

Five Ways To Protect Mail and Packages

For many of us, this season is a time to celebrate the holidays with family and friends. Unfortunately, thieves take advantage of the holidays to steal packages containing gifts for loved ones or supplies needed for holiday celebrations.

The *Postal Service*™ looks forward to delivering a great deal of holiday cheer along with more than 15 billion mail pieces. The *United States Postal Inspection Service*®, the federal law enforcement arm of the *Postal Service*, is working around-the-clock to keep your important shipments safe and prevent mail and parcel theft.

What can you do to ensure your gifts and cards are safe? Postal Inspectors are offering FIVE tips to help ensure your important packages reach their destination, and brighten the lives of friends and loved ones this holiday season.

1. Don't leave delivered mail and packages unattended. Just as you would not leave your wallets and purses on the front seat of an unlocked car overnight, mail and packages should not be left sitting in mailboxes or on front porches for any length of time.

2. Going out of town? Hold Mail at the local *Post Office*®. If you plan on going out of town or know you won't be able to check your mail for a few days, consider using the *Request Hold Mail* service on *USPS.com*®. Letters and packages will be held securely at the local *Post Office* until you pick them up or request delivery.

3. Plan ahead. Ship using *Hold for Pickup*. When shipping packages, you can choose the *Hold for Pickup* option and the recipients can collect the packages at their local *Post Office*. If you are expecting a package, you can redirect it to your local *Post Office* by selecting *Hold for Pickup* using *USPS Package Intercept*®.

4. Customize the delivery. If you know the package will not fit in your mailbox and you won't be home to receive it, you can authorize the carrier to leave it in a specified location. Visit *usps.com*, enter the tracking number and select *Delivery Instructions*.

5. Secure the shipment using *USPS Special Services*. *Signature Confirmation* helps ensure the package ends up in the right hands by requiring a signature at the time of delivery. For your most valuable packages, you can opt for *Registered Mail*® service. *Registered Mail* receives special handling from the time it's mailed until the time it's delivered, with documentation every step of the way.