the check arrives.
- Tell the customer that the VA has told the Postal Service that VA recipients must wait until the 3rd calendar day after the date of the compensation, pension, or education payment date before reporting nonreceipt of the check.
- After the 3rd calendar day after the payment date, if the check has not arrived customers must report the nonreceipt to the local VA office by telephone.
- Additionally, the VA has advised the Postal Service that if the recipient has knowledge that (1) the check was delivered and (2) has since been lost or stolen, they should report the loss or theft immediately to the local VA office. There is no reason to delay in such cases. Notify the Postal Inspection Service if the check is known to have been stolen.
- The VA advises that anyone who reports nonreceipt of a payment will be advised of the status of their claim as soon as possible, and that a replacement check will be issued if the circumstances warrant. However, you should tell customers that it does take time. Do not give the customer an estimate of how long it may take.

Appendix B

Frequently Asked Questions

ADDRESS CORRECTION ENDORSEMENT

Caller: *First-Class Mail endorsed "Address Correction Requested" is being returned to us instead of being forwarded to the addressee. Why?*

Answer: Our policy states that the entire piece of mail is returned to the sender with the correct address or the reason for nondelivery. If you wish to have the mail forwarded in addition to receiving the new address, please use the endorsement "Forwarding and Address Correction Requested."

AEROGRAMME

Caller: *What is an aerogramme?*

Answer: An aerogramme is lightweight stationery that folds into a mailing envelope for correspondence to other countries. The cost is 45 cents.

AUTHORIZED AGENT

Caller: *I sent a letter restricted delivery and someone else signed for it. Why?*

Answer: Many companies that receive large quantities of accountable mail have designated a person, called an authorized agent, to sign for all accountable mail, including restricted delivery. It is often impossible for presidents or CEOs to sign for every letter sent to them by restricted delivery. The company must keep an authorized letter on file at the delivery post office.

AUXILIARY ROUTES

Caller: *Why can't we be assigned a regular carrier on our route?*

Answer: We design routes so that carriers have 8-hour work days. After establishing routes, there may be an excess area that does not require a full day's work so a regular carrier is not assigned to the area. Although we cannot guarantee that a permanent carrier will be assigned to your route soon, routes are adjusted periodically to meet the needs of the community. However, if this situation is causing you problems, I will be glad to inform the supervisor so that your service can be monitored.

BARCODES

Caller: *What are the vertical lines on the lower right part of my mail?*

Answer: Those lines are called a BARCODE, which represents a ZIP Code. Automated mail processing equipment can "read" the barcode and process mail efficiently to help keep our costs down.

QUALIFYING FOR BULK RATES

Caller: *How can I qualify for bulk rates?*

Answer: The minimum standards require you to mail at least 200 pieces or 50 pounds of addressed pieces at one time. In addition, there is a \$75.00 annual fee to use bulk mail.

STOPPING BULK BUSINESS MAIL

Caller: *How can I stop the delivery of junk mail at my house?*

Answer: The Postal Service cannot refuse to deliver mail if proper postage is paid. However, you may contact:

MAIL PREFERENCE SERVICE
DIRECT MARKETING ASSOCIATION
PO BOX 9008
FARMINGDALE NY 11735-9008

and request that their members remove your name from their mailing lists. Because not all mailers are members of this organization, your request will not stop all of your advertising mail; however, it will stop some. You can also exercise your right to control delivery by marking "REFUSED" on the mail and returning it unopened to the post office.

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL (BRM)

Caller: *What is business reply mail?*

Answer: BRM enables you to pay postage for mail being returned to you by your customers. A permit is needed to use this service (\$75.00 annually), and you may pay an optional accounting fee (\$185.00) to receive BRM at a lesser per-piece fee. There is a special format required for BRM.

CALLER SERVICE

Caller: *What is caller service. Also, what are the requirements and cost?*

Answer: Caller service is a premium service for customers who receive a large volume of mail that cannot be accommodated by our largest post office box. The service is also for customers who have more than five post office boxes at one location. There is a semiannual fee of \$202.50 for this service.

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

Caller: *What is a certificate of mailing?*

Answer: A certificate of mailing (50 cents) provides a receipt showing evidence of mailing. It does not provide insurance coverage for loss or damage. In addition, no record of the mailing is kept by the Postal Service.

CERTIFIED MAIL

Caller: *What type of service is provided by certified mail?*

Answer: Certified mail provides you with a mailing receipt, and a record of delivery is kept at the delivery post office. The fee is \$1.00 in addition to postage. You can also purchase a return receipt if you need proof of delivery.

CHAIN LETTERS

Caller: *Are chain letters illegal?*

Answer: Chain letters received through the mail asking for anything of value are illegal; other chain letters are not. Please report illegal chain letters to the nearest Postal Inspection Service office.

CHANGE-OF-ADDRESS INFORMATION

Caller: *John Doe moved and I would like his new address.*

Answer: I'm sorry, but I cannot provide this information.

CHECK ACCEPTANCE

Caller: *Do you accept checks at the post office?*

Answer: Personal checks are accepted for the amount of purchase for all services and products except for the purchase of money orders. Your name and address must be preprinted on the check and you need to submit one of the following photograph-bearing documents: drivers license, state-issued nondriver identification, passport, or military ID. Or, we will accept two credit cards or other credentials bearing a signature. Social Security cards are not acceptable identification. Checks should be made payable to "Postmaster."

COLLECT ON DELIVERY (COD)

Caller: *Please explain your collect on delivery service.*

Answer: COD allows you to mail merchandise for which you have not received payment. We collect the payment from the addressee at the time of delivery and forward the amount collected to the mailer. COD service is available for up to \$600.00. The postage and COD fee must be paid at the time of mailing. The addressee pays upon delivery by a personal check payable to the sender, or by cash with the purchase of a postal money order.

COD CLAIMS

Caller: *When can I file a claim on COD mail?*

Answer: We wait 45 days before accepting COD claims. At that time you will need to complete Form 1000 at any post office. Your mailing receipt is required when filing a claim.

COMPLAINTS

Caller: *I have a complaint and I want to talk to the postmaster!*

Answer: May I ask the nature of your complaint? We have managers who specialize in different service areas and it is necessary for me to know your problem so that I can connect you with the person who can best help you.

OFFICIAL COMPLAINTS

Caller: *I want to make an official complaint!*

Answer: I'm sorry you're having problems and will be glad to accept your complaint. We record this information on a Consumer Service Card, and I can send you a copy of the card I complete on your behalf. Also, I'll make sure that the appropriate manager receives this information immediately so that corrective action can be taken.

CUSTOMS

Caller: *Is it legal for the U.S. Customs Service to inspect my mail from a foreign country?*

Answer: Yes. Mail originating in foreign countries and most U.S. territories is subject to U.S. Customs Service examination upon entering the country. Many imported goods are subject to customs duty. When goods enter by mail, the duty assessed by Customs is collected by the Postal Service in addition to a customs clearance and delivery fee. If you need additional information contact:

UNITED STATES CUSTOMS SERVICE
TREASURY DEPARTMENT
PO BOX 7407
WASHINGTON DC 20229-7407

DAMAGED MAIL

Caller: *My package arrived with the contents broken. It wasn't insured. What do I do now?*

Answer: I can certainly understand your concern about this matter, and I apologize that your mail was damaged while in our care. Unfortunately, we cannot accept claims for damaged mail unless the item was insured. However, I would like to complete a Consumer Service Card on your behalf, which will serve as an official complaint. This way, the damage to your package will receive local management attention.

DEFACED STAMPS

Caller: *Mail was returned to me because there was tape on the stamp. Why?*

Answer: When stamps are covered, the canceling machines cannot imprint directly on the stamp; therefore, they are not acceptable for mailing. The machines must also be able to read the ultra-violet ink on stamps in order to detect them on the envelope. If your stamp had been only partially covered, perhaps at the top and bottom, the stamp may have been acceptable for processing.

DELAYED MAIL

Caller: *My mail is always delayed. I need better service.*

Answer: I'm sorry you are having this problem. Do the delays seem to be originating from any specific city? Do you have any of the envelopes that were delayed? It would be helpful in our investigation if we could examine any delayed mail you may have. Often there are identifying marks on an envelope that pinpoint the cause of a delay. I would also like to complete a Consumer Service Card on your behalf to ensure that this problem is reported to the appropriate manager.

DOG BITES

Caller: *The carrier refuses to deliver mail to my house because of my dog.*

Answer: I'm sorry you are having this problem. Carriers are instructed not to enter areas where they feel they may be bitten. The annual estimated cost of dog bite injuries is over one million dollars. Studies show most dogs that bite have never bitten anyone before and the owner did not think the dog was a hazard. I apologize for any inconvenience; however, in order to protect our employees, you will need to restrain your dog during delivery times.

EMPLOYMENT

Caller: *How do I get a job with the Postal Service?*

Answer: It is necessary that you pass a postal examination, which is normally given every 3 to 4 years. Due to downsizing and the impact of automation, a date has not been reached for our next testing. However, if you have been discharged from active military duty within the past 120 days or are a disabled veteran, you may be eligible to apply for earlier testing. The Postal Services hires new career employees based on their test scores when vacancies occur.

EXPRESS MAIL

Caller: *Can you deliver this package overnight?*

Answer: Our premium service, Express Mail, is committed for overnight delivery to most destinations and prices start at only \$9.95. Let me check to see whether the city to which you are mailing it is on our next day network.

► **Note:** The Express Mail Network Directory should be checked to ensure overnight service is available.

TRACING EXPRESS MAIL

Caller: *My Express Mail didn't arrive and it needs to be traced.*

Answer: I'm sorry your package has not arrived. I need the label number, date of mailing, and addressee information to trace it and then I'll call you back with the information. (Obtain the information from the customer along with the customer's name and telephone number. Call the Comprehensive Tracking and Tracing Center at 1-800-222-1811, trace the item, and call the customer back with the information. Follow up, if necessary.) Inform the customer that for future inquiries, he or she may call the Comprehensive Tracking and Tracing Center at 1-800-222-1811.

FORWARDING MAIL TO NEW ADDRESS

Caller: *How do I get mail forwarded to my new address?*

Answer: To have your mail forwarded, please complete a change-of-address card, which is available at all post offices, and submit it to the post office that delivers mail to your old address. We recommend that you notify your correspondents of your new address directly, and postcards are available for this purpose. Mail will start arriving at your new address within 3 to 5 days after the start date of your order.

LENGTH OF FORWARDING

Caller: *How long will you forward my mail?*

Answer: First-Class Mail is forwarded for 1 year. Second-class mail is forwarded for 60 days. Third-class mail will not be forwarded unless it contains the proper endorsements by the mailer. Fourth-class mail will be forwarded locally at no additional charge and postage-due if the new address is out-of-town. Any mail that the sender has endorsed "Address Correction Requested" or "Do Not Forward" is returned to the sender.

FORWARDING FROM HOTEL/MAILBOX SERVICE/COMPANY

Caller: *Who will forward my mail when I move from school/hotel/mailbox service, etc.?*

Answer: Any forwarding requests submitted from a central point delivery address are turned over to the management of the establishment because the forwarding of such mail is that organization's responsibility.

GENERAL DELIVERY

Caller: *I get my mail at 3:00 p.m., which is too late. May I pick up my mail at the post office every morning by using general delivery?*

Answer: General delivery service is provided for transients and customers who are not permanently located. We rarely allow other customers to use general delivery because it is disruptive to our operations. Exceptions can be made if a customer is having problems receiving mail due to theft or vandalism. However, if you require earlier delivery, may I suggest renting a post office box. Although there is a nominal fee for this service, your mail will be available each morning for pickup.

HOLD ORDER

Caller: *Will you hold my mail for me while I'm on vacation?*

Answer: Yes, we can hold your mail up to 30 days. However, if you expect to be gone longer than this time, you should file a temporary forwarding order. Please provide us with a written request (Form 8076) indicating the beginning and ending dates of your hold order request.

INSURANCE

Caller: *I need to insure this parcel. How expensive is your insurance?*

Answer: Postal insurance is very reasonable and provides coverage against loss or damage. You may insure items up to \$600.00 and the cost depends on the value of the item. Fees range from 75 cents to \$6.20. For items valued over \$600.00, we recommend using registered mail.

INTELPOST

Caller: *What is INTELPOST?*

Answer: INTELPOST is an international facsimile service available between the United States and over 30 foreign countries. The original document is "faxed" via satellite to the destinating country and then delivered to the addressee according to the services available in the particular country.

INTERNATIONAL MAIL

Caller: *I mailed an (insured/registered) package to my sister in another country and she has not received it. What should I do?*

Answer: International mail must be traced on a Postal Service Form 542 before a claim can be filed. There is a \$6.00 fee for this service if a return receipt was not purchased at the time of mailing. Also, you must wait 60 days before this form can be processed if the item was mailed by air, and 90 days if the item was mailed by surface transportation. Once the tracer process is complete, a claim can be filed on Postal Service Form 2855.

INTERNATIONAL REPLY COUPONS

Caller: *What are international reply coupons?*

Answer: International reply coupons provide a convenient method for you to prepay replies from foreign countries. You can send your correspondent one or more coupons, which may be purchased for 95 cents each. Your correspondent exchanges the coupon for postage in his or her country.

LOST MAIL

Caller: *I never received my check. What should I do?*

Answer: I'm sorry. Has it been more than 10 days since it was mailed? I will be happy to complete a mail loss report for you. Part of this form is sent to our mail recovery centers and a search is conducted for the mail. Another part is furnished to Postal Inspectors and used to identify patterns of lost mail. You will receive a copy of this report, which can serve as a record of delivery or nondelivery. (COMPLETE FORM 1510.)

MAILBOX INSTALLATION

Caller: *How should my new curbside mailbox be placed?*

Answer: The bottom of the box should be from 42 to 48 inches from street level and the front of the box must be in line with the back of the curb. Also, please show your house number on the box.

MAIL TAMPERING

Caller: *Someone is stealing my mail. What can I do?*

Answer: I recommend that you contact our Postal Inspection Service to report mail theft. The Inspection Service will need specific information about the problem. In addition, please contact your local law enforcement agency.

MAXIMUM/MINIMUM SIZE STANDARDS

Caller: *What are the largest and smallest sizes mailable?*

Answer: The SMALLEST mailable size is 3-1/2 inches high, 5 inches long, and seven-thousandth (.007) inch thick (about the thickness of a postcard) and must be rectangular in shape.

The LARGEST mailable size is 108 inches in length and girth (distance around at the largest point) combined and a maximum weight of 70 pounds.

MAXIMUM POSTCARD SIZE

Caller: *What is the largest postcard you can mail for 19 cents?*

Answer: The maximum size for a postcard is 4-1/4 inches high, 6 inches long, and nine-thousandth (.009) inch thick. Also, it must be rectangular in shape in order not to be nonstandard. Postcards exceeding these dimensions are charged at the letter rate of 29 cents.

MAXIMUM LETTER SIZE (NONSTANDARD SIZE MAIL)

Caller: *What is the largest mailable letter size?*

Answer: Letters may not be more than 6-1/8 inches high, 11-1/2 inches long, and 1/4 inch thick. In addition, the length divided by the height should be between 1.3 and 2.5 inclusive. Any letters weighing 1 ounce or less that exceed these standards will incur a 10-cent nonstandard surcharge. There are exceptions for certain presorted categories of mail.

MILITARY MAIL ADDRESSING

Caller: *Why do the new military addresses not have a city?*

Answer: Effective September 1991, the military changed the format for foreign military mail addresses. Instead of a city and state, these addresses now use APO (Army Post Office) or FPO (Fleet Post Office), along with AE (mail going to Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and portions of Canada), AP (the Pacific) and AA (for the Americas and portions of Canada). Therefore, the bottom line of overseas military addresses is: APO or FPO; followed by AE, AP, or AA; and then the ZIP Code.

MISDELIVERED MAIL

Caller: *My mail is always delivered to my neighbor's house. This problem must be corrected.*

Answer: I am sorry. I will complete a Consumer Service Card to ensure that the carrier's supervisor is advised of this problem. I assure you that corrective action will be taken immediately.

MISDIRECTED MAIL

Caller: *I received an envelope that had been sent to another city before reaching my address. How does this happen?*

Answer: Because of the huge volume of mail we process daily, the operators of our letter sorting machines must read an address in approximately 1 second. As they read the address, they simultaneously depress numbered keys, using a keyboard similar to a calculator, to dispatch the envelope to the proper sortation bin. The keying system used for this purpose is the ZIP Code. If one number is incorrectly keyed, the envelope is dispatched to an incorrect destination. When the error is discovered, the back of the envelope is postmarked to let the recipient know why the mail was delayed. Supervisors spot-check sorted mail prior to dispatch in an attempt to intercept mail that has been miskeyed. Where it is noted that employees are making frequent errors, remedial training is arranged.

MONEY ORDERS

Caller: *What is the maximum amount for postal money orders?*

Answer: Money orders are available in any amount up to \$700.00 and cost 75 cents. Also, multiple money orders may be purchased for up to a maximum of \$10,000 in 1 day. If your money order is lost or stolen, it can be replaced. Also, you can obtain copies of paid money orders for up to 2 years after the date they are paid.

NEWS MEDIA INQUIRIES

Caller: *I'm John Doe of City News. Will you comment on . . . ?*

Answer: May I please have your telephone number so that I can have someone return your call?

► **Note:** Postmasters are advised to refer the caller to or consult with corporate relations before responding.

PARCEL POST

Caller: *Can you please explain parcel post?*

Answer: Parcel post, or fourth-class mail, is for packages weighing from 1 to 70 pounds. This is an economical way to mail packages when speedy delivery is not critical. Items travel by surface transportation, usually trains or trucks, and delivery is within 2 to 10 days. Packages for delivery in the United States may not weigh more than 70 pounds or measure more than 108 inches in length and girth combined. Rates are based on the weight of the package and the distance of travel. Insurance can be purchased for up to \$600.00.

POST OFFICE BOXES FOR HOMELESS CUSTOMERS

Caller: *I am homeless and don't have an address. Can I still get a post office box?*

Answer: Yes. If you do not personally know a postal clerk or the postmaster/manager, you can submit a driver's license or other signed and numbered traceable credential; or, you can provide a verifiable point of contact such as a charitable institution, employer, shelter, or social services office.

REQUEST FOR POST OFFICE BOX HOLDER INFORMATION

Caller: *Who rents Post Office Box 1234?*

Answer: We are not permitted to give out that information unless the box is being used for the purpose of soliciting business from the public. **CHECK WITH THE BOX SECTION CLERK TO DETERMINE THE STATUS OF THE BOX INVOLVED. IF IT IS USED TO SOLICIT BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC, RELEASE THE INFORMATION. IF NOT, APOLOGIZE TO THE CALLER AND EXPLAIN THAT YOU MAY NOT RELEASE THE INFORMATION FOR THE PRIVACY AND SECURITY OF OUR CUSTOMERS.**

POSTMARK THE DAY AFTER MAILING

Caller: *A piece of mail I deposited on the 15th received a postmark on the 16th. How could this happen?*

Answer: Under normal circumstances, mail deposited before the designated cutoff time of a collection location should receive a postmark that reflects the current date. However, our cancellation equipment may occasionally malfunction and fail to postmark a piece of mail properly. When the error is discovered, the envelope is sent back to be processed once again on the cancellation equipment. If the mail is processed after midnight, the date would be changed accordingly.

RATE INQUIRIES

Caller: *How much is postage to . . . ?*

Answer: One moment please while I check our rate and zone charts. The postage rate from here to _____ is _____.

► **Note:** Keep rate and zone charts near the telephone at all times.

REGISTERED MAIL

Caller: *What is the safest way to mail valuable items?*

Answer: Registered mail provides maximum security for mail because it is transported under lock and is accounted for by number from the time of mailing to delivery. Registered mail may require somewhat longer for delivery than ordinary mail because of these special precautions.

REGISTERED MAIL CLAIMS

Caller: *The registered letter I mailed has not been received. What can I do?*

Answer: Please allow 15 days from the date of mailing before filing a claim on registered mail. At that time, you will need to complete a Form 1000 at your local post office. You will need to provide proof of mailing by submitting your registered receipt. You also need proof of loss, which can be a letter or statement from the addressee denying receipt of the article. Also submit proof of value, such as an invoice or sales slip.

RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED

Caller: *I received a parcel from a company which I opened, and then decided I didn't want. I taped the package up and tried to mail it but was told I would have to pay to send it back even though it said "Return Postage Guaranteed." Why?*

Answer: The mailer's endorsement "Return Postage Guaranteed" is an instruction to the Postal Service in the event that we are unable to make delivery. Once the parcel has been accepted and opened, postage is required to send the parcel back to the mailer.

SECOND-CLASS MAIL

Caller: *Can the general public use your second-class mail service?*

Answer: Only publishers and registered news agents who have been authorized second-class mailing privileges may mail at second-class rates. The applicable First-Class, single-piece third-class, or fourth-class rate must be paid on copies of second-class magazines and newspapers mailed by the general public.

STAMPS BY MAIL/STAMPS BY PHONE

Caller: *How else can I buy stamps besides visiting a post office?*

Answer: Stamps by Mail is designed for customers who find it difficult to leave their homes or offices to purchase postage. I will be happy to send you a self-mailer that can be used for this service. Instructions for completing the order form are on the envelope. Payment of postage is made by check. There is no extra charge for this service and the stamps will be delivered to your address within 3 business days.

Stamps by Phone is another available alternative. There is a handling charge for this service, which depends on the size of your order; however, many customers prefer the ease of just picking up the telephone. You may order Stamps by Phone by calling 1-800-STAMP-24 (1-800-782-6724).

STATE/TERRITORY ABBREVIATIONS

Caller: *What is the state/territory abbreviation for...?*

Answer:

Alabama	AL	Kentucky	KY	Ohio	OH
Alaska	AK	Louisiana	LA	Oklahoma	OK
American Samoa	AS	Maine	ME	Oregon	OR
Arizona	AZ	Marshall Islands	MH	Palau	PW
Arkansas	AR	Maryland	MD	Pennsylvania ..	PA
California	CA	Massachusetts	MA	Puerto Rico	PR
Colorado	CO	Michigan	MI	Rhode Island ..	RI
Connecticut	CT	Minnesota	MN	So. Carolina ...	SC
Delaware	DE	Mississippi	MS	South Dakota ..	SD
District of Columbia ...	DC	Missouri	MO	Tennessee	TN
Fed/Micronesia	FM	Montana	MT	Trust Territory ..	TT
Florida	FL	Nebraska	NE	Texas	TX
Georgia	GA	Nevada	NV	Utah	UT
Guam	GU	New Hampshire	NH	Vermont	VT
Hawaii	HI	New Jersey	NJ	Virgin Islands ...	VI
Idaho	ID	New Mexico	NM	Virginia	VA
Illinois	IL	New York	NY	Washington ...	WA
Indiana	IN	North Carolina	NC	West Virginia ..	WV
Iowa	IA	North Dakota	ND	Wisconsin	WI
Kansas	KS	N Mariana Islands	MP	Wyoming	WY

THIRD-CLASS MAIL

Caller: *Please explain third-class mail.*

Answer: Third-class mail includes printed matter and parcels weighing less than 16 ounces. There are two rate structures—one for single pieces and the other for bulk mailings. Many organizations and businesses find it economical to use the bulk rates. Also, individuals may use third-class mail for mailing lightweight parcels.

TORT CLAIMS ACT

Caller: *What is the Tort Claims Act?*

Answer: Congress provided that tort claims against the Postal Service were to be paid in accordance with the Tort Claims Act. This Act excludes us from liability for any claim arising out of the loss, miscarriage, or negligent transmission of letters or postal matter (Title 28, United States Code, Section 2680(b)).

UNSOLICITED MERCHANDISE

Caller: *I received merchandise that I didn't order. What should I do?*

Answer: If you receive unsolicited merchandise in the mail, we recommend that you do not pay for it. If you don't open the package, you can mark it "RETURN TO SENDER" and we will return it to the sender at no charge to you. If the package is opened and you don't like what you find, you can throw it away. You may wish to contact the Postal Inspection Service if you have any questions.

ZIP CODE REQUEST FOR FOREIGN COUNTRY

Caller: *I need to send mail overseas and need the ZIP Code.*

Answer: I'm sorry, but we do not have that information. ZIP Codes are not required on international mail; however, if you must have one, please contact a representative of the foreign country through the appropriate consulate or embassy.

ZIP+4 CODE

Caller: *Why does my ZIP Code have nine digits, and do I have to use them?*

Answer: That is the ZIP+4 code that allows us to pinpoint your address more accurately than a five-digit ZIP Code. Use of this code is not mandatory; however, it will allow us to process mail more accurately to help keep future rate increases to a minimum.

FREQUENTLY CALLED NUMBERS

This space is provided for listing the telephone numbers you use most frequently.

[illegible]



8 Handling Customer Complaints, Claims, and Refunds

81 Guidelines for Recording Complaints on PS Form 4314-C, *Consumer Service Card*

811 General

All customer complaints, such as equipment malfunction, loss of money or stamps, or empty equipment, are recorded on PS Form 4314-C, *Consumer Service Card* (Exhibit 811). If the complaint is initiated in person, the customer fills out the unshaded portion of the form. If the complaint is made by telephone or by mail, the employee accepting the complaint fills out the unshaded portion of the form.

812 Specific

The person completing PS Form 4314-C fills in the following unshaded portions:

- a. Name of the customer making the complaint.
- b. Date of the complaint.
- c. Address and daytime telephone number of the customer making the complaint.
- d. The appropriate box under the heading, "Is This."
- e. The box for "Vending Equipment," under the heading, "Did it Involve."
- f. Under the heading "Please Give Essential Facts," a description of the problem, including location, type of machine, and product involved. For example:
 - (1) "Didn't get two 1-cent stamps on purchase from stamp vending machine."
 - (2) "Deposited \$2.20 in booklet machine, but no booklet, no money returned."
 - (3) "Currency changer took dollar and didn't give any change."

Exhibit 811

PS Form 4314-C, Consumer Service Card



Consumer Service Card

1. PRINT FIRMLY

2. REMOVE TOP COPY FOR CUSTOMER RECORD
(Do not separate remaining copies.)3. COMPLETE THE ADDRESS ON
BACK OF THIS CARD4. MAIL
(Postage Paid By USPS)

Name		Date (Month, Day, Year)		No.			
Mailing Address (No. and Street, Apt. or Box No.)		City or Town	State	ZIP Code	Customer Phone (8 a.m. - 5 p.m.)		
Is This <input type="checkbox"/> Information Request <input type="checkbox"/> Suggestion <input type="checkbox"/> Problem <input type="checkbox"/> Compliment							
Did It Involve <input type="checkbox"/> Delay <input type="checkbox"/> Nonreceipt (Prepare 1510) <input type="checkbox"/> Damage <input type="checkbox"/> Misdelivery <input type="checkbox"/> Improperly Returned <input type="checkbox"/> Change of Address <input type="checkbox"/> Vending Equipment <input type="checkbox"/> Window Services <input type="checkbox"/> Personnel <input type="checkbox"/> Other		If This Is A Problem With A Specific Mailing, Please Complete The Following: <table border="1"> <tr> <td> Was It <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> Flat / Large Envelope <input type="checkbox"/> Package <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper / Magazine <input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement </td> <td> Was Mailing <input type="checkbox"/> First-Class <input type="checkbox"/> Priority Mail <input type="checkbox"/> Certified <input type="checkbox"/> Registered <input type="checkbox"/> Insured <input type="checkbox"/> Express Mail <input type="checkbox"/> Other </td> </tr> </table>		Was It <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> Flat / Large Envelope <input type="checkbox"/> Package <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper / Magazine <input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement	Was Mailing <input type="checkbox"/> First-Class <input type="checkbox"/> Priority Mail <input type="checkbox"/> Certified <input type="checkbox"/> Registered <input type="checkbox"/> Insured <input type="checkbox"/> Express Mail <input type="checkbox"/> Other	What Did You Do (Describe the action you took to solve the problem.) (Describe the action you took to solve the problem.) (Describe the action you took to solve the problem.)	
Was It <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> Flat / Large Envelope <input type="checkbox"/> Package <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper / Magazine <input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement	Was Mailing <input type="checkbox"/> First-Class <input type="checkbox"/> Priority Mail <input type="checkbox"/> Certified <input type="checkbox"/> Registered <input type="checkbox"/> Insured <input type="checkbox"/> Express Mail <input type="checkbox"/> Other						
Please Give Essential Facts (If change of address problem, please include previous address.)							

PS Form 4314-C, January 1995

THANK YOU. You will be contacted soon by your Post Office.

CUSTOMER COPY - 1

82 Refunding Money to Customers

Refunds may be made in stamps or cash, if so requested. If a cash refund is to be mailed, a postal money order must be used.

821 Complaints Registered in Person

821.1 Acceptance

A window clerk may accept complaints from customers and pay refunds involving no-vend claims, unless the servicing person is available. Prior to resolution, the window clerk or supervisor verifies the complaint by the following procedures:

- a. Accompanies the customer to the self service vending machine.
- b. Examines for:
 - (1) Stamps caught in the dispensing area of the machine.
 - (2) Customer not understanding correct machine operation.

821.2 Resolution

821.21 By Window Clerk

If the machine is not functioning properly, the window clerk performs the following procedures:


- a. Places Label 6, *Vending Equipment Out of Order*, on the malfunctioning machine.
- b. Immediately notifies the servicing person or servicing person's supervisor.
- c. Asks the customer to fill out the unshaded portion of PS Form 4314-C, *Consumer Service Card* (see 812).
- d. Reviews PS Form 4314-C for completeness of customer information.
- e. Gives copy 1 (Customer Copy) to the customer.
- f. Reimburses the customer's loss with stamps or cash, if so requested.

Note: A supervisor must approve refunds of more than \$5.00.

- g. Forwards copy 2 (Processing Center Copy) to the his or her supervisor, who, on a daily basis, batches all processing center copies and mails them to the address listed on the reverse side of the copy.
- h. Completes PS Form 1096, *Receipt* (Exhibit 821.21), for the amount of the reimbursement/refund.
- i. Completes the shaded portion of PS Form 4314-C, "This Section is for USPS Use Only," filling in his or her name, the date, and the action taken.
- j. Attaches PS Form 1096 to the remaining copies of PS Form 4314-C.
- k. Exchanges PS Form 4314-C and PS Form 1096 for cash with the servicing person.

Exhibit 821.21

PS Form 1096, *Receipt*

 UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE®		Receipt
Amount (Written Out) _____		Amount (In Numbers) _____
		/100 Dollars \$
Purpose _____		
Is any Portion of this Sale a Charitable Tax Deduction?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
If "Yes," the fair market value of the postage portion of the foregoing stamps equals the First-Class postage rate.		
By (Signature and Title) _____		Date _____
PS Form 1096, April 1998		

821.22 By Servicing Person

The servicing person resolves the complaint as follows:

- a. If the no-vend complaint is verified, a refund is issued to the customer. *This refund can be in either stamps or cash, if so requested.*
- b. If the no-vend complaint cannot be verified, the following procedures are taken:
 - (1) Request the customer fill out the unshaded portion of PS Form 4314-C, *Consumer Service Card* (see 812).
 - (2) Issue a refund in stamps.
 - (3) Give copy 1 (Customer Copy) of PS Form 4314-C to the customer.
 - (4) Forward copy 2 (Processing Center Copy) to his or her supervisor, who, on a daily basis, batches all processing center copies and mails them to the address listed on the reverse side of the copy.
 - (5) Complete the shaded portion of PS Form 4314-C, "This Section Is for USPS Use Only."
 - (6) Forward copy 3 (Action Copy) to his or her supervisor.
 - (7) Retain copy 4 (Post Office File Copy).

822 Complaints Registered by Telephone**822.1 Acceptance**

The employee accepting the complaint does the following:

- a. Records the complaint on the unshaded portion of PS Form 4314-C, *Consumer Service Card*.
- b. Informs the customer that a refund will be mailed the next regular mail delivery day.
- c. Discards copy 1 (Customer Copy) of PS Form 4314-C.
- d. Forwards copy 2 (Processing Center Copy) to the appropriate supervisor, who, on a daily basis, batches all processing center copies and mails them to the address listed on the reverse side of the copy.
- e. Forwards the remaining copies of PS Form 4314-C to the servicing person.

822.2 Resolution

Upon receipt of PS Form 4314-C, *Consumer Service Card*, the servicing person follows these procedures:

- a. Dispatches the refund the next regular mail delivery day.
- b. Fills out the shaded portion of PS Form 4314-C, "For USPS Use Only."
- c. Forwards copy 3 (Action Copy) to his or her supervisor.
- d. Retains copy 4 (Post Office File Copy).
- e. Investigates the complaint as soon as possible.

823 Complaints Registered by Mail**823.1 Acceptance**

The employee accepting the complaint sent in the mail does the following:

- a. Completes the unshaded portion of PS Form 4314-C, *Consumer Service Card*.
- b. Discards copy 1 (Customer Copy).
- c. Forwards copy 2 (Processing Center Copy) to the appropriate supervisor, who, on a daily basis, batches all processing center copies and mails them to the address on the reverse side of the copy.
- d. Forwards remaining copies of PS Form 4314-C to the servicing person.

823.2 Resolution**823.21 By Servicing Person**

Upon receipt of PS Form 4314-C, *Consumer Service Card*, the servicing person does the following:

- a. Dispatches the refund the next regular mail delivery day.
- b. Completes the shaded portion of PS Form 4314-C, "USPS Use Only."
- c. Forwards copy 3 (Action Copy) to supervisor.
- d. Retains copy 4 (Post Office File Copy).
- e. Investigates the complaint as soon as possible.

823.22 By Postmaster or Designee

The postmaster or designee may answer a written complaint by telephone or in writing. If the complaint requires a refund, the written response may include the refund.

83 Resolving Other Complaints

The servicing person must resolve all other complaints regarding self service vending equipment. For such complaints, include selection varieties, types of vending equipment, cleanliness of equipment, etc. Servicing personnel must bring any action required for resolution to the attention of the supervisor for appropriate action.

84 Reviewing Complaints/Resolutions

On a daily basis, the employees resolving complaints accumulate Action Copies (copy 3) of PS Form 4314-C, *Consumer Service Card*, and submit them to the servicing employee's supervisor. After reviewing the copies, the supervisor batches all action copies and mails them to:

CONSUMER SERVICE CARD UNIT
PO BOX 14899
ST. LOUIS MO 63180-9998

85 Retaining Complaint Records

The servicing person retains the completed copy 4 (Post Office File Copy) with PS Form 1096, *Receipt* (if submitted). The forms are filed alphabetically by customer's last name and retained for a period of 1 year.

86 Additional Information for Use of PS Form 4314-C, *Consumer Service Card*

The *Postal Operations Manual* contains additional instructions (165.4–165.6) for use of PS Form 4314-C, *Consumer Service Card*.

