

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Postmaster General Sends Advice to Prevent ID Theft *Letter Sent to Every Postal Service Customer in Nation*

WASHINGTON, DC — The U.S. Postal Service begins delivering an important message from Postmaster General John Potter this week to every household in America. The letter provides advice to protect against identity theft.

Identity theft is one of America's fastest growing crimes, costing billions of dollars each year. Victims can spend months or years and thousands of dollars cleaning up their financial records and restoring their good names.

A recent Federal Trade Commission survey on identity theft determined that only 2 percent of all victims reported that the theft was connected to the mail. But even 2 percent is too much, Potter said.

"We will keep working to make the mail even more secure and strive to reduce that percentage to zero," he said. "Your identity is valuable. If someone steals it to commit fraudulent acts, it can affect every aspect of your life – your credit standing, your ability to buy a car or house, even get a job or medical care."

The Postal Service teamed up with the FTC to provide tips and tools to help Americans protect their identities and information on actions they can take if they become victims of identity theft. The FTC brochure, "Deter. Detect. Defend. Fighting Back Against Identity Theft," is included in the mailing.

Americans depend on the security of the mail and they trust the U.S. Postal Service, above all other federal agencies, to protect their privacy. The Postal Service has ranked first among all federal agencies for the past three years, according to national surveys by the Ponemon Institute.

In addition to educating consumers about identity theft, the Postal Service, through its Postal Inspection Service, and the FTC are leading the fight against this crime. The FTC and the Postal Service offer the following tips to help protect against identity theft:

- Check credit card statements, bank documents and financial reports every month for unauthorized activity.
- Protect Social Security numbers. Don't carry Social Security cards in wallets or write the number on a check.
- Don't provide personal information over the phone or the internet.
- Never click on links sent in unsolicited email messages.
- Keep personal information in a secure place at home.

More information on identity theft and information on reporting the crime can be found at these websites:

- U.S. Postal Inspection Service (usps.com/postalinspectors)
- The Federal Trade Commission (www.consumer.gov/idtheft)
- The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (www.fdic.gov/consumers)
- The Department of Justice (www.ojp.gov/topics/identitytheft.htm)

Please Note: For a copy of the Postmaster General's letter, please contact Joanne Veto at joanne.m.veto@usps.gov or 202-268-3118. Broadcast quality video and audio, photo stills and other media resources, visit the USPS Newsroom at www.usps.com/news.

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An independent federal agency, the U.S. Postal Service is the only delivery service that visits every address in the nation – 146 million homes and businesses. It has 37,000 retail locations and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to pay for operating expenses, not tax dollars. The Postal Service has annual revenues of \$75 billion and delivers nearly half the world's mail.