



POSTAL NEWS

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POST OFFICE TO SANTA: WRITE BACK EARLY

THE NORTH POLE – You are six years old. Your Mom and Dad bring in the mail. They hand you a letter with a North Pole postmark. You open the letter. It's more than Santa's response to the wish list you sent him – it's a memory of a lifetime.

The Postal Service is helping you create and preserve this memory for your child. Here's how it works. Work with your child as they write their letter to Santa. Secretly craft a response from Santa and mail it in a second envelope to North Pole, Alaska Post Office. The Postal elves will postmark and mail Santa's response back to your child. To make this holiday activity especially enjoyable, follow these suggested guidelines.

- Beyond the traditional, "here's what I want" list, ask your child to write why the holiday season is special.
- Teach the child that proper addressing techniques include a return address -- otherwise Santa may not write back.
- After you take the letter and tell the child you'll mail it, keep it in a safe place until you can write Santa's response. If your child recognizes your handwriting, ask a friend or neighbor to rewrite it.
- To make Santa's response extra special, beyond reminding the child that Santa knows if they've been bad or good, add a positive line or two about the child's recent accomplishment that was not included in the letter to Santa.
- As a P.S., Santa might want to remind the child to be in bed at a certain hour, and hint that he and his reindeer appreciate holiday snacks left near the tree.
- Place Santa's response in a stamped envelope addressed to the child, and be sure to include the North Pole as the return address.
- Place this envelope into a larger, properly stamped, First-Class Mail or Priority Mail envelope and mail it to:
North Pole Christmas Cancellation
Postmaster
5400 Mail Trail
Fairbanks AK 99709-9998

The North Pole Post Office will postmark Santa's reply and place it in the mail stream.

- Make sure your camera's ready to record the excitement.
- Save your child's letter, Santa's response, and the photo.
Present them to your child years later in an album as a special gift.

North Pole postmark requests must arrive in Fairbanks before December 15, 2003. As it gets closer to the holidays, consider mailing requests via Express Mail.

Customers interested in obtaining the North Pole postmark on greeting cards should mail to the same address. Make sure that stamped envelopes have inserts. Empty envelopes can be damaged by high-speed sorting equipment.

The Postal Service does not maintain a national "Letters to Santa" program. In 1912, Postmaster General Fred H. Hitchcock first authorized postmasters to allow individuals or institutions to use letters addressed to "Santa Claus" for philanthropic purposes. Today many children and people in need benefit from the kindness of strangers during the Holidays.

The North Pole area, located just outside of Fairbanks, was homesteaded in 1944 and subdivided for developed to attract the toy industry to manufacture items as made at the North Pole. In 1953 the community became incorporated. A year later the North Pole Post Office first began issuing cancellations. Last year, North Pole cancellations totaled more than 600,000. Organizations and institutions, such as the North Pole Lions Club and the North Pole Middle School, volunteer to answer letters to Santa. More than 70,000 letters were responded to last year.