



POSTAL NEWS

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U.S. Postal Service Announces Holiday Season Forecasts with New Gingerbread Houses Forever Stamps and Priority Mail Products *Postmaster General Predicts Double-Digit Percent Jump in Shipping Volume*

A high-resolution image of the stamp is available for media use only by emailing Lindsay.N.Richardson@usps.gov.

NEW YORK — The U.S. Postal Service kicked off the holiday season today with its improved Priority Mail products and new Gingerbread Houses Forever stamps. The Postal Service expects to process 545 million pieces of mail every day throughout this holiday season; totaling nearly 15 billion pieces of mail to be delivered between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve. Competitive package volume also is expected to increase by approximately 12 percent from last year to about 420 million packages during the 2013 holiday season.

The Postal Service is ready to deliver holiday greetings and gifts to more than 152 million addresses nationwide. The busiest mailing day this season is projected to be Monday, Dec. 16, when more than 600 million pieces of mail are expected to be processed. The same day, 6 million customers are expected to visit Post Offices nationwide.

The busiest delivery day for mail will be Wednesday, Dec. 18 and the busiest day for packages will be Thursday, Dec. 19.

This is the first holiday season that consumers and businesses can take advantage of the recently revamped Priority Mail, which now comes with free insurance, day-specific delivery and free tracking. With our low-cost Flat-Rate shipping product — which has no additional surcharges — the Postal Service

anticipates that its highly popular Priority Mail offerings will be very attractive to cost-conscious small businesses and holiday shippers.

Today, Patrick Donahoe, Postmaster General and CEO, along with Nagisa Manabe, Chief Marketing and Sales Officer, announced the 2013 holiday season mailing and shipping forecasts for the 2013 holiday season during a kick-off event in New York.

“The holidays are a special time of year for the U.S. Postal Service. We consider it a privilege to help spread holiday cheer by delivering billions of holiday greetings and packages to millions of homes and businesses around the country,” said Donahoe. “Our residential and business customers will experience improved Priority Mail service this year with new features that include enhanced tracking visibility.”

“We’re providing a compelling value proposition for holiday shippers with our improved Priority Mail for whatever you ship and wherever you plan to ship it,” said Manabe. “Our improved Priority Mail products, combined with the improved tracking visibility, convenience and affordability our customers expect, will help make the Postal Service an important resource to our customers during the busy holiday season.”

Consumers can avoid any holiday hassle by visiting usps.com — the Postal Service’s website that will help make mailing and shipping easier. Nearly 75 million customers will skip the trip to the Post Office altogether and take advantage of convenient online shipping. Click-N-Ship and other online services allow customers to print shipping labels, order free Priority Mail boxes, purchase postage and even request free next-day package pickup.

Holiday cheer has a stamp of its own: Gingerbread Houses

To kick off the holiday season and reignite America’s love for the gingerbread house, the Postal Service introduced limited-edition Gingerbread Houses Forever stamps today during a ceremony in the historic James A. Farley Post Office in New York City. At the event, which featured The Broadway Boys performing classic holiday songs, a life-size replica of one of the gingerbread houses pictured in the stamps was also unveiled. It will remain in the lobby of the Farley Post Office through Jan. 2, 2014, to continue the holiday cheer throughout the season.

“Just like sending holiday cards, building colorful gingerbread houses is a cherished annual tradition for many families,” said Manabe. “We hope the whimsical Gingerbread Houses stamps will add some holiday cheer to envelopes holding greeting cards and invitations this season,” added Manabe.

The new holiday Forever stamps sheet feature four different gingerbread houses set against a bright blue background. The gingerbread houses pictured in the stamp are decorated with sugary fruit slices for shingles, peppermint sticks for support beams and round, candy-coated chocolate doorknobs and holly berries. All of the houses in this stamp set were designed by gingerbread house architect Teresa Layman under the direction of stamp art director Derry Noyes and were photographed by stamp artist Sally Anderson-Bruce.

First-Day-of-Issue Postmark

Customers have 60 days to obtain the first-day-of-issue postmark by mail. They may purchase new stamps at local Post Offices, at The Postal Store website at usps.com/shop or by calling 800-STAMP-24. They should affix the stamps to envelopes of their choice, address the envelopes (to themselves or others), and place them in larger envelopes addressed to:

Gingerbread Houses Stamps
Special Cancellations
PO Box 92282
Washington, DC 20090-2282

After applying the first-day-of-issue postmark, the Postal Service will return the envelopes through the mail. There is no charge for the postmark up to a quantity of 50. For more than 50, the price is 5 cents each. All orders must be postmarked by Feb. 6.

First-Day Covers

The Postal Service also offers first-day covers for new stamp issues and Postal Service stationery items postmarked with the official first-day-of-issue cancellation. Each item has an individual catalog number and is offered in the quarterly *USA Philatelic* catalog, online at usps.com/shop or by calling 800-782-6724. Customers may request a free catalog by calling 800-782-6724 or writing to:

U.S. Postal Service
Catalog Request
PO Box 219014
Kansas City, MO 64121-9014

Related Products

There are six philatelic and related products available for this stamp issue:

- 688906, Press Sheet with Die Cuts, \$73.60 (print quantity of 2,500)
- 688908, Press Sheet without Die cuts, \$73.60 (print quantity of 2,500)
- 688910, Keepsake (Booklet & Digital Color Postmark Set), \$15.95
- 688916, First-Day Cover Set of 4, \$3.60
- 688921, Digital Color Postmark Set of 4, \$6.44
- 688930, Ceremony Program (Random Stamp), \$6.95

Mail-By Dates

To ensure that holiday mail and packages are delivered on time, the Postal Service recommends keeping the following mailing and shipping deadlines in mind:

- **Nov. 12** APO/FPO Military Standard Post
- **Dec. 2** Priority Mail International
- **Dec. 10** APO/FPO Military Priority Mail and First-Class Mail
- **Dec. 10** Priority Mail Express International
- **Dec. 14** Standard Post
- **Dec. 16** Global Express Guaranteed
- **Dec. 17** Priority Mail Express Military Service
- **Dec. 20** First-Class Mail
- **Dec. 21** Priority Mail
- **Dec. 23** Priority Mail Express

The dates listed above are the earliest deadlines for international and military mail. For a complete list of shipping deadlines, visit usps.com/shippingdates/.

For the best selection of stamps and related collectible products, please visit the official Postal Service Store on eBay at ebay.com/stamps.

For more information about Postal Service products and services, please visit us on the web at usps.com.

The Postal Service receives no tax dollars for operating expenses and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to fund its operations.

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For reporters interested in speaking with a regional Postal Service public relations professional, please go to <http://about.usps.com/news/media-contacts/usps-local-media-contacts.pdf>.

A self-supporting government enterprise, the U.S. Postal Service is the only delivery service that reaches every address in the nation: 152 million residences, businesses and Post Office Boxes. The Postal Service receives no tax dollars for operating expenses and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to

fund its operations. With more than 31,000 retail locations and the most frequently visited website in the federal government, *usps.com*, the Postal Service has annual revenue of more than \$65 billion and delivers nearly 40 percent of the world's mail. If it were a private-sector company, the U.S. Postal Service would rank 42nd in the 2012 Fortune 500. The Postal Service has been named the Most Trusted Government Agency for seven years and the fourth Most Trusted Business in the nation by the Ponemon Institute.

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