

DOCKET SECTION

BEFORE THE
POSTAL RATE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20268-0001

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POSTAL RATE AND FEE CHANGES, 1997

POSTAL RATE BOARD
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Docket No. R97-1

RESPONSE OF UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
TO INTERROGATORIES OF
DOUGLAS F. CARLSON
(DFC/USPS-15-18)

The United States Postal Service hereby provides responses to the following interrogatories of Douglas F. Carlson: DFC/USPS-15-18, filed on October 27, 1997.

Each interrogatory is stated verbatim and is followed by the response.

Respectfully submitted,

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

By its attorneys:

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November 26, 1997

RESPONSE OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
TO INTERROGATORIES OF DOUGLAS F. CARLSON

DFC/USPS-15. Please explain in detail how Consumer Service Cards are processed, at all levels of the Postal Service organization, once a postmaster receives the card.

RESPONSE: Please see Attachment A to this response.



Management Instruction

Complaint Resolution and Proper Use of the Consumer Service Card

This instruction establishes the minimum requirements and standard response time for answering customer complaints and establishes procedures for handling, tracking, and assigning accountability for timely response. Postal employees are to ensure timely, customer-friendly, and professional complaint resolution.

Date August 12, 1993
Effective Immediately
Number PO-250-93-2
Obsoletes MI-PO-250-91-3
OCC Code CA101


Ann McK. Robinson
Vice President and Consumer Advocate

BACKGROUND

The Customer Satisfaction Index indicates that prompt response to and resolution of customer complaints will increase customer satisfaction with the complaint handling process. The Customer Satisfaction Index points out areas where prompt response is receiving low marks from our customers and needs improvement.

SCOPE

The following, or their designees, are responsible for implementing these requirements and for informing assigned personnel about local procedures for responding to or forwarding complaints received:

1. Headquarters Consumer Affairs.
2. Area office managers.
3. Customer Services district managers.
4. Plant managers.
5. Consumer Affairs and Claims managers.
6. Postmasters and station or branch managers.
7. Postal employees delegated responsibility for handling complaints.

SOURCE OF COMPLAINTS

The Postal Service receives complaints from business and residential customers who report them through:

1. Form 4314-C, *Consumer Service Card (English)*.
2. Form 4314-A, *Consumer Service Card (Spanish)*.
3. Telephone and personal contact.
4. Written correspondence, including customer surveys (e.g., the Customer Satisfaction Index).
5. Headquarters to field referrals (customer correspondence initially directed to the postmaster general or the

consumer advocate, then reassigned to the field for resolution).

6. Governmental inquiries from the legislative and executive branches of the federal government.

RESPONSIBILITY

Headquarters Management. Headquarters Consumer Affairs is responsible for establishing requirements and measuring compliance with this instruction.

Field Management. The following managers must ensure compliance with this instruction and resolve complaints within their areas of responsibility:

1. Area managers.
 2. District managers.
 3. Plant managers.
 4. Consumer Affairs and Claims managers.
 5. Postmasters and station or branch managers.
- Consumer Affairs and Claims managers must also do the following:
1. Monitor activity throughout their respective districts for compliance with this instruction.
 2. Refer customer complaints to the appropriate functional areas for resolution.
 3. Establish and maintain a customer complaint file.
- Postmasters and station or branch managers must also do the following:
1. Ensure that their offices meet the requirements of this instruction.
 2. Maintain one or more customer complaint control logs (see example on page 4).
 3. Investigate and take corrective action to resolve complaints by contacting and working with other

functional areas of the Postal Service, if necessary, to resolve customer complaints.

4. Establish and maintain a complaint file.
- Other postal employees, especially window clerks, are to provide the customer with a Consumer Service Card or refer the customer to the appropriate functional area.

PROCEDURES

Time Frames. Follow the procedures in the following chart to ensure that necessary actions are performed within the indicated time frames:

	Time Frame	Action
Initial Contact	Within 24 hours after receiving complaint	Acknowledge complaint by preprinted postcard, letter, telephone call, or personal contact with the customer.
Final Response	Within 14 days after receiving complaint	Send a final response to the customer by telephone, letter, or personal contact. The final response must be comprehensive and either describe how the problem was or will be corrected, or explain why the problem cannot be corrected.

Exception to Final Response Requirement. The final response time discussed above does not apply to complaints requiring issuance of a publication watch for daily, weekly, and monthly newspapers or magazines. All other requirements do apply. Process the publication watch in accordance with Management Instruction PO-440-88-4, *Publication Watch Revised Form and Procedures*, dated 10/21/88. The time frames for responding to these complaints are as follows:

Type of Publication	Final Response Due
Daily	Within 35 days after complaint received
Weekly	Within 45 days after complaint received
Monthly	Within 75 days after complaint received

Maintaining Customer Complaint Control Log. Maintain one or more customer complaint control logs at every office to ensure timely response to customer complaints and to facilitate routine analysis of complaint activity.

Content. Include the following information in the customer complaint control log:

1. Office name and ZIP Code.
2. Customer name.
3. Company name, if applicable.

4. Customer address.
5. Customer telephone number.
6. Control number (i.e., Consumer Service Card number).
7. Subject of complaint.
8. Type of contact.
 - a. Type of 24-hour acknowledgment (i.e., telephone, letter, postcard, personal).
 - b. Type of final response (i.e., telephone, letter, personal).
9. Date received.
10. Suspense date.
11. Assignment of responsibility for suspense and resolution of the complaint.
12. Date closed.

Complaints Resolved Immediately. If a complaint received over the telephone or in person is resolved immediately, document the contact in the customer complaint control log. However, if further investigation is needed, advise the customer and complete a Consumer Service Card.

Completing the Consumer Service Card. The Consumer Service Card is completed by one of the following methods:

1. A customer completes the Consumer Service Card, retains copy 1, and either gives the form to a postal employee or mails it, following the directions on the top of copy 1.
2. A postal employee completes a Consumer Service Card when a customer comment is received over the telephone, in person, or by letter when follow-up action must be taken or the comment or complaint must be referred elsewhere for action or resolution.

Processing a Complaint Made in Person. Follow these instructions when processing a Consumer Service Card that is received in person:

1. Ensure that the customer has provided complete information if he or she hands in the Consumer Service Card in person. Verify that the following information is legible on all parts:
 - a. Card number.
 - b. Customer name.
 - c. Complete address and ZIP Code.
 - d. Card date.
2. Enter the information in the customer complaint control log using the Consumer Service Card number as the control number.
3. Carefully separate and send copy 2 of the Consumer Service Card to the St. Louis Consumer Service Card Unit on the same date the Consumer Service Card is received from a customer or completed by a postal employee.
4. Acknowledge having received the complaint, within 24 hours, by preprinted postcard, letter, telephone call, or personal contact.

5. Investigate the complaint.
6. Document the response in the *USPS Use Only* section on copy 3 of the Consumer Service Card. Include the date the customer was contacted, who made the contact, and a brief description of the action taken.
7. Send copy 3 to the Consumer Service Card Unit on the date action is completed and file copy 4 locally, along with any letters or attachments.

NOTE: Copies 2 and 3 should be sent to the Consumer Service Card Unit on the same day *only if follow-up action is completed on the same day* the comment is received.

8. Enter the date the complaint was closed on the customer complaint control log.

Processing a Written Complaint. Follow these instructions when processing a written complaint:

1. Transfer all vital information from the letter of complaint to a Consumer Service Card and enter it in the customer complaint control log using the Consumer Service Card number as the control number.
2. Follow processing procedures above.

Processing a Telephoned Complaint. Follow these instructions when processing a complaint made by telephone:

1. Complete a Consumer Service Card and log it in the customer complaint control log using the Consumer Service Card number as the control number.
2. Follow processing procedures above.

Mailing the Consumer Service Card. Instructions for mailing the Consumer Service Card to the Consumer Service Card Unit are as follows:

1. Do not staple Consumer Service Cards or include attachments, such as letters. (Attachments should be filed locally with copy 4.) Document all relevant information in the appropriate sections of the Consumer Service Card.
2. Do not fold the Consumer Service Card. Use an envelope measuring 6-1/2 inches by 9-1/2 inches or larger.
3. Divide copies 2 and 3 into separate batches. Mail both batches in one envelope each day to:

CONSUMER SERVICE CARD UNIT
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
PO BOX 80479
ST LOUIS MO 63180-9479.

Headquarters to Field Referrals. The following apply:

1. The Consumer Affairs and Claims manager is responsible for transferring information from customer correspondence to the customer complaint control log, for assigning the suspense date, and for ensuring that an appropriate response is made within 14 days from the date the district office received the complaint.

2. Field offices must respond within the assigned suspense date established by the Consumer Affairs and Claims manager.
3. 24-hour acknowledgment will have been made by Headquarters.

Government Inquiries. Process inquiries from legislative and executive branch officials as follows:

1. Follow procedures in *Administrative Support Manual* 338.
2. Process inquiries regarding service to a postal customer in the area served as written correspondence. These inquiries must receive prompt and conscientious attention.

MEASUREMENT OF EFFECTIVENESS

Consumer Affairs monitors the quality and timeliness of complaint resolution by conducting reviews of the following:

1. Customer Satisfaction Index.
2. Consumer Affairs field audits.
3. Periodic reports on the Consumer Service Card program.

BENEFITS

The Postal Service expects to:

1. Improve customer satisfaction with the complaint handling process.
2. Establish accountability for effective resolution of customer complaints.
3. Identify and correct service deficiencies which cause complaints.

REFERENCES

The following reference material, available from the materiel distribution centers, must be accessible to assist postal employees in resolving complaints related to Postal Service policy or regulations:

- *Domestic Mail Manual (DMM)* -
- *Administrative Support Manual (ASM)*
- *International Mail Manual (IMM)*
- *Postal Operations Manual (POM)*
- *Handbook PO-250, Consumer Answer Book*
- *Handbook M-38, Management of Rural Delivery Services*
- *Handbook M-41, City Delivery Carriers Duties and Responsibilities*
- *Handbook PO-102, Retail Vending Operational and Marketing Program, Chapter 8, Customer Complaints.*

RESPONSE OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
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DFC/USPS-16. For each of the past three years, please provide all information that is available in summary form about the types of service problems that customers have brought to the attention of the Postal Service using a Consumer Service Card.

RESPONSE: The categories of problems reported are as follows:

Change of Address

Address Correction Service
Change of Address Problems

Collection

Collection Boxes
No Pick Up from Mail Box

Damaged

Letter
Package
Newspapers
Advertisement
Electronic Mail
Flat/Large Envelope

Delay

First Class
Newspaper/Magazine
Priority
Special Delivery
Certified
Registered
Express Mail
Other

Delivery Problems

Attempted Delivery
General Delivery
Improper delivery
Improperly Returned Mail
Daily Delivery Time Variation
Misdelivery
Mode of Delivery

RESPONSE OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
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Response to DFC/USPS-16 (cont.):

Central Delivery Point
No Carrier Delivery Available
Non-Delivery
Notice of Attempted Delivery
Rural Route
Special Delivery
Problems with Hold Orders
Non-Receipt Vol Mailer Complaint
Delayed Vol Mailer Complaint

Distribution Problems

Distribution
Notice to Call

Inspection Service

Complaint about Inspection Service
Referred to Inspection Service

Installations

International Mail

Post Office Box and Caller Service

Non-Receipt

Letter
Package
Newspaper
Advertisement
Electronic Mail
Flat/Large Envelope

Other Services

Return Receipt
COD Mail
Registered Mail
Money Orders
Business Reply Mail

RESPONSE OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
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Response to DFC/USPS-16 (cont.):

Personnel

Carrier
Clerk
Other Personnel
Telephone Response
Supervisors/Postmasters

Policy

Poor Use of Supplies/Equipment
Unable to Provide Service
Logo

Postage Due

Postage Rates
Retail Products

Self-Service Postal Equipment

Broken Machines
Lost Money in Machines
Machine Empty
Postal Buddy
General Vending Complaints

Stamps and Philately

Philatelic Products
Stamps and Stamped Paper Products
Stamp Inventory

Window Services

Elimination of Service
Hours of Service
Window Delays/Long Lines
Window Transactions Quality

Miscellaneous

Misuse of Consumer Service Card
Customer Error
General Service Complaints
Objectionable Mail Matter
Payment of Claims
ZIP Codes

RESPONSE OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
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DFC/USPS-17. For each of the past three years, please provide all information that is available in summary form about the specific types of problems that customers have experienced with return receipts. If this information is not available at the headquarters level, please provide this information for all levels for which it is available. (Note: The response to DBP/USPS-33(d) suggests that some "customer feedback" from Consumer Service Cards, including "data," is available to "local managers.")

RESPONSE: The Postal Service's national information indicates that the following number of problems were reported on Consumer Service Cards regarding return receipts:

1995	4635
1996	4709
1997	4683

Data on the *types* of problems reported regarding return receipts is not compiled.

RESPONSE OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
TO INTERROGATORIES OF DOUGLAS F. CARLSON

DFC/USPS-18. For each of the past three years, please provide all information that is available in summary form about the specific types of problems that customers have experienced with post-office-box service. If this information is not available at the headquarters level, please provide this information for all levels for which it is available. (Note: The response to DBP/USPS-33(d) suggests that some "customer feedback" from Consumer Service Cards, including "data," is available to "local managers.")

RESPONSE: The Postal Service's national information indicates that the following number of problems were reported on Consumer Service Cards regarding post office boxes and caller service:

1995	5754
1996	5206
1997	4320

Data on the *types* of problems reported regarding post office and caller service is not compiled, nor is this information split between post office boxes and caller service.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that I have this day served the foregoing document upon all participants of record in this proceeding in accordance with section 12 of the Rules of Practice.


Anne B. Reynolds

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November 26, 1997