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2004 HOLIDAY OUTLOOK: MAILING AND PACKAGING GUIDELINES

Between Thanksgiving and Christmas . . .

- 20 billion pieces of mail will be delivered.
- Of the 670 million pieces of mail collected, processed and delivered each day, 100 million represent cards, letters that are postmarked.
- Between Thanksgiving and Christmas, postmarks increase by 50%.
- Many Post Offices will be open late and on Sundays.
- The year's busiest mailing day will be Monday, December 20. Card and letter volume may triple to 280 million pieces to push the total to 850 million.
- Throughout the year, the daily average volume is 670 million pieces. If placed end-to-end, this would circle Earth three times.
- The busiest day's volume of 850 million pieces adds a fourth lap around the globe.
- Busiest delivery day is two days later.

Suggested Mailing Dates

During the peak of the Iraq war, military mail volume to the Persian Gulf region jumped more than 130 fold to a level of 400,000 pounds per day. Since the beginning of the operation, over 650 dedicated mail-only contract flights have been sent to the Persian Gulf and we continue to send a 747 freighter of APO/FPO mail to the region each day. Starting in November and continuing through the end of December, the number of dedicated contract flights each day has more than doubled.

Military Mail

- The recommended deadline for timely delivery for Parcel Air Lift, one of economical services, is four days away. Mail by **this Saturday, Dec. 4**
- Use Priority Mail until Monday, December 6 to APOs with ZIP Codes beginning with 093; others until December 11 via Priority; then check with your local Post Office for Military Express Mail Service availability.

Mailing within the U.S.

- Switch from Parcel Post to Priority Mail by Tuesday, Dec. 14.

For non-local mailings, switch from Priority to Express Mail on Tuesday, Dec. 21.

Use Express Mail for local distribution area through Dec. 23 [call 1-800 ASK-USPS (1-800 275-8777) or see usps.com]. USPS delivers Express Mail 365 days a year, including Dec. 25.

International Mail

- Global Air Mail to Africa, Central and South America, Dec. 6; to the rest of world, Dec.13
- Global Express. Dec. 11 (Africa, Europe, Central and South America) Dec. 17 all others. (*Canada: Dec.18).
- Global Express Guaranteed. Dec. 20* (*Canada: Dec. 21)

Increasing Network Capacities, Using Technology

- Increasing air cargo lift by nearly 40%.
- Increasing ground network by creating direct trucking routes between major metro cities.
- Thanks to advances in mail processing technology, the number of holiday hires will be minimal – about 10,000 nationwide. Today's automated sorters process 90% of handwritten addressed mail vs. 2% in 1997.

We're Quick, Easy, and Convenient.

- 82,000 locations to buy 2.9 billion holiday stamps; includes 38,000 Post Offices plus more than 21,000 supermarkets, convenience stores and drugstores and 16,000 ATMs, and 7,000 pieces of vending equipment in non postal locations.
- Automated Postal Centers (APCs) are virtual stand-alone Post Offices. This year, 2,500 APCs have been installed in Postal facilities. The APC does everything short of face-to-face transactions. APCs dispense the same dollar-bill sized sheet of First-Class Mail stamps currently available through ATMs. Using credit or debit cards, customers can mail packages weighing up to 70 pounds. The APC has a built-in electronic scale and allows customers to calculate and obtain postage strips in any amount for Express Mail, Priority Mail, First-Class Mail, and Parcel Post mailings. APCs also provide extensive mailing information along with ZIP Code lookup.
- usps.com – 24/7 Post Office never closes.
- 1-800-ASK-USPS for info.
- 1-800-STAMP-24 for stamps by mail.

Addressing Tips

- Write, type, or print complete address and return address.
- Don't know ZIP? Never guess.
- usps.com's ZIP Code locator
- Call 800-ASK-USPS

Packaging Tips

- When flying, do not transport wrapped gifts in carry on luggage. Instead, mail them in advance.
- Use a sturdy box to protect contents and cushion the contents.
- Be careful using previously mailed boxes: old addresses and barcodes cause confusion – mark through them completely.
- Remove batteries from toys. Wrap and place separately.
- When packaging powders, make sure they are in padded, sift-proof envelopes.
- If mailing framed pictures, disassemble and wrap the frame and glass separately.
- Enclose a card listing the contents along with the sender and recipient's address.
- Packing materials, boxes, padding materials are available at the Post Office.
- Use Click-N-Ship™ on usps.com to buy postage for packages and avoid trips to the Post Office.

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