

Wednesday, 12 January 2000

## **Truth in advertising**

George Graham's Jan. 5 complaint about the U.S. Postal Service's ``priority mail" service is not an isolated bit of evidence that something may be wrong with priority mail (``The cost of a letter").

I have often pointed out that Postal Service ads for this pricey mail product usually obscure the fact that the two- to three-day service is an average delivery time.

Priority mail overshoots its outer limit three-day mark up to 15 percent of the time.

In fact, for letters and light packages (less than 13 ounces), first class is faster to local destinations than priority - at about one-tenth the price - and as fast to many distant locations.

For packages, local area parcel post delivery averages 1.8 days, and average delivery is about three days between 151 and 300 miles.

For the most cost-effective mailing alternatives, consumers should check the USPS Web site rate calculator ([www.usps.gov](http://www.usps.gov)), which offers pretty reliable information, although it does not reflect the frequent lapses in priority's three-day service promise.

I think the Postal Service, an arm of the government, should be more up front about its actual service times and help consumers get the best price/service deals.

It is unfortunate that neither the Postal Rate Commission, on which I serve, nor any other federal agency, has jurisdiction over Postal Service advertising.

Legislation that would require the Postal Service to meet Federal Trade Commission truth-in-advertising standards is pending in the House of Representatives.

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\*The views expressed are solely those of the author.