

Central Mail News



November 2008

Issue 46

ARE YOU READY FOR HOLIDAY MAILING?

It's here: The holiday mailing season — especially for international mail and mail to overseas military destinations. To assist you in preparing your holiday shipments, here are some tips and suggestions as you prepare to mail your holiday cards and packages. Careful preparation of holiday mailings will ensure safe and timely delivery.

Tips For Packaging Gifts

First, choose a box that's suitable for the contents and weight of the items you're shipping. Also, when selecting boxes, don't ship small, lightweight items in large boxes — practice "right-size" shipping. For example, if you send a pair of shoes in a shoebox, you'll pay a lot less than if you send them in a copy paper box, even though the contents weigh the same. This helps you avoid possible surcharges for oversized packaging. Sturdy paperboard or corrugated fiberboard boxes are best for weights up to 10 pounds.

Flat-rate shipping is the best value in the marketplace. Priority Mail Flat Rate Boxes give customers the ability to send items across the country, with a flat predetermined price, regardless of how much they weigh or how far they're going.

– Postmaster General John Potter

Remember, an individual item that is not fragile requires less cushioning material around the contents and sometimes a "snug-fitting" box is all that's needed. If you're reusing an ordinary box, don't forget to cover all previous labels and markings with adhesive labels or remove them prior to mailing. Boxes, padded mailing bags, and tubes of various sizes are available for purchase at most Post Offices.

For added convenience, use our Priority Mail and Express Mail complimentary packaging available in a variety of sizes at your local Post Office, online at usps.com, or place an order by phone at 800-222-1811. Priority Mail packaging is sized so that it's never subject to minimum balloon price or dimensional-weight pricing. For outstanding value and convenience, use our Priority Mail Regular Flat Rate Boxes, available in two shapes, and the Priority Mail Large Flat Rate Box. For one price, ship to any domestic destination, so there's no weighing or calculating postage.

Next, place the appropriate amount of cushioning, based on the contents, around your items. Use newspaper, Styrofoam "peanuts," bubble wrap, or shredded paper. If there are multiple items in the box, close and shake the box to determine if there's enough cushioning for the contents. If you hear items shifting, add more cushioning. Remember, when packaging more than one item, wrap each item separately. Fragile articles need suitable separations from each other as well as sufficient clearance from the corners and sides of the box.

Don't forget to remove batteries from toys and electronic devices. Wrap them separately and place next to the item in the mailing container. Be sure to place an address label with the return and delivery addresses inside the box to ensure that the item can be delivered in case the outside address label becomes damaged or detached from the box.

Note: Customs forms are required on Priority Mail articles weighing 16 ounces or more sent to and from ZIP Codes with prefix 969 and ZIP Code 96799 (Guam and American Samoa, respectively) as well as to all APO/FPO destinations.

Return Address

The complete address of the sender, including the ZIP Code of the return address, must be in the upper left corner of the address side of the mailpiece. Only one return address can be used and it must be located so that it does not affect either the clarity of the destination address or the application of service labels and notations, such as postmarks.

Insurance

Insured mail service purchased at a retail Post Office provides up to \$5,000 indemnity coverage, and insured mail service purchased online provides up to \$500 indemnity coverage. Items, however, may not be insured for more than their current value. All insured items are numbered, barcoded, and receive a delivery scan. For those items insured for more than \$200, a signature also is obtained upon delivery. Tracking information is available only on those insured mail items sent with Delivery Confirmation or Signature Confirmation service through the Delivery Confirmation or Signature Confirmation number (not the insured number). Remember to save your insured mail receipt. The Post Office does not maintain mailing records for insured items.

Greeting Cards and First-Class Mail Items

Greeting cards are available in various shapes and weights and include "musical" cards. Many of these cards weigh more than 1 ounce and, if the card appears to be square in shape, it may be subject to the 20-cent nonmachinable surcharge in addition to the applicable letter-size First-Class Mail postage. Usually the envelopes for such cards are marked "extra postage required." Additionally, some invitations or other items may also be subject to the nonmachinable surcharge.

The First-Class Mail nonmachinable surcharge applies to all letters up to 3.5 ounces. Due to their thickness, many of the musical greeting cards exceed letter-size standards and are classified and priced as flats (large envelopes). Mailpieces classified as postcards eligible for the postcard price, and flats and parcels, are never subject to the 20-cent nonmachinable surcharge.

To be eligible for the 27-cent First-Class Mail postcard price, postcards can be no larger than 6 inches long by 4-1/4 inches high, and no more than 0.016-inch thick.

Thirteen-Ounce Mail Rule

Mailpieces that weigh more than 13 ounces and bearing ordinary postage stamps must be presented at a retail Post Office. You can use convenient online postage applications or an APC if you wish to mail items that weigh more than 13 ounces in Postal Service collection boxes or Post Office lobby mail slots, or if you wish to leave the items for pickup by your letter carrier. Online postage applications include the Postal Service's Click-N-Ship service on *usps.com* and PC Postage from an authorized USPS vendor. If you are unable to use one of the above methods to prepare and affix postage, items weighing more than 13 ounces must be presented for mailing to an employee at a retail Post Office. Decals have been placed on USPS collection boxes to indicate

that deposit of stamped mail over 13 ounces is prohibited in collection boxes and any such mail will be returned to sender. This is part of ongoing security measures established by the Postal Service, in cooperation with other government agencies, to keep the public, customers, employees and the mail safe.

2008 INTERNATIONAL AND MILITARY MAIL HOLIDAY MAILING DATES

To ensure delivery of holiday cards and packages by Dec. 25 to military APO and FPO addresses overseas and to international addresses, we suggest that mail be entered by the recommended mailing dates. Use the link to see mailing date chart. <http://www.usps.com/holiday/shippingcalendar.htm>

REMEMBER THESE DATES:

- * December 17 The busiest mailing day of the year.
- * December 19 The busiest delivery day of the year.