MEMO to MAILERS

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ANYWHERE, USA 98765-4321

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ANYWHERE, USA 98765-4321

The "OneCode" vision

The barcode says it all: The check truly is in the mail. The direct mail flier was just delivered at the customer's door. That package you ordered has left the company's warehouse. That's some smart barcode, right? That's the promise of Intelligent Mail — the capture and sharing of information about each mailpiece to ensure accurate and low-cost end-to-end processing and delivery — and the Postal Service is working to make it a reality.

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE®

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Operation Iraqi Freedom mailing tips

The Postal Service is reminding Americans that certain conditions and restrictions apply when mailing items to military and civilian personnel deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom in the Middle East and Persian Gulf areas.

Programs that allowed the general public to send mail addressed to "Any Service Member" were canceled more than a year ago by the Department of Defense (DoD). While popular with the public dur-

ADDRESSING TIPS

The Defense Department has requested that those who send mail use the service member's full name (with or without rank or rating), unit and APO/FPO (Air/Army Post Office or Fleet Post Office) address with the nine-digit ZIP Code (if one is assigned) and a return address. For packages, mailers are asked to print on one side only with the recipient's address in the lower right portion.

Staff Sgt. Michelle Mister (left) processes mail for a customer. Mister is the post office's noncommissioned officer in charge and is assigned to the 386th Expeditionary Communications Squadron at a forward-deployed location. The sergeant and her fellow workers and volunteers process nearly 33,000 pounds of mail each week. Photo by Staff Sgt. Karen J. Tomasik (U.S. Air Force)

ing Desert Storm and other operations, DoD's concern with security and transportation constraints led to canceling this program.

DoD recommends that individuals and organizations wishing to mail letters and care packages to individual service members overseas refocus their activities into supporting the service member's family members at home.

DoD recommends visiting *www.defendamerica.mil* and clicking the "Support Our Troops" icon to find ways to support service members.

PROHIBITIONS

While there are specific restrictions for each five-digit military post office ZIP Code (APO/FPO), generally speaking, it is prohibited to mail the following to this region:

- Obscene articles (prints, paintings, cards, films, videotapes, etc.).
- Any matter containing religious materials contrary to the Islamic faith or depicting nude or seminude persons, pornographic or sexual items, or non-authorized political materials.
- Pork or pork by-products.

Restrictions are updated every other Thursday at *www.usps.com*. Customers may also obtain this information by calling 800-ASK-USPS, or by visiting their local Post Office.

All military units are assigned an APO or FPO ZIP Code and in many cases that ZIP Code travels with the unit. The Postal Service places APO/FPO mail on special charter flights, commercial airlines and military service aircraft at military and U.S. airports. When planes arrive overseas, the mail is tendered to the military and transported via local military transportation to delivery points.
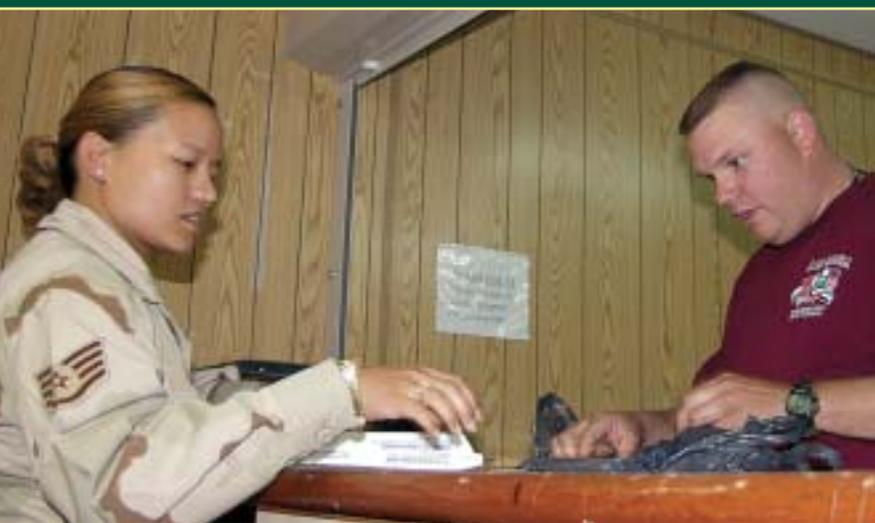
According to the Military Postal Service Agency (MPSA), depending on where the service member is located, letters and Priority Mail parcels to Kuwait normally take 10 to 15 days. Parcel Post packages take longer since they don't travel by aircraft within the U.S. prior to overseas dispatch. There may be size restrictions and customs declaration form requirements to some locations as mail going through the MPSA can be subject to the host country customs requirements. The time to deliver varies depending on the category of mail and the country of destination. Delivery may also take longer when armed forces are on the move during periods of heightened activity.

PACKAGING TIPS

It's a good idea to keep the following in mind to ensure that packages are delivered promptly.

- Extreme temperatures: Desert temperatures typically exceed 100 degrees.
- The box: Select a box strong enough to protect the contents and large enough to accommodate cushioning. If reusing a box, cover all previous labels and markings with a heavy black marker or adhesive labels.
- Cushioning: Cushioning the contents with newspaper is a novel way to send news from home. Styrofoam and bubble wrap are also good choices. Close and shake the box. If it rattles, add additional cushioning to keep items from shifting.
- Batteries: Occasionally a battery powered item such as a radio or electric razor will turn itself on during shipment. Be sure to remove and wrap the batteries separately.
- Sealing: Tape the opening of the box and reinforce all seams with 2" wide tape. Use clear or brown packaging tape, reinforced packing tape or paper tape. Do not use cord, string or twine as it causes the package to get caught and possibly damaged in sorting equipment.
- Include a card describing the contents: Occasionally improperly wrapped packages fall apart during shipment. Including a card inside the package that lists the sender's and recipient's addresses along with a description of the contents helps in collecting items that have fallen open during processing. ■

The future of
flats processing

The mailing industry knows that the Postal Service's program to automate letter mail processing has been a success. Productivity in letter processing has increased 83 percent since 1993 and mailers have received the benefits through postage discounts for preparing automatable letter mail.

Now the Postal Service wants to bring those same efficiencies to the processing of flats mail, which includes newspapers, catalogs, magazines and other periodicals. "Our goal is to make flats mail processing as automated as letter mail processing is now," says John Rapp, senior vice president of Operations for the Postal Service.

Flats processing has moved from costly manual and mechanized distribution to new AFSM 100s, automated flat sorting machines that can process sizes up to 15"x12", up to 3/4" thick, and weighing up to 20 ounces. Five hundred and thirty four AFSM 100s have been deployed and the old FSM 881s they replaced will be removed

from operation by the end of fiscal year 2003. In the past two years, flats processing at plants has moved from 63 percent mechanized to 77 percent automated. Rapp also notes that flats productivity has improved by 91 percent during that time.

"For larger size flats we are upgrading the FSM 1000 with an optical character reader and high speed feeder. This will enable automation efficiencies for the full range of flat mail sizes. With added sort capacity, we have also moved flats processing from manual operations in smaller Post Offices to automated operations in our larger processing centers," says Rapp. "To reduce mail preparation costs, we are working to standardize our opening units and the way we distribute flats."

CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT

The Postal Service is looking at new equipment to increase efficiency in the near-term. Another key is to increase customer involvement. "We and our customers need to match makeup requirements to both of our processing needs," says Rapp.

It's critical that the amount of barcoded flats increase, he adds. Mailers need to move from 9-digit barcoding to 11-digit barcoding.

Changes in packaging and preparation also provide a way to reduce costs. "We want to develop mutually acceptable preparation and handling methods that can

drive down costs for both mailers and us," says Rapp.

How can mailers prepare mail so it can be fed into the AFSM 100 to take advantage of its increased throughput? Reducing the number of small bundles in the system is one way. Mailers now have the option to increase the minimum number of Standard Mail flats in a 5-digit bundle from 10 to 17. Preparing scheme sorts for flats, similar to those used for letters, also will help reduce the number of bundles or containers. "Reducing the number of bundles will also reduce mailers' preparation costs," Rapp adds.

Today, over 20 percent of delivery costs come from the time carriers spend manually casing flats which then have to be combined with letter mail that has already been sorted to delivery order.

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

The Postal Service's long-term vision includes a plan to test the feasibility of sequencing letters and flats into one package for each delivery point, called Delivery Point Packaging (DPP). The idea is to develop one machine that can sequence both flats and letters in delivery order.

USPS also will pursue a parallel research and development effort to automate flat sorting into delivery order, should DPP prove unfeasible. The Flats Sequencing System (FSS) will use a two-pass system to sort flats, similar to the Delivery Point Sequencing used for letter mail.

"We will weigh the costs and benefits of both systems and choose the technologies that work the best," Rapp says. "Whatever options we pursue or new equipment we purchase, we will involve our customers every step of the way to make sure any impacts on them are minimized. Together we can make this transformation successful." ■

AFSM-100 has boosted productivity significantly

We've got it!
A tool for SOHOs

Are you a small office/home office (SOHO) business owner looking for ways to save time and choose the right service for your business? The Postal Service has answers in *A Customer's Guide to Mailing.* It can help small businesses choose a service for mailing, calculate postage and address their mail correctly.

This publication, available in Post Offices everywhere, answers common questions about postal services. Using charts, illustrations, tips, and real-life examples to explain postal products and services, *A Customer's Guide to Mailing* provides solutions for different mailing situations.

A recent survey of 10,000 people conducted by the Gallup Organization found:

■ Over 90 percent of those surveyed found the guide to be "very useful" or "somewhat useful."

■ Eighty-seven percent said they were "very likely" or "likely" to use the guide to answer future questions.

In addition, *A Customer's Guide to Mailing* was recognized in the prestigious Society for Technical Communication Washington, DC, awards competition. The honors included a Merit Award in the Technical Art competition and a Distinguished Award in the Technical Publications competition.

Remember, the guide is available free at Post Offices, or it can be downloaded from the Postal Service website at *www.usps.com*. Customers who order stamps and other merchandise from The Postal Store online will receive a free copy. Also, look for a Spanish-language version, coming soon.

Get a copy and keep it handy. ■

A Customer's Guide to Mailing

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
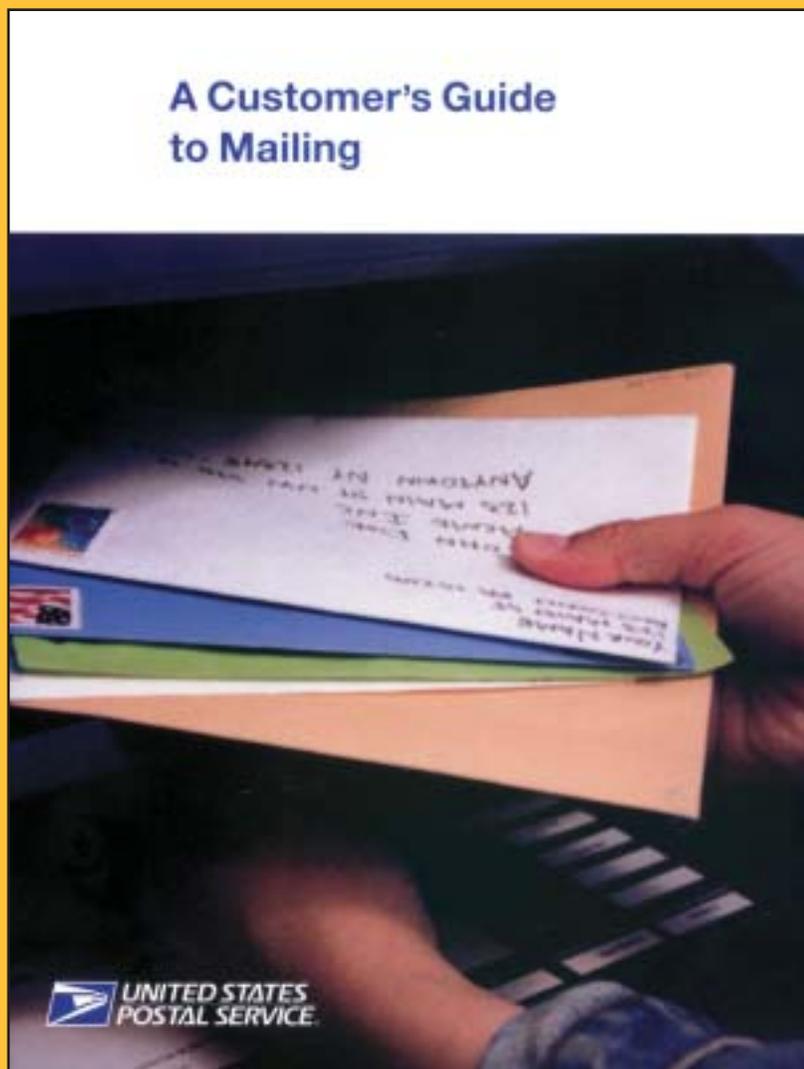
FYI

In response to the federal *Stamp Out Domestic Violence Act* of 2001, USPS will issue a *Stop Family Violence* semipostal stamp later this year. It will join the *Breast Cancer Research* and *Heroes of 2001* semipostals to provide funding for charitable causes. ■

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*Delivery times may vary depending on destination.
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SPRING IN THE TWIN CITIES

The Twin Cities Postal Customer Council will host its annual Spring Executive Luncheon May 7 in Minneapolis, MN. Keynote luncheon speaker will be Neal Denton, executive director of the Alliance of Nonprofit Mailers. He'll give his unique perspective, "View from the Hill." Motivational speaker Gabrielle Harmen-Kieffer also will be there. For more information on registration call Ken Gardner at 651-293-3100.

BOOKMARK THIS

Stop by often. The PCC website is *www.usps.com/nationalpcc*. All PCC members should bookmark the site and visit it regularly. Want to get updates automatically? Simply log on and e-mail *register@pcc.tteam.com*. Please note that the e-mail address you use to sign up will be the same one to which updates will be sent. Register now and stay informed.

PostalOne! manager
honored by mailing industry

The Postal Service manager responsible for guiding the development of *PostalOne!* has been honored by IDEAlliance with its highest award. Larry Goodman, manager of Business Customer Support Systems, is the 2003 recipient of the Donald A. Mumma Award.

The award is presented each year to the person who makes a significant contribution to advancing cooperation between USPS and the mailing industry. In presenting the award to Goodman, IDEAlliance said he was honored "for commitment to excellence in mailer-Postal Service communications, as a means to greater efficiency in mail preparation and processing."

PostalOne!, a suite of electronic services to improve mail acceptance and payment for business mailers, is an important part of the USPS Transformation Plan. ∎

The "OneCode" vision

"We believe there are opportunities to grow revenue through information technologies," says USPS Senior Vice President Charles Bravo, who heads the newly created Intelligent Mail and Address Quality group.

Bravo says his group's first goal is to develop a plan to standardize barcodes on envelopes. It's called the "OneCode" vision. "This initiative will give both businesses and consumers added value that has never been available before," he says.

The concept is to create one standardized, information-rich code for each type of mail that points to a suite of services, such as mail processing sortation, address changes and postage payment. Each code would be unique so both mailers and customers will be able to track mail at any point throughout the postal system. For instance, a code printed on a return envelope enclosed with a bill would allow a company to track a payment. The firm would not only know that the check's in the mail but when it would be arriving. Or, companies would know when to increase staffing at fulfillment houses after a mailing has been delivered.

In addition to adding value to the mail, the security of the mail would be increased since each piece of mail would have its own unique barcode, which is trackable.

The "OneCode" effort, at this point, is still a vision. It will take several years to make it a reality, says Bravo, and additional initiatives are part of the Intelligent Mail effort. "We're working to upgrade the infrastructure to provide near real-time information. We're talking about new hand-held scanners. We're looking into RFI (radio frequency identification) technology. But whatever steps we take, we'll keep sight of the customers' business needs," he says.

Intelligent Mail will play an important role in the future of the Postal Service. "This is where we want to go," says Bravo. ∎

FACTS ABOUT INTELLIGENT MAIL

- Information about the mail is viewed by many mailers as being almost as important as the mail itself.
- Products are more attractive in the marketplace by leveraging information to improve certainty of delivery.
- Intelligent Mail will reduce postal operating costs by providing information to improve management of both the network and operations.
- Validation and verification of postage payment will enhance revenue accuracy.
- Confirm is the first Intelligent Mail application.

FYI

The labeling lists contained within Module L of the *Domestic Mail Manual* are available electronically for customer purchase from the National Customer Support Center (NCSC). Electronic Labeling Lists provide an efficient method of updating mailers, presort services and shippers with current destination information needed to label trays, sacks and pallets of mail. The standards for mail preparation are becoming increasingly demanding.

Receiving updates electronically reduces the human error factor as well as the amount of time necessary to update each change in destination.

Electronic Labeling List subscribers benefit by receiving revised Module L labeling list data bi-monthly in ASCII text format that can be easily incorporated into mailers' software or database. This product is available for download via the Internet from the Rapid Information Bulletin Board System (RIBBS) or via CD.

Subscriptions are available for $60 per year for bi-monthly updates. To subscribe to the Electronic Labeling List product, contact the NCSC Labeling List Coordinator at 800-238-3150 ext. 4455 or send an e-mail to *LNCSC@email.usps.gov*. ∎

USPS SETS RECORD FOR ON-TIME DELIVERY

The Postal Service achieved its highest overnight service score for First-Class Mail delivery, breaking all previous records and setting a new bar for service in the nation's major metropolitan areas. Also, for the first time in its history, the number of addresses USPS delivers to in the United States has surpassed the 140 million mark.

"This record-breaking service score is remarkable in its own right," said S. David Fineman, chairman of the Postal Service Board of Governors, "but this exceptional level of service was realized during one of the worst winters in recent memory and when the number of addresses reached an all-time high."

Overnight First-Class Mail achieved the milestone 95 percent on-time delivery service performance score during Postal Quarter II, the period between Nov. 30, 2002, and Feb. 21, 2003. This is the fourth consecutive quarter First-Class Mail delivery hit the 94 percent and above benchmark.

First-Class Mail delivery performance is measured externally and independently by IBM's Business Consulting Services unit, using the External First-Class measurement system, or EXFC. It provides an independent assessment of the time it takes a piece of First-Class Mail, once its deposited into a collection box, to be delivered to one of the over 140 million American homes, businesses and Post Office boxes that are serviced six days a week. EXFC service performance scores are measured by testing 463 ZIP Code areas selected on the basis of geography and volume density from which 90 percent of First-Class Mail volume originates and 80 percent destinates. EXFC is not a system-wide measurement of all First-Class Mail performance.

SATISFIED CUSTOMERS

Ninety-three percent of households nationwide reported having a positive view of the Postal Service, rating overall performance as excellent, very good, and good, according to the most recent customer satisfaction survey.

This is the sixth consecutive quarter in which ratings of overall performance have reached 93 percent.

Customer Satisfaction Measurement is independently measured by The Gallup Organization which conducts surveys on a variety of postal issues and services from a customer's perspective. These include accuracy and consistency of delivery; retail clerk courtesy, knowledge, and responsiveness to customers; and telephone courtesy and accuracy of information provided, to name a few.

The Postal Service uses survey results to identify opportunities to improve customer satisfaction.

EDUCATION KIT AVAILABLE

USPS is helping to promote the legacy of the first African-American Supreme Court justice with the release of the Thurgood Marshall Education Kit. It's the first educational aid of its kind to focus on one person in the *Black Heritage* series of commemorative stamps. As an advocate of civil rights, desegregation and racial equality, Marshall has been an inspiration to educators for decades.

The *Thurgood Marshall* stamp — issued in January — attracted a lot of attention, especially for its educational value. USPS was able to deliver the educational kits to more than 125,000 classrooms, reaching more than 7 million students. To make the kit more accessible, it's now available online at *www.usps.com/communications/community/bhstamps.htm*.

USPS salutes the red, white and blue this month with *Old Glory* commemorative postage stamps.

European express

Global Express Mail (GEM) customers can look for better service and more detailed and accurate tracking in eight additional European countries. This is the result of an expanded agreement between the U.S. Postal Service and Royal Mail Group's pan-European parcel delivery company, General Logistics System.

"Reliable and secure service is at the core of all our service offerings," says James Wade, vice president, USPS International Business. "Global Express Mail is a good bargain for businesses and consumers looking for reliable delivery at an affordable price."

Initially, this agreement included Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Netherlands and Sweden. The expansion has added Belgium, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, San Marino, Switzerland and Vatican City.

For more information on USPS's international delivery options, go to *www.usps.com/global*. ■

Messages that stick

From your envelope to their refrigerator doors. Repositionable notes (RPNs) have sticking power. Direct mailers now can enhance their mailpieces using those little squares of colored notepaper with sticky adhesive on them.

Since the notes can be easily removed from the envelope, the recipient can place them somewhere handy — such as by the phone or the refrigerator, or on a mirror or a computer monitor — as a reminder.

"Research and live-mail testing have shown that through the use of repositionable notes advertisers can significantly increase their response rates by as much as 37 percent, making advertising mail an even more valuable medium," says Nicholas Barranca, vice president, Product Development.

Repositionable notes add value to mail. They:
- Catch a customer's attention quickly, increasing open and read rates.
- Make mail more actionable, increasing response rates.
- Require no additional postage.

Direct mailers can use this new feature for teaser copy, coupons, and telephone or Internet address reminders. The notes help to call attention to a particular offer in a catalog, on the Internet or at a retail location.

The new regulations are spelled out in the April 3 *Postal Bulletin*. RPNs can be applied to First-Class Mail and Standard Mail letter-size automation compatible mailpieces that meet certain qualifying requirements. Details also will be published in *Domestic Mail Manual* (DMM) C810 or go to *www.usps.com* for more information. ■