

USPS Report on PRC Rate and Service Inquiries for May 2010

The Postal Regulatory Commission referred 71 inquiries to the Postal Service in May. Customers received responses on average within 9 days.

Inquiries covered various topics that fell into three main categories:

- Delivery services (39) – i.e., the time of delivery, forwarding, and method of delivery.
- Customer services (10) – i.e., hours of service, availability of retail products, and product tracking.
- Policies/procedures (22) – i.e., privacy and Freedom of Information Act requests, obtaining refunds or exchanging postage, and suggestions.

While many of the inquiries were customer specific, the following topics are being highlighted for their possible interest to a larger audience.

Why are custom forms needed for APO/FPO mail?

Military APO (Army Post Office) and FPO (Fleet Post Office) service offers mail delivery at hundreds of Military Post Offices overseas, allowing those serving their country to stay connected to family and friends back home. Generally, any mail with an overseas (international) destination requires a customs declaration, as this mail is subject to international transportation and importation regulations. Regulations for mail entering a foreign country are established through the Universal Postal Union (UPU), an organization that facilitates the exchange of mail between nations within its membership through policy, rates, and regulations, effectively creating a cooperative international postal system.

To learn more about overseas APO/FPO military mail, please visit the Postal Service website at <http://pe.usps.gov/text/dmm300/703.htm#wp1113810>.

For more information on the type of customs form most appropriate for sending international mail and instructions for completing your customs declaration, please click on the following link <https://webapps.usps.com/customsforms/#>.

Why do Post Office (P.O.) Box rates vary across different parts of the country?

Post Office Box service provides customers with a convenient, secure and flexible way to receive mail. Post Office Box service is a premium service offered for a fee to any customer requiring more than free carrier delivery or general delivery and, under certain circumstances, for no fee to customers who are not eligible for carrier delivery. The service allows a customer to obtain mail during the hours the box lobby is open or access is otherwise available. Post Office Box service is provided only through receptacles owned or operated by the USPS or its agents.

Rates for P.O. Box rental vary by size and location. Generally, there are five sizes of P.O. Boxes available for rental ranging from 3" x 5.5" to 22.5" x 12". In addition to size, rates for Post Office Box rentals are aligned by 5-digit ZIP Code™ location to reflect the true local costs of providing this service based on the estimated real estate value of the space used to provide the Post Office Box service.

To learn more about P.O. Box service, please visit the Postal Service website at <http://www.usps.com/receive/businesssolutions/poboxservice.htm>.

You may also locate, check rates and rent a P.O. Box online at <http://www.usps.com/receive/businesssolutions/poboxesonline.htm> or at most Post Offices. Prices vary depending on the location of the Post Office and the size of the P.O. Box. New customers can search for an available P.O. Box near their home or business, and existing P.O. Box customers can manage their P.O. Box rental payments online.

Hardship Case Delivery

The Postal Service™ is a customer oriented organization, and there are procedures and guidelines for changing the type of delivery when service by existing methods imposes an extreme physical hardship to an individual customer.

Customers may request a temporary change in the mode of delivery for an authorized delivery point by submitting a written request to their local postmaster for initial review. Changes may be made when service as currently provided would impose an extreme physical hardship on an individual customer. Each request is carefully evaluated on a case by case basis and if approved, the requested change is temporary, and service is returned to the original level when the hardship no longer exists.

To obtain contact information for your local post office and where to submit your written request for a change in delivery mode, please visit http://usps.whitepages.com/post_office or call 1-800-ASK-USPS (1-800-275-8777).