



POSTAL NEWS

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SUPPORT OUR TROOPS: DO THE RIGHT THING AND MAIL EARLY

WASHINGTON – The Postal Service, in cooperation with the Department of Defense (DoD), is reminding Americans mailing overseas to loved ones deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom to mail early for the Holidays. It is also reminding Americans to do the right thing. Patriotic acts of support by some well-intentioned individuals and groups risks creating bottlenecks in the military's mail stream and delaying mail delivery from the service member's loved ones.

Shortly after 9/11 and the anthrax attacks, the DoD suspended Operation Dear Abby and other mail addresses as "Any Service Member," "Any Soldier," "Any Marine, Sailor," etc. due to concerns relating to mail being introduced into the mail system from unknown sources. These programs remain suspended, yet many individuals have circumvented this prohibition by mailing bulk quantities of cards, letters and care packages addressed to individual service members. The DoD has requested that these loyal Americans instead extend their support through activities listed on a special military web site or by calling a toll-free number.

Do the Right Thing

The DoD recommends supporting the service member's family at home, or through other local programs, or by:

- visiting www.defendamerica.mil and clicking the "Support Our Troops" icon;
- visiting www.operationuplink.org; or,
- calling the Military Postal Service Agency's toll-free number 1(800) 810-6098 to identify other programs.

Mail Early

To insure delivery of holiday greeting cards and packages, the Postal Service recommends mailing by the following dates.

Items for delivery by Hanukkah should be mailed five days prior to the dates noted below.

Military Mail Addressed To Air/Army Post Office/Fleet Post Office (APO/FPO)	First Class Mail Letters/Cards	Priority Mail	Parcel Airlift Mail (PAL) ^{1/}	Space Available Mail (SAM) ^{2/}
APO/FPO AE ZIPs 090-092	Dec 11	Dec 11	Dec 4	Nov 28
APO/FPO AE ZIP 093	Dec 4	Dec 4	Nov 26	Nov 13
APO/FPO AE ZIPs 094-099	Dec 11	Dec 11	Dec 4	Nov 28
APO/FPO AA ZIP 340	Dec 11	Dec 11	Dec 4	Nov 28
APO/FPO AP ZIPs 962-966	Dec 11	Dec 11	Dec 4	Nov 28

^{1/} PAL: A special service that provides air transportation for parcels on a space-available basis, PAL is available for Parcel Post® not exceeding 30 lbs. in weight or 60 inches in length and girth combined. The applicable PAL fee must be paid in addition to the regular surface rate of postage for each addressed piece sent by PAL service.

^{2/} SAM: Parcels paid at Parcel Post® postage rates are first transported domestically by surface and then to overseas destinations by air on a space-available basis. The maximum weight and size limits are 15 lbs. and 60 inches in length and girth combined.

Addressing Tips

The DoD has requested that those who send mail use the servicemember'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, customers are reminded to place addresses on one side only. The return address in the upper left hand corner, and recipient's in the lower right portion.

Prohibitions

Generally speaking, in keeping with international agreements, there are specific restrictions for each five-digit military post office ZIP Code (APO/FPO). It is prohibited to mail the following to this region:

- obscene articles (prints, paintings, cards, films, videotapes, etc.);
- pork or pork by-products;
- any matter depicting nude or seminude persons, pornographic or sexual items, or nonauthorized political materials. Although religious materials contrary to the Islamic faith are prohibited in bulk quantities, items for the personal use of the addressee are permissible.

Restrictions are updated every other Thursday at www.usps.com. Customers may also obtain this information by calling 1-800-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. Since mid-March, more than 46 million pounds of mail -- more than one million pounds per week -- has been flown to the region.

The time to deliver varies depending on the category of mail and the country of destination. According to the Military Postal Service Agency (MPSA), depending on where the servicemember is located, letters and Priority Mail parcels to Afghanistan, Iraq and Kuwait normally take 10 to 15 days. 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.

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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.