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USPS, APWU, Agree on Contract and Send Ratepayers the Bill – Commentary

On December 11, the American Postal Workers Union, representing about 200,000 mail processing and retail clerks, mechanics, vehicle drivers, custodians, and administrative employees, announced a tentative agreement with the Postal Service on a new three-year contract.

In its announcement, the union's president acclaimed the agreement as "great news" and applauding it for providing "annual wage increases, protection of full COLAs and no-layoff protections, new opportunities for career work, gains for part time flexibles and a host of other improvements." According to a more detailed summary of the agreement produced by the union, the agreement includes:

- Three wage increases of 1.3% each;
- Six semi-annual cost-of-living increases;
- Continuation of the no-layoff clause;
- An additional paid holiday, bringing the total to 11 annually;
- No increase in employee contributions to health plans;
- "Enhanced" pay scales, moving employees up in grade;
- New guarantees for part-time employees; and
- Additional conversion of non-career workers to career status.

If, as expected, the rank-and-file approve the agreement, it will be effective retroactively from last September 21 through September 20, 2024.

Irony

Ratepayers and commercial mail producers will find two characteristics to this development, the first being the glaring irony that apparently no-one in the upper ranks of the Postal Service sees or cares to acknowledge.

That the pattern of decades of generous labor contracts should continue even as the Postmaster General declaims the need for change in the face of \$160 billion in projected losses apparently didn't seem inappropriate or incongruous.

Similarly, it also seems to have escaped notice that the same PMG who's preaching to ratepayers about the need to do the difficult things that need to be done (read: raise rates and cut service) at the same time shows no interest in asking for such belt-tightening from the APWU or the other unions.

Moreover, despite repeated criticism of his predecessors for their shortcomings, in this case he's doing exactly what they did: accede to the demands of the unions for more money,

greater insulation from job disruption, and no responsibility for job performance.

Spending Ratepayers' Money

During the November MTAC meeting, the PMG alluded to the revenue represented by the 1.8-1.9% price increase in January 2022 that he chose not to seek. Based on FY 2021 total revenue, that would have been worth about \$1.425 billion. (That revenue was *not* lost, of course, only deferred until the next price increase.) Based on the National Payroll Summary for USPS Pay Period 25, (<https://www.prc.gov/dockets/document/120383>), the total raises in the contracts with just *two of the four* postal unions (clerks' and city carriers') are worth about \$1.455 billion.

Politics

The second characteristic of the agreement is its cynical implementation of power politics. Given his background and political acumen, observers shouldn't be surprised that PMG Louis DeJoy would agree to the reported contract terms.

Though he wears his private sector background proudly, and though he claims to be taking aggressive action to right the ship of USPS finances, his decidedly non-private sector approach to dealing with the postal unions is a strategy perhaps learned back in Brooklyn or in his early days in the trucking industry.

Despite the fact that postal labor represents the bulk of the agency's costs, DeJoy has done nothing to rein in such expenses. In fact, besides the terms of labor agreements reached on his watch, he's deliberately avoided anything that the unions would find objectionable.

The first example was his declaration that six-day delivery would be retained, even though few people outside Congress and the carriers' unions feel it essential. However, doing so – and foregoing the billions in potential savings that five-day delivery would have enabled – bought him peace with the carriers. Minimizing any pursuit of further plant consolidations and converting tens of thousands of non-career employees to career status – even as mail volume declines – also made the unions happy. Naturally, the notion of setting performance standards for craft employees remains anathema and so, as in past contracts, is reflected nowhere in the new agreement.

He'd stated early in his tenure that he wasn't going to "take any money out of employees' pockets." And if that didn't make it clear enough that the white flag was already raised,

choosing Doug Tulino – the HR chief who’s overseen past contract negotiations – as his Deputy PMG further signaled to the unions that they could rest easy knowing that their employer’s obsequious largesse would continue.

Of course, whether DeJoy’s truly a union guy or not, the simple fact is that all of this effort to placate the unions simply is a way to keep them from making political trouble for him.

Consider his political finesse: he’s been indifferent to cultivating a bipartisan relationship on The Hill, and has been less than solicitous when appearing at hearings. Yet he’s been able to insulate himself from Congressional threats simply by playing the two political parties off one another.

On one side, he has the stamp of the former president and, therefore, the devoted support of all of that former executive’s loyalists (or other partisans simply staying in line).

Across the aisle, where DeJoy’s political background earns him no friends, he’s neutralized any troublemakers by endearing himself to the postal labor unions. By pandering to those groups’ narcissism and greed, he’s assured their intervention on his behalf with similarly venal politicians keen to retain union contributions.

This cynically street-smart approach – leveraging alliances to serve your purposes – includes the corollary of unprincipled disregard for those who can’t hurt you – like postal ratepayers and the mailing industry. Applying this to the subject of

labor agreements means giving the unions what they want and keeping them on your side.

Passing the bill

Of course, this also means continuing the decades-old practice of handing ratepayers the bill for the deals to which the USPS and the unions agree. As is the inequitable custom, those who have to underwrite the negotiated costs have no voice in the discussions when the unions and USPS management talk contracts. Customers are involved only when it’s time to pay the higher postage costs that inevitably result.

The USPS described the agreement as “fair and responsible” in a posting on its daily *Link* but skipped any mention of the increase in cost it represents. Naturally, that cost isn’t a worry for postal executives – they’re not paying for it, just passing it along to somebody else.

Instead, their apparent job is to continue crying poor-mouth in financial statements and warning that if service isn’t cut and rates increased sharply twice a year the USPS can’t meet its obligations, let alone pay off \$160 billion in ten years.

How the USPS can further bloat its labor costs while simultaneously claiming the financial sky is falling defies reconciliation; looking at the new contract they’ve reached, some observers mind find such wailing a little disingenuous, if not outright hypocritical. But, then again, given who’s setting the course for the USPS, why should anyone be surprised?

Senate Committee Chair Has “Concerns” About BPM Transfer

In a December 7 letter to the Postal Regulatory Commission, Sen. Gary Peters (MI), chair of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, expressed his “concerns about the transfer of educational bound printed matter (BPM) from the market-dominant product category to the competitive product category.”

On March 26, the Postal Service had filed a request to transfer BPM parcels to the “competitive product list as a subcategory of Parcel Select called Parcel Select Bound Printed Matter.” In that filing, the USPS explained the history of the category and that BPM typically is used for “inexpensive, ground delivery of light- to moderate-weight packages containing books, catalogs, and similar printed matter to individuals and businesses.”

After explaining that BPM is not a monopoly product, that the USPS does not control the shipping of BPM-eligible matter, and that competitors will not be harmed, the agency made its only reference to educational materials:

“Some customers may argue that, as a product used often for the transport of books, BPM Parcels should be kept on the Market Dominant product list in the interest of ensuring a low-cost means of distributing educational, cultural, scientific, and informational material. In response, the Postal Service would point out that there is another Market Dominant product for this specific purpose, namely, Media Mail. Moreover, Media Mail is available to both retail and commercial customers, thereby better ensuring the distribution of educational, cultural, scientific, and informational material. BPM Parcels, in contrast, is available only to commercial customers and is largely used by large and sophisticated commercial firms in for-profit commerce.”

During the public comment period after the filing, the PRC was flooded with letters from teachers and others, likely

encouraged by producers of school books and publications, claiming that the loss of low BPM rates would imperil their receipt of various educational and classroom materials. This theme was echoed by Peters in his letter:

“... While it is essential for the Postal Service to move toward a sounder financial footing, a price increase on these educational mailings would do little to improve the Postal Service’s finances and would affect mail with educational value. I request that the Postal Regulatory Commission carefully consider the Postal Service’s request to transfer BPM to the competitive category and not support the reclassification of educational materials sent to pre-K-12 schools.

“The Postal Service noted, in response to congressional requests for information, that it does not have a clear understanding of how much revenue this change would raise. The Postal Service also noted that educational materials sent to pre-K-12 schools comprise only approximately 1.5% of all bound printed matter sent by consumers.

“The Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act requires the Postal Regulatory Commission to consider ‘the educational, cultural, scientific, and informational value to the recipient of mail matter’ in establishing rates and classes. The educational nature of some mailed matter sent as BPM, such as reading-list information booklets, warrants its exclusion from reclassification.

“...In addition, given the lack of information on the impact this change would have on revenue, this reclassification may have limited benefit. It is critical that any substantial change to BPM pricing is carefully and thoughtfully reviewed.”

What the USPS may have thought would be a relatively simple and straightforward request seems to be caught up in the concerns of an influential customer group and, judging by the letter, an influential senator as well. How the PRC responds to Peters’ strong hint remains to be seen.

Soaring CPI Cap Foreshadows Sharp Price Increase in 2022

Perhaps the most contradictory passage in Postmaster General Louis DeJoy's 10-Year Plan is on page 38, at the opening of the section about pricing, where he states:

"We will apply **judicious and prudent strategies to optimize revenues** and contribution within applicable regulatory constraints."

To many readers, it's difficult to reconcile being "judicious and prudent," which implies a degree of thoughtful restraint, with the goal to "optimize revenues" to the maximum allowed by law – getting every dime that's available, regardless of the consequences for those who are paying.

The first demonstration of the PMG's judiciousness was the midyear rate increase averaging over 6.8% (plus 2% more for "underwater products") that was implemented last August. Later, he and his loyalists on the Board of Governors announced that, apparently because annual price increases didn't yield revenue fast enough, semi-annual increases would be implemented beginning in July 2022.

Adding it up

During last November's meeting of the Mailers Technical Advisory Committee, Sharon Owens, USPS VP for Pricing and Costing explained some of the mechanics of the ratesetting process. One of her slides contained the official statement:

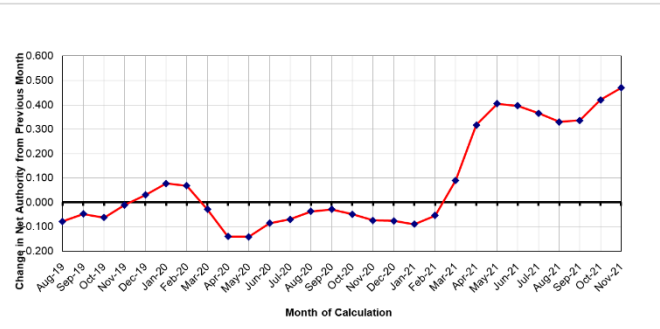
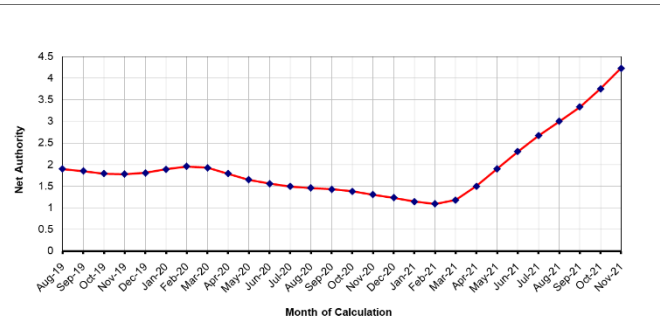
"The Postal Service intends to be **judicious** in the use of available pricing authority, but anticipates the prospect that, given our current financial condition, the price change for each Market Dominant class may be required to **apply most or all pricing authority**. July 2022 rate authority will include ten months of CPI plus retirement, density, and non-compensatory class authorities as determined by the Postal Regulatory Commission. The January rate authority will include six months of CPI, plus any unused rate authority. Subsequent July prices will include six months of CPI plus the retirement, density, and non-compensatory class authorities."

The combination of all four sources of revenue authority is adding up to a substantial figure, if current projections hold. Estimates in early November put the "density" authority at about 0.58% and the "retirement" authority around 1.07% (compared to the 4.5% and 1.062%, respectively, that was applied in the May 2021 filing).

However, "density" is based on the number of delivery points, the volume of mail, and the percent of institutional costs borne by market-dominant mail, data points that won't be finalized until later this month and then will be reported to the Postal Regulatory Commission; the final "retirement" factor also will be resolved by the end of this year. (The "non-compensatory" authority is a fixed 2%.) In addition, other over-cap increases on specific "underwater" classes and products had been ordered by the PRC in the past, and those would be applied as well.

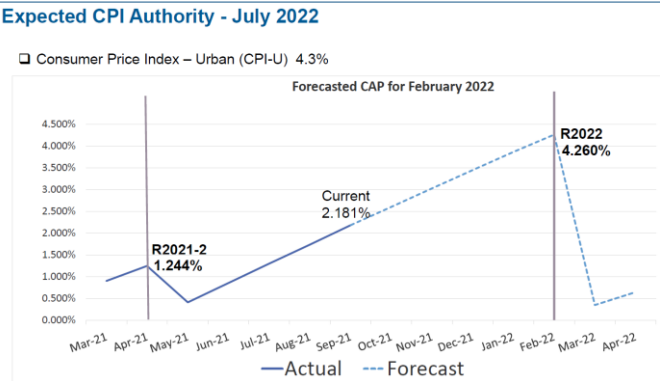
The CPI

Meanwhile, the CPI-based cap on market-dominant prices, which had been hovering around an annualized level below 2% since mid-2019, began shooting upward in May, and has climbed almost 2.4% just since last April, reaching an annualized 4.225% as of the November CPI – a level not seen since November 2008.



However, the formula to calculate an annualized CPI cap will not apply when the USPS files for its mid-2022 price increase because the filing – expected next April – will be less than a year after the preceding increase. Instead, a different formula will apply, but even that sets the cap at 3.264% as of the November CPI.

Owens noted at MTAC that an April filing would be based on the February CPI, meaning ten months' of CPI growth would be driving the calculated cap. If the current upward trend of the CPI cap continues – it's been rising at about 0.39% per month over the past seven months – the cap could reach a record-breaking annualized 5.392% by March – or about 4.431% using the less-than-annual formula (Owens had estimated it would be about 4.26%; see below.)



Adding the potential CPI-based increase to the other projected authorities (0.58% and 1.07%) means that the total rate increase facing ratepayers in July could be about 6.1% – or 8.1% for "underwater" classes and categories.

Unless you're Louis DeJoy, imposing rate increases totaling nearly 13% in less than a year doesn't seem either judicious or prudent.

International Organizations and Postal Policy Affect US Mailers

Ideally, a letter or package that's mailed in any country to any other country would move smoothly through the international postal system to its foreign destination – but that's never been entirely true; embargoes, trade wars, insurrections, and warfare have always interfered.

The UPU



First, a brief review of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) and what it does would be useful.

The UPU is a United Nations specialized agency that's older than the UN itself. The UPU was established in 1874 and is the second oldest international organization worldwide. With its headquarters in Berne, Switzerland, it now has 192 member countries. The UPU has coordinated and regulated international postal exchanges through all of its almost 150 years, serves as the primary forum for cooperation between postal sector players, and helps to ensure a truly universal network of up-to-date products and services.

Any UN member country may become a member of the UPU, and any UN non-member country may become a UPU member provided that its request is approved by at least two-thirds of the member countries of the UPU.

(Though the UPU now has 192 member countries, the United Nations has 193 members. The number of "countries" in the world is greater, with some places having "limited recognition," semi-independence, or disputed territorial sovereignty. States with "limited recognition" must route their mail through third parties, since the UPU does not allow direct deliveries.)

Payments between countries for delivery of international mail, documentation for postal shipments to other countries, postal customs forms, Advanced Electronic Data (AED in the US, EAD elsewhere) exchange protocols, and other requirements for moving mail internationally are set by the UPU agreements and treaties. The UPU also coordinates with the World Customs Organization (WCO) and with the International Air Transport Association (IATA), creating consistent regulations worldwide.

The UPU operates on a four-year cycle, and its new cycle starts in January 2022, following their quadrennial Congress in September 2021, which elected new leadership.

Next year, the new Director General (DG) and new Assistant Director General (ADG), elected at the Congress, take office and all the groups, committees, and other UPU bodies have changes in leadership and membership. The DG, ADG, committee chairs and members are from the member countries. Chairs of all these groups move to other countries with the new cycle. (The US tends to remain as a member of many groups.) The permanent staff, the UPU's International Bureau (IB), provides continuity and staff support. But, even with all that history, new problems are appearing.

The postal system

The system has been facing challenges, as an increasing number of countries impose stricter import controls and taxes. The international postal system generally has not done well in adjusting to these changes.

For example, Germany is considering different protocols for processing outbound packages in response to EAD responses from other countries than have been set by the UPU.

(A country can put a hold on any package from another country after receiving the EAD for that item. For example, the US mandates this in the STOP Act to restrict receiving items potentially containing illegal drugs.)

France is imposing its own Value Added Tax on all B2C items on January 1, 2022. (The UPU notice to its members is at https://mcusercontent.com/95d0c7665472b36283bfa894b/files/190e177c-0c85-00e5-ce55-a00ea235ae19/197_France_VAT_150_EUR.pdf.)

The EU sets minimum, not maximum, regulations and regulates customs – not taxes. Additionally, some UPU regulations have conflicts between their requirements that are not being resolved quickly.

The US

For the US, the State Department provides the officially designated representative to the UPU. Advising the State Department representatives to the UPU is an interagency group of relevant government departments and agencies, including Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the USPS.

Additionally, the State Department has a private-sector Advisory Committee on International Postal and Delivery (IPoDS). The State Department will be issuing a notice in the *Federal Register* regarding IPoDS. The State Department personnel for IPoDS are open to private sector involvement. IPoDS meeting are open to the public, who may speak at the meetings. Individuals, companies, or associations interested in international (i.e., mainly UPU) postal policy should consider attending.

Input

Mailer and consolidator input to the State Department is particularly important now.

The US is co-chair with Algeria of the UPU task force on opening the UPU to the broader postal sector. Depending on the actions of the UPU Extraordinary Congress to be held in 2023, the UPU may be more open to companies in the private sector, giving them access to all or part of the information, networks, and procedures now limited to postal operators and allowing them to participate in UPU activities.

While it is unlikely that a broad opening and reform will pass the Extraordinary Congress, no reform is likely without the strong backing of the US and advocacy by the private sector may be key to that happening.

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OIG Finds Inaccuracies in USPS Delayed Mail Data

For an agency that regularly publicizes its service performance, the Postal Service seems to have internal problems in tracking and reporting mail that's delayed – and, presumably, not meeting established service standards.

As detailed in an audit report released December 10 by the Postal Service's Office of Inspector General, *Capping Report of Mail Operations and Delayed Mail at Select Processing and Distribution Centers*, the basic problem isn't new: field management not being trained in, or not understanding how to use, data systems provided them by USPS upper management – or simply not using them at all.

Background

The OIG explained:

"The US Postal Service considers mail to be delayed when it is not processed in time to meet the established delivery day. Delayed mail can adversely affect Postal Service customers and harm the organization's brand.

"In the past, the Postal Service tracked delayed mail in the Mail Condition Reporting System. Each facility would perform daily delayed mail counts and estimate how much mail was actually delayed. Mail processing facilities used the Mail Condition Reporting System to report their daily mail count, providing the Postal Service with a standardized national view of mail conditions at processing facilities.

"In January 2019, the Postal Service launched the Mail Condition Visualization (MCV) system to replace the Mail Condition Reporting System and track mail conditions at processing facilities in an automated way. The MCV system provides near real-time visibility of a facility's on-hand volume, delayed inventory volume, and delayed dispatch volume. MCV uses data from mail processing machines and handheld devices, Surface Visibility scans, and mailer documentation to automatically calculate mail conditions. ...

"Specifically, the MCV system relies on machine reported scans to capture mail conditions to report delayed inventory, which include mailpieces that have not received their next expected processing operation scan by 6:59 a.m. for destinating final processing operations and by 6:00 a.m. for all other operations. However, we found that not all the mail reported as delayed inventory in the MCV system is actually delayed. Sometimes mail can be dispatched timely out of the facility but be counted as delayed inventory if designed mail flows are not followed.

"The MCV system expects mail to be processed in accordance with the designed mail flow. ... When mail is not processed on a last processing operation, the mailpieces do not receive their next expected processing scan and are thus counted as delayed inventory by the MCV system."

Findings

The OIG found that the actions of field managers was not what was expected, and that the resulting data they produced was inaccurate in describing delayed mail.

"Finding #1: Management did not Fully Understand nor Use Delayed Inventory Data

"From January 1, 2020, to March 31, 2021, we analyzed delayed inventory volumes from mail processing facilities nationwide and found there was over 183 billion mailpieces reported as delayed inventory. However, P&DC management did not know the causes for the high amounts of delayed inventory because they did not fully understand how delayed inventories were calculated. P&DC management also did not fully understand that when mail isn't processed in accordance with the designed mail flow, it can be counted as delayed inventory.

"P&DC management was more concerned about whether mail was actually delayed and remaining on-hand at the facility. We found that P&DC management at the eight sites we visited were performing daily counts of delayed mail to determine how much mail was not processed in time to meet its established delivery date. We also reached out to an additional 19 P&DCs throughout the country to determine if they were performing daily counts of delayed mail. Management at all those facilities stated they were completing daily delayed mail counts in part because they felt the delayed inventory numbers reported in the MCV system were not reliable as they did not match actual delayed mail volumes in the facility.

"P&DC management tried to reconcile the differences between the delayed inventory reported in the MCV system and their delayed mail counts at the facility but were unable to do so, because delayed inventory includes more than just delayed mail that remains on-hand at a facility. Mail can be counted as delayed inventory if designed mail flows are not being followed and last processing operations are not completed. In addition, delayed inventory can be reported in the MCV system for up to five days, which contributes to high daily delayed inventory numbers. ...

"According to the Informed Visibility Decision Analysis Report, daily delayed mail counts were supposed to end when the Mail Condition Reporting System was replaced with the MCV system. Daily delayed mail counts were costly and lacked precision since they required an employee to visually observe on-hand inventory. The process also relied on the accuracy of the observer and could lead to imprecise mail counts. The Postal Service estimated this process took an average of three hours per facility per day and projected annual cost savings through eliminating delayed mail counts of \$9.4 and \$9.6 million for FYs 2020 and 2021, respectively.

"Postal Service headquarters management believes they have been able to reduce the workhours used for the delayed mail counts. They also stated P&DC management has the discretion to perform delayed mail counts to validate delayed inventory numbers in the MCV system. However, since P&DC management is still relying on daily delayed mail counts due to the large discrepancies between the delayed inventory and delayed mail count numbers, workhour savings forecasted in the Decision Analysis Report are not being fully realized.

"Finding #2: Mail not Processed as Designed was Counted as Delayed Inventory

"We found that none of the eight P&DCs always processed mail as designed; rather, the facilities did not process some mail on a last processing operation before dispatching the mail out of the facility. P&DC management stated they were not aware that dispatching mail before its run on a last processing operation could lead to mail being counted as delayed inventory. P&DC management decided not to process mail on last processing operations in order to address the following issues: To expedite the dispatch of mail to Postal Service units and meet service for mail that arrived late to the P&DC; For smaller Postal Service units that did not have a lot of mail volume; For high-density caller services mail that did not need further processing.

"When mail was not processed on a last processing operation, the mailpieces did not receive their next expected processing scan and were counted as delayed inventory by the MCV system. Postal Service headquarters management stated there are certain situations where mail can be dispatched off an operation that is not a last processing operation. However, when a last processing operation is not completed, the MCV system evaluates the CIN codes for each bin the mail is sorted to and determines if additional processing should occur for those pieces. We found the CIN codes used were expecting additional processing, and when it didn't occur, mail was dispatched out of the facility without the expected scans and counted as delayed inventory in MCV. At the

sites we visited, P&DC management was not aware the CIN codes being used did not remove the mail from being counted as delayed inventory. ...

“When last processing operations are not used and the appropriate CIN codes are not used to remove mail from a delayed inventory condition, data integrity becomes an issue because management cannot validate the accuracy and completeness of the data. P&DC management was unable to rely on the data to determine if there were actual delayed mail conditions at the facility and, as a result, did not use the MCV data to measure their performance and make operational decisions.”

Recommendations and responses

The OIG recommended that senior USPS management:

- “... provide additional training to management with an emphasis on how local processing management should use Mail Condition Visualization reports to identify root causes for delayed inventory to provide a more accurate representation of mail conditions at the facility.
- “...develop supplemental guidance for local management reiterating that mail should be finalized on a last processing operation.
- “...coordinate with management to determine if Content Identification Number codes need to be changed or added for situations where the designed mail flow does not correctly finalize mail that is not processed on a last processing operation, so that mail is not counted as delayed inventory.”

As expected, “management disagreed with the recommendations” of the OIG and offered rebuttals to the findings:

“Management stated that MCV is designed with the assumption that mail is processed in the most efficient operations. They acknowledged that there are situations where alternate mail flows are used to process mail to ensure timely delivery, but MCV reporting those pieces as delayed is not a point of failure. In addition, management stated that the manual daily count, which MCV replaced, was imprecise and the MCV-calculated data are more accurate. Management also disagreed that local management did not fully understand or use delayed inventory data.

In addition, senior USPS management rebutted that

“... robust MCV training is already being provided, adding that there are also documentation and videos available for mail processing personnel regarding MCV that provide insight into how to identify root causes of delayed inventory. Management also stated that there is daily communication regarding MCV and delays.

“... there are legitimate reasons why local management may not finalize mail on a last processing operation, and timely delivery of the mail takes precedence over accurate reporting.

“... it is not practical in most cases to use separate CINs for mailpieces that will not be processed on a non-last processing operation because mailpieces are typically mixed and running them on a separate machine would add unreasonable costs to the process.”

The OIG stated that it considers management’s comments “nonresponsive” and will pursue its recommendations “through the formal audit resolution process.” For observers, the audit suggests yet another reason to doubt the accuracy of USPS data about service performance.

Mailers Question Industry Connect Dashboard Accuracy

The Postal Service recently introduced an Industry Connect Dashboard to offer commercial ratepayers a view of conditions at mail processing facilities. However, the information shown on the site may not be accurate, based on the initial review of one commercial mailer who’s compared it to data from other sources:

“To assist the industry and provide a view into potential delays in FAST appointment unloads or processing delays, the USPS has developed the Industry Connect Dashboard. This was a great step forward to provide the industry a view into the postal network ... if it only reported accurately!

“After sitting in on FAST user group meetings, it’s a known problem that the person receiving the loads on the dock at a postal facility commonly records the arrival time as the same time as the start of the unload. If this practices continues, it basically shows no delays and is just not a true picture of reality.

“The industry also has reported to the USPS that the time conversion reflected in FAST output is different than the time being reported in Informed Visibility. For example, if the Dashboard is pulling data from IV, a truck that has been sitting at a facility for three hours is only reported as being there for two hours. The two-hour point is the report/don’t report threshold. The USPS has been asked numerous times where the data reported on the Dashboard comes from but has yet to respond.

“During private industry meetings, logistics companies and commercial mailers report delays that aren’t reflected by the USPS Dashboard. For example, during one such meeting recently, participants reported unloading delays in Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Dayton but a concurrent check of the Dashboard revealed that it showed no delays at those facilities ... none.

“The FAST system allows appointments as early as 6am at some facilities. Upon arrival, however, the driver is told that the forklift driver doesn’t report for work until 7:30am and that the truck won’t be unloaded until 8am – two hours after the scheduled appointment in FAST. However, because FAST and IV report

different times, the Dashboard will indicate only a *one* hour delay. As of the last FAST user group meeting on December 15, callers were told by the USPS that all postal facilities have been updated – yet there still appears to be a disconnect between what’s shown in FAST and the reality at facilities.

“Another disconnect: for over a week, there’s been a reduction in transactional mail scan events. Though normally 98-99% of the mail would have been scanned within a five-day period, that’s fallen to only 85% in a *ten-day* period. This is occurring in a specific area of the country but, though this apparent delay in processing has been validated by numerous people who review and track scan events, it isn’t being reported on the new Dashboard.

“The effort to develop and meet industry requests for reporting is appreciated, but the USPS must drive reports with accurate data, or there’s no value to what’s being reported.”

Not news

Unfortunately, this isn’t the first instance of Postal Service data being inconsistent with reality. As has been reported previously, commercial mailers and logistics companies have found delays in unloading, processing, or delivery that are not reflected by related information produced by the USPS. Inaccuracies in data development, reporting, or usage have similarly been found by the Postal Service’s Office of Inspector General.

Given the agency’s campaign to promote the Postmaster General’s 10-Year Plan and create the appearance of steadily improving service, it would be easy to connect that effort to data reporting that generally shows USPS performance as better than what commercial mailers and logistics companies have experienced. Whether that is, in fact, the motivation or whether inaccurate USPS data is attributable simply to unresolved system issues or inadequate personnel training, the result is the same: a growing industry distrust of what the Postal Service reports.

Miscellany

Saber rattling

Should the Senate confirm the two recent nominees for seats on the USPS Board of Governors and thus make the *current* president's selectees the majority, speculation has been that the resulting loss of majority support for PMG Louis DeJoy could threaten his job.

As reported by *Politico*, anticipating such a possibility, Rep. James Comer (KY 1st) warned that he would withdraw support for the bi-partisan postal reform bill now being considered by the House if efforts emerged to oust DeJoy, a fellow partisan loyalist. Though the House majority could pass the bill – if it's ever brought to the floor – even without the votes of Comer and his allies, the Senate is evenly split and cross-aisle support for the bill could be essential – if it gets there.

Looking ahead to a possible shift of majority control in Congress after the 2022 elections, irritating Comer could have an impact on USPS issues as he likely would become chair of the House committee with postal oversight.

Postal traffic jam

Usually the traffic in and out of postal facilities isn't newsworthy, but most postal facilities aren't in residential neighborhoods, either. The private facility serving as the Postal Service's surface transfer center for the DC area is located about fifteen miles southeast of the city in Brandywine (MD) in what had been a rural area – until a townhouse development was built across the highway.

Starting last month, whether for scheduling or capacity issues, incoming trucks had to queue up along the road, causing traffic concerns for residents. Eventually, the county executive wrote a letter to the USPS chiding them for the situation, pointing out several code violations related to the facility's operation, and asking for over \$41,000 in compensation for traffic control necessitated by the truck congestion.



In response, the USPS simply stated that "The truck lines at the site and in the neighborhood has been resolved and we do not anticipate this situation will arise again. If there is a surge in the number of trucks in the future the site now has access to an overflow lot to minimize any disturbances."

UPS raising prices

As reported December 9 by *Modern Shipper*, UPS will increase prices for Sure Post items by an average of 5.9% effective December 26, though items between one and five pounds will see an increase of 6.2-6.5% depending on delivery zone. Delivery surcharges also will go up, by 44.7% (to \$3.40), and 39% (to \$4.10) for items going to "extended" delivery areas. UPS destination-enters Sure Post items at postal facilities for last mile delivery by the Postal Service. FedEx previously brought its similar service in-house, and Amazon is increasingly doing the same for its shipments.

Confirmation

On December 9, Michael Kubayanda resumed his role as Chair of the Postal Regulatory Commission.



Initially nominated on June 6, 2018, to complete the remainder of a six-year term expiring November 22, 2020, Kubayanda was unanimously elected to serve as vice-chairman in August 2019, serving in that role through the end of 2020. The president designated him as chairman of the commission in January 2021.

The president renominated him on October 19 for a full six-year term, expiring November 22, 2026, and he was confirmed by the Senate on December 7. Vice-chair Ashley Poling acted as chair during Kubayanda's two-week hiatus.

Before coming to the PRC, Kubayanda was a board member and privacy officer for a digital health startup, and before that he worked for the USPS Office of Inspector General, ending as director of government relations. Prior to joining the OIG, he served on the staff of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. Kubayanda holds degrees from Georgetown University, Northwestern University, and Ohio State University, and has studied at the Graduate Institute in Geneva, Switzerland.

Fake PMG

According to a December 10 release by the US Attorney's Office for Nebraska, a 56-year-old man was sentenced to seventeen months in prison after he was found guilty in September of four counts of impersonating a federal officer.

Between October 2016 and at least January 2017, the man went to multiple locations in the Omaha area claiming to be a postal inspector or Postmaster General. He wore identification that he made from USPS receipts and a video camera. On one of these occasions, he convinced a postal employee to accompany him to the Douglas County courthouse where he demanded to meet with a government official. In September 2020, the same man had gone to multiple locations in the Omaha area claiming to be a US Marshal, wearing a six-pointed star belt buckle and a body-worn video camera.

Fake stamps



As reported by Rochester's *WHEC*, an ongoing scam is fake postage stamps sold by sites like "uustamps.com" and "upssts.com," both registered in China. Though the perpetrators are out

of reach, selling fake stamps is a federal crime punishable by up to five years. Of course, people who buy counterfeit stamps have lost their money. The report noted that mailed items bearing the fakes likely will be returned because USPS equipment can spot the phonies.

Complaint dismissed

In a December 17 order, the Postal Regulatory Commission granted the Postal Service's motion to dismiss a complaint filed October 7 by attorneys general from twenty states and the District of Columbia. In their complaint, they alleged that the Postal Service violated statute by not seeking an advisory opinion from the PRC before implementing the Postmaster General's 10-Year Plan.

Specifically, the attorneys general had claimed that 39 USC 3661(b) requires that "[w]hen the Postal Service determines that there should be a change in the nature of postal services which will generally affect service on a nationwide or substantially nationwide basis," the agency must seek an advisory opinion from the PRC "within a reasonable time prior to the effective date of such proposal."

In response, the USPS disagreed that the statutory requirement applies, asserting that The Plan is only "an announcement of anticipated strategies that the Postal Service expects to pursue over the next several years" that "itself effects no changes."

In the end, the PRC concluded that

"Complainants and the Postal Service agree on the relevant facts but disagree on the question of whether the Postal Service violated 39 USC 3661(b) when it failed to request an advisory opinion on the entirety of the 10-Year Strategic Plan. Given that there are no facts in dispute, the only issue before the Commission is whether 39 USC 3661(b) required the Postal Service to request an advisory opinion from the Commission on the entirety of the 10-Year Strategic Plan. For the reasons explained in the body of this Order, the Commission concludes that a request for an advisory opinion was not required on the entirety of the 10-Year Strategic Plan. Based on the applicable standard of review, the Commission further concludes that the Complaint fails to raise any material issues of fact or law. Accordingly ... the Commission dismisses the Complaint."

Lawsuit settled

According to a December 17 statement by the plaintiffs, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Public Citizen Litigation Group, and the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund have reached a settlement with the Postal Service in *NAACP v. United States Postal Service*. The suit, which had been pending in US District Court for the District of Columbia, was filed in the summer of 2020 to challenge USPS "delivery delays and inadequate measures to ensure timely delivery of mail-in ballots."

Under the settlement, the Postal Service agreed "to meet with NAACP in the months before each national primary and general election through 2028 and to provide weekly reports on service performance during the six weeks leading up to general elections." The agency "also will issue guidance documents to address its plans for prioritizing the monitoring and timely delivery of election mail for the national general elections through 2028." The announcement noted that the "parties expect that these measures will be similar to the 'extraordinary measures' used in the weeks leading up to the 2020 general election."

Stamp fight continues

As reported by *Linn's Stamp News*, a years-long fight continues between a Massachusetts artist and the Postal Service over an image that had been rejected for the now-ended Customized Postage program.



Anatol Zukerman designed the stamp to protest a 2010 Supreme Court ruling that removed restrictions on political giving by corporations and unions. However, when he asked USPS contractor Zazzle Inc. to produce the stamps, it refused, saying the design was banned as political under the agency's rules. In turn, Zukerman and Charles Krause Reporting LLC, which owns a Washington gallery that displays political art, sued the USPS in 2015.

In 2019, a US District Court judge ruled that the USPS had the right to determine what could be depicted on Customized Postage stamps. When an appellate court later remanded the matter, the same judge ruled last November that "the USPS had violated Zukerman's First Amendment rights by rejecting his stamp design because of 'its political content.'" However, rather than specifying a remedy, the judge simply urged the sides to resolve their dispute. For Zukerman, the decision was "nothing but the empty declaration. So we appealed again," he said, adding that "the litigation will probably continue for another year."

Keep delivering

In the wake of fatal tornadoes that hit the Midwest in early December, Amazon is facing criticism for how its contracted delivery companies responded to drivers' safety concerns. According to text messages reported by *Bloomberg*, one driver contacted her boss reporting that tornado warning sirens were sounding and that she wanted to head back to the company terminal. In reply, the delivery company supervisor told the driver to keep delivering. As the exchange continued, the supervisor added

"Just keep delivering for now. We have to wait for word from Amazon. If we need to bring people back, the decision will ultimately be up to them. I will let you know if the situation changes at all. I'm talking with them now about it."

The driver persisted, asking

"How about for my own personal safety, I'm going to head back. Having alarms going off next to me and nothing but locked building around me isn't sheltering in place. That's wanting to turn this van into a casket."

However, the supervisor remained firm:

"If you decided to come back, that choice is yours. But I can tell you it won't be viewed as for your own safety. The safest practice is to stay exactly where you are. If you decide to return with your packages, it will be viewed as you refusing your route, which will ultimately end with you not having a job come tomorrow morning. The sirens are just a warning."

About an hour later, the tornado destroyed the nearby Amazon warehouse, in Edwardsville (IL), killing six workers.

All the Official Stuff

Federal Register

Postal Service

NOTICES

December 14: International Competitive Services Product and Price Changes; Correction, 70977.

December 15: Product Change [9]: Priority Mail Express and Priority Mail Negotiated Service Agreement, 71298; Priority Mail and First-Class Package Service Negotiated Service Agreement [3], 71298, 71298, 71299; Priority Mail Negotiated Service Agreement [5], 71297, 71297-71298, 71298, 71298-71299, 71299; Meeting; Sunshine Act, 71298; Privacy Act; Systems of Records [2], 71294-71297, 71299-71301.

December 17: Privacy Act; Systems of Records, 71679-71680.

PROPOSED RULES

[None].

FINAL RULES

December 10: Periodicals Pending Authorization Postage, 70382-70385.

Postal Regulatory Commission

NOTICES

December 7: New Postal Product [2], 69298, 69299.

December 9: New Postal Product, 70150.

December 10: New Postal Product, 70546-70547.

December 13: Inbound Competitive Multi-Service Agreements with Foreign Postal Operators, 70872.

December 14: New Postal Product, 71105-71106.

December 15: New Postal Product, 71293; Inbound Competitive Multi-Service Agreements with Foreign Postal Operators, 71293-71294.

December 17: Inbound Parcel Post (at Universal Postal Union Rates), 71678-71679.

December 20: Inbound Competitive Multi-Service Agreements with Foreign Postal Operators, 71933-71934.

PROPOSED RULES

November 30: Competitive Postal Products, 67882-67885.

December 1: Market Dominant Products, 68291-68292.

FINAL RULES

[None].

DMM Advisory

December 6: UPDATE 211: International Mail Service Updates Related to COVID-19.

December 8: International Service Suspension Notice – effective December 10, 2021.

December 8: International Service Resumption Notice – effective December 10, 2021.

Postal Bulletin (PB 22587, December 16)

- Effective **January 1**, Labeling Lists L009, L011, L012, L014, L015, L051, L201, L601, and L605 are revised to reflect changes in mail processing operations. Mailers are expected to label according to these revised lists for mailings inducted on or after the January 1, 2022, effective date through the February 28, 2022, expiration date.
- Effective **January 9**, DMM 286.1.1 and 604.4.6.3 are revised to clarify the First-Class Package Service – Commercial (FCPS-C) standards for enter and deposit. FCPS-C was originally a pre-sorted priced product and was later redefined as a single-piece priced product. In addition, the Postal Service will update the “Enter and Deposit” section of Quick Service Guide (QSG) 280.
- Effective **January 9**, DMM 703.1.6.11 is revised to reflect a change in the maximum allowed value of low-cost items for that type of product to be mailable at Nonprofit USPS Marketing Mail prices, as long as all other required conditions are met. ... Each year, the Internal Revenue Service determines the allowed value of a low-cost item and adjusts it for cost of living. For 2022, the allowed value of a low-cost item is \$11.70 or less. The value of a low-cost item is the item’s cost to the authorized nonprofit organization mailing the item or on whose behalf the item is mailed.
- Effective **December 16**, Publication 431, *Post Office Box Service and Caller Service Fee Groups*, is revised to include the changes noted.

A note to readers: *Mailers Hub News* no longer reprints the weekly press releases by the USPS, concurrently issued as *Industry Alerts*, alleging improved service performance, that in our editorial opinion present skewed and misleading information.

USPS Industry Alerts

December 6, 2021

Discontinuance of the Priority Mail Pre-Paid Flat Rate Stamped Envelope

The United States Postal Service has produced the Priority Mail Pre-Paid Flat Rate Stamped Envelope since 2003. This is a Priority Mail Flat Rate envelope with dimensions 12-1/2” x 9-1/2” (L x W) printed with a Priority Mail Stamp image. Orders and usage of the envelope have steadily declined over the past several years while production and fulfillment costs have continued to rise. The Postal Service will discontinue further production of the Priority Mail Pre-Paid Flat Rate Stamped Envelope. The Priority Mail Pre-Paid Flat Rate Stamped Envelope will remain available on the USPS.com/Postal Store until January 2022. Customers that currently use these envelopes are encouraged to place any desired orders before supplies are depleted. Customers that order the Priority Mail Pre-Paid Flat Rate Stamped Envelope will be directed to the Priority Mail Forever Pre-Paid Flat Rate Envelope that is available on USPS.com/Postal Store for future orders. The Priority Mail Forever Pre-Paid Flat Rate Envelope has Forever Postage applied to the envelope. The customer’s return address is printed in the upper left corner of the shipping label and USPS Tracking included. For questions regarding this change, please email Expeditedpackaging@usps.gov.

December 6, 2021

UPDATE: PostalOne System Release 54.0.0.0 - December 26, 2021

As previously advised, on Sunday, December 26, 2021, the United States Postal Service has scheduled software updates for PostalOne System Release 54.0.0.0 which includes January-Price Change-2022 content (effective January 9, 2022). Please reference the “updated” December 26, 2021 Pre-Release Notes (Change 2.0) document attached and also posted to PostalPro @ <https://postalpro.usps.com/december-26-2021-release-notes>. As referenced in the Document History, Change 2.0 modifications include: Release content that is delayed and now targeted for implementation on April 3, 2022 as detailed below: Section 4.2: Proposed Fees for Non-Standard Parcel Sizes;

Section 4.3: Proposed Dimensional Data Non-Compliance Fee; Inclusion of additional “existing” Postage Statements; Section 4.5: Proposed Updates for USPS Tracking Plus (“Note” Statement - Postage Statement Changes ; Release content targeted for a future release date); Section 4.9: Mail.XML Support for Certified Mail. **REMINDER:** PostalOne System Release 54.0.0.0 includes a new REQUIRED Mail.dat client. After implementation activities conclude, users should download Mail.dat client 54.0.0.0_PROD from the Business Customer Gateway (BCG) using the following path: Mailing Services → Electronic Data Exchange [Go to Service] → Mail.dat download (Windows 32-bit, Windows 64-bit or Solaris). All Business Service Administrators (BSAs) should forward this Industry Alert (as well as the attached Pre-Release Notes document) to their impacted stakeholders. During normal business hours (7:00 AM CT – 7:00 PM CT), please direct any inquiries or concerns to the Mailing and Shipping Solutions Center (MSSC) via eMail [MSSCAdmin@usps.gov] or telephone (877) 672-0007. Thank you.

December 6, 2021

Scheduled System Releases – Sunday, December 12, 2021

In support of the rollback of Time-Limited Price Change 2021 [effective Sunday, October 3, 2021 through Saturday, December 25, 2021], the United States Postal Service will implement software updates for the following systems: PostalOne System Release 53.2.0.0; Package Platform Release 2.8.0.0; Program Registration Release 22.4.0.0. PostalOne System Release 53.2.0.0: No NEW Mail.dat Client required. The December 12, 2021, Pre-Release Notes (Change 1.0) document is attached and also available via PostalPro @ [https://postalpro.usps.com/december-12-2021-\[RollbackofTime-LimitedPriceChange2021\]-release-notes](https://postalpro.usps.com/december-12-2021-[RollbackofTime-LimitedPriceChange2021]-release-notes). All Business Service Administrators (BSAs) should forward this Industry Alert (as well as the attached Pre-Release Notes document) to their impacted stakeholders. During normal business hours (7:00 AM CT – 7:00 PM CT), please direct any inquiries or concerns to the Mailing and Shipping Solutions Center (MSSC) via eMail [MSSCAdmin@usps.gov] or telephone (877) 672-0007. Thank you.

December 7, 2021

FAST Help Desk Update

The FAST Help Desk is back to accepting phone calls with a live agent. It is no longer necessary to wait to leave a message. Please refer to FAST Help Desk contact information below to make appointments. Hours of Operation: Business Hours Monday - Friday 7am to 7pm CST. FAST Contact Information: Phone: 877-569-6614 Option 2 during business hours, Option 3 outside business hours. Email Address: FAST@usps.gov.

December 8, 2021

COVID-19 CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS UPDATE – International Service Suspension Notice – Effective December 10, 2021

[See the December 8 listing for COVID-19-Related International Mail Service Disruptions in the Special Section.]

December 8, 2021

COVID-19 CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS UPDATE – International Service Resumption Notice – Effective December 10, 2021

[See the December 8 listing for COVID-19-Related International Mail Service Disruptions in the Special Section.]

December 13, 2021 (as revised December 14, 2021)

Holiday Hours – Business Mail Entry and MSSC Helpdesk

Holiday hours for mail acceptance at Business Mail Entry Units (BMEUs) will be as follows:

Christmas Eve 12/24 – Offices will be closed nationwide, while some may offer limited hours. Local hours of operation for the holiday will be posted at your BMEU no later than Wednesday, 12/15. **Note: If you plan to present a mailing on Christmas Eve, please communicate with your local BME to ensure staff will be available.

Christmas Day 12/25 – All offices will be closed nationwide.

New Year's Eve 12/31 – Offices will be open, while some may offer limited hours. Local hours of operation for the holiday will be posted at your BMEU no later than Wednesday 12/22.

New Year's Day 1/1 – Offices will be closed nationwide.

Regular acceptance office hours will resume on Monday, Dec. 27, and Monday, Jan. 3. The Mailing & Shipping Solutions Center (MSSC) will be open normal hours 7am-7pm CT on Friday the 12/24 and 12/31. It will be closed on Christmas Day 12/25 and New Years Day 1/1.

December 14, 2021

Now Available – Industry Connect Dashboard, via Business Customer Gateway (BCG)

This dashboard provides current information on conditions for USPS processing facilities. Users can select specific geographic regions or processing center types. Majority of information is refreshed each hour to provide the most current conditions. Access is available through BCG as part of Managed Services. Once Access is approved – Launch Report! The instructions can be found on PostalPro at: <https://postalpro.usps.com/industry-connect-dashboard-announcement>.

December 16, 2021

REMINDER: Service Type ID Table Updates for Ballot Mail and Political Mail

Based on industry feedback, the Service Type ID (STID) table available on PostalPro is being updated to include new STIDs for Ballot Mail and Political Mail that may be used when preparing mail for mailing on and after January 23, 2022.

Use of the appropriate STIDs allows for Informed Visibility® Mail Tracking & Reporting (IV-MTR) to identify mailpieces, with all expected service combinations, during mail processing. These new STIDs are only for use on Ballot Mail or Political Mail.

Ballot Mail is any Official Ballot mailed to or from authorized election officials.

Political Mail is any material mailed for campaign purposes by a registered political candidate, campaign committee, or committee of a political party, or political message mailing by a political action committee (PAC), super PAC, or other organization engaging in an effort to influence or drive voter mobilization.

NOTE: For other Election Mail (e.g., voter registration applications, polling place locations, absentee applications, sample ballots) use the appropriate STID for the mail class and ACS and IV-MTR services desired that are identified for First-Class Mail (page 2) or USPS Marketing Mail (page 4) of the STID Table. The Election Mail attribute in eDoc (electronic documentation) should be used to identify a mailing that contains any type of Election Mail.

Information on Informed Visibility Mail Tracking & Reporting can be found at: <https://postalpro.usps.com/InformedVisibility>. The current Service Type ID Table can be found at: <https://postalpro.usps.com/mailing/service-type-identifiers>. The updated Ballot Mail and Political Mail STID tables effective January 23, 2022, can be found below:

Service Type Identifier (STID) Table January 23, 2022

Political Mail						
Class of Mail	Address Correction Option	Basic or Nonautomation w/o IV [®]	Basic or Nonautomation with IV [®]	Full-Service w/o IV [®] MTR [®]	Full-Service with IV [®] MTR [®]	
First-Class Mail [®]	No Address Corrections	751	727	761	747	
	Manual Address Corrections **	752	756			
	OneCode ACS [®]	Address Service Requested Opt 1	753	757		
		Address Service Requested Opt 2	754	758		
		Change Service Requested Opt 1	755	759		
	Full-Service ACS [™]	Address Service Requested Opt 1			763	767
		Address Service Requested Opt 2			764	768
		Change Service Requested Opt 1			765	769
		Return Service Requested Opt 2			762	766
	USPS Marketing Mail [®]	No Address Corrections	771	728	773	748
Manual Address Corrections **		772	776			
OneCode ACS [®]		Address Service Requested Opt 1** §				
		Address Service Requested Opt 2** §				
		Change Service Requested Opt 1	775	770		
Full-Service ACS [™]		Address Service Requested Opt 1** §				
		Address Service Requested Opt 2** §				
		Change Service Requested Opt 1** §			774	781
		Return Service Requested Opt 2** §				
Traditional ACS [™]		Change Service Requested Opt 1** §	785	786		

§ ACS Green & Secure Option. Additional First-Class Mail Green & Secure STIDs are available when you sign up for Secure Destruction. For more information go to: <https://postalpro.usps.com/mailing/secure-destruction>
 § Return postage/fee will be charged for undeliverable mail that is returned to sender.
 * Informed Visibility® Mail Tracking & Reporting <https://postalpro.usps.com/InformedVisibility>
 ** Requires the printed text ancillary service endorsement. The option selected must not be printed with the endorsement.

Service Type Identifier (STID) Table January 23, 2022

Ballot Mail						
Class of Mail	Address Correction Option	Basic or Nonautomation with IV [®] MTR [®]	Full-Service with IV [®] MTR [®]			
First-Class Mail [®]	No Address Corrections	715	720			
	Manual Address Corrections **	716				
	OneCode ACS [®]	Address Service Requested Opt 1	717			
		Address Service Requested Opt 2	718			
		Change Service Requested Opt 1	719			
		Return Service Requested Opt 2	713			
	Full-Service ACS [™]	Address Service Requested Opt 1			722	
		Address Service Requested Opt 2			723	
		Change Service Requested Opt 1			724	
		Return Service Requested Opt 2			725	
USPS Marketing Mail [®]	No Address Corrections	735	741			
	Manual Address Corrections **	736				
	OneCode ACS [®]	Address Service Requested Opt 1** §	737			
		Address Service Requested Opt 2** §	738			
		Change Service Requested Opt 1** §	739			
		Return Service Requested Opt 2** §	714			
	Full-Service ACS [™]	Address Service Requested Opt 1** §			743	
		Address Service Requested Opt 2** §			744	
		Change Service Requested Opt 1** §			745	
		Return Service Requested Opt 2** §			746	
Traditional ACS [™]	Change Service Requested Opt 1** §	740				
	Return Service Requested Opt 2** §	726				
Ballot Returns	Return Ballot - First-Class Mail Reply Envelopes	777				
	Return Ballot - Business Reply Mail by ZIP Envelopes	778				
	Return Ballot - Permit Reply Mail by ZIP Envelopes	779				
	Return Ballot - UOCAVA	780				

§ ACS Green & Secure Option. Additional First-Class Mail Green & Secure STIDs are available when you sign up for Secure Destruction. For more information go to: <https://postalpro.usps.com/mailing/secure-destruction>
 § Postage and fees are charged for undeliverable mail that is returned to sender.
 * Informed Visibility® Mail Tracking & Reporting <https://postalpro.usps.com/InformedVisibility>
 ** Requires the printed text ancillary service endorsement. The option selected must not be printed with the endorsement.

December 17, 2021

New 2022 USPS Mailing Promotions Documents and 2022 Tactile, Sensory & Interactive Promotion Documents Update

We are excited to announce the release of the new promotions requirements guidebooks for 2022. The guidebooks have been simplified and streamlined for each of the six mailing promotions, and can be found on the “Promotions” PostalPro page at <https://postalpro.usps.com/promotions>. The promotion guidebooks provide a quick and easy way for users to access content for each promotion. Each guidebook contains promotion requirements information, content from the “General Participation Guide,” as well as a new look and feel. Key information regarding updated discounts, important dates, enrollment, eligibility, and more is accessible through new clickable links to facilitate finding content easier. With these improvements and enhanced visuals, the guidebooks clearly demonstrate the value the promotions can add to your mail. If you are looking for a specific guidebook containing promotion requirements, please click on the relevant PostalPro link. Tactile, Sensory & Interactive Promotion; Emerging and Advanced Technology Promotion; Informed Delivery Promotion – Coming Soon; Personalized Color Transpromo Promotion; Earned Value Promotion; Mobile Shopping Promotion. The 2022 Informed Delivery Guidebook with promotion requirements will follow soon. Please check for updates on PostalPro at <https://postalpro.usps.com/promotions>. Registration Opens for the 2022 Tactile, Sensory & Interactive Promotion: Leverage new developments in paper, ink, and other technologies to create a memorable multi-sensory experience for your customers with the 2022 Tactile, Sensory & Interactive (TSI) promotion. Updated requirements let you take advantage of these developments to create high value mailpieces and drive customer engagement. For 2022, these updates include First-Class Mail and two new technologies, Clean Release Cards and Zip Strips. In addition to opening the promotion to more mailers, the discount for TSI is increasing from 2% to 4%. Capitalize on these changes to make impressive mailpieces that stand out to your customers and capture their senses. Registration for the Tactile, Sensory & Interactive (TSI) Promotion opened on December 15, 2021. The Promotion Period runs from Feb 1, 2022, to July 31, 2022. To find out more about the 2022 Tactile, Sensory & Interactive Promotion, please visit the TSI PostalPro page here: <https://postalpro.usps.com/promotions/2022-tactile-sensory>.

Calendar

- January 11-12 – MTAC Meeting (virtual)
- January 18 – *Mailers Hub Webinar*
- February 15 – *Mailers Hub Webinar*
- March 15 – *Mailers Hub Webinar*
- April 5-6 – MTAC Meeting, USPS Headquarters

To register for any webinar, go to [MailersHubWebinars.com](https://mailershubwebinars.com)

- April 11-14 – ING Executive Networking Forum, Tucson (AZ)
- April 19 – *Mailers Hub Webinar*
- May 15-18 – National Postal Forum, Phoenix (AZ)
- July 26-27 – MTAC Meeting, USPS Headquarters
- October 25-26 – MTAC Meeting, USPS Headquarters

subscription, Mailers Hub subscribers get an annual consultation (up to one hour) from Brann & Isaacson, and a reduced rate for additional legal assistance. The points of contact at Brann & Isaacson are: Martin I. Eisenstein, meisenstein@brannlaw.com; David Swetnam-Burland, dsb@brannlaw.com; Stacy O. Stitham, [sstitham@brannlaw.com](mailto:ssstitham@brannlaw.com); Jamie Szal, jszal@brannlaw.com. They can also be reached by phone at (207) 786-3566.

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Special Section: DMM Advisories and USPS Industry Alerts Related to COVID-19

These service disruptions affect Priority Mail Express International (PMEI), Priority Mail International (PMI), First-Class Mail International (FCMI), First-Class Package International Service (FCPIS), International Priority Airmail (IPA), International Surface Air Lift (ISAL), and M-Bag items. Unless otherwise noted, service suspensions to a particular country do not affect delivery of military and diplomatic mail.

December 6, 2021, DMM Advisory: UPDATE 211: International Mail Service Updates Related to COVID-19

On December 6, 2021, Poste Maroc, the designated operator of Morocco, provided notification that, following the latest developments with COVID-19, and in order to limit its spread, the Moroccan authorities have decided to suspend international flights to and from Morocco from November 29 to December 13, 2021. This may result in delays in the collection, transport and delivery of inbound and outbound letter-post, parcel-post and EMS items.

December 8, 2021, DMM Advisory: International Service Suspension Notice – effective December 10, 2021

[Also issued as December 8, 2021, Industry Alert: COVID-19 CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS UPDATE – International Service Suspension Notice]

The Postal Service will temporarily suspend international mail acceptance for certain destinations due to service impacts related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Effective December 10, 2021, the Postal Service will suspend international mail acceptance to destinations where transportation is unavailable due to widespread cancellations and restrictions into the area. Customers are asked to refrain from mailing items addressed to the following country, until further notice: **Solomon Islands**. ... For already deposited items, other than Global Express Guarantee (GXG), Postal Service International Service Center (ISC) employees will endorse the items as “Mail Service Suspended —

Return to Sender” and then place them in the mail stream for return. Due to COVID-19, international shipping has been suspended to many countries. According to DMM 604.9.2.3, customers are entitled to a full refund of their postage costs when service to the country of destination is suspended. The detailed procedures to obtain refunds for Retail Postage, eVS, PC Postage, and BMEU entered mail can be found through the following link: <https://postalpro.usps.com/international-refunds>. The Postal Service is closely monitoring the situation and will continue to update customers until the situation returns to normal. Customers may visit our International Service Alerts page for the most up to date information: https://about.usps.com/newsroom/service-alerts/international/?utm_source=residential&utm_medium=link&utm_campaign=res_to_intl.

December 8, 2021, DMM Advisory: International Service Resumption Notice – effective December 10, 2021

[Also issued as December 8, 2021, Industry Alert: COVID-19 CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS UPDATE – International Service Resumption Notice]

Effective Friday, December 10, 2021, the Postal Service will resume acceptance of mail destined to the following: **Sudan**. ... The Postal Service is closely monitoring service impacts related to the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue to update customers until the situation returns to normal. Please visit our International Service Alerts page for the most up to date information: https://about.usps.com/newsroom/service-alerts/international/?utm_source=residential&utm_medium=link&utm_campaign=res_to_intl.
