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A Little Common Sense Goes a Long Way for Happy Holidays *Package Restrictions and Safety Protocols Go Hand in Hand*



WASHINGTON, DC — Ensuring the safety of mail processing and delivery starts with you.

It's important to know how to properly ship all the gifts on your list, including what you can and can't send through the mail. Plan ahead to help prevent injuries to Postal Service employees, customers and even your gift recipients.

Simple preparation will also lessen the chance that your packages are returned to you because they don't follow shipping guidelines.

Shipping Restrictions

The Postal Service has rules in place to keep certain hazardous, restricted and perishable items out of the mail — both domestic and international. The regulations on shipping such items safely through the Postal Service can be found in [Publication 52, Hazardous, Restricted and Perishable Mail](#).

There are some items you **are not allowed to send** through the mail — better known as **prohibited items** — including:

- Liquor
- Ammunition
- Explosives
- Mercury (including items which contain mercury such as thermometers)
- Gasoline

Then there are those items that can be sent through the mail, but you must follow certain guidelines to do so — these are known as **restricted items**. The list below is not comprehensive, and customers are advised to check [Publication 52](#), or with a retail clerk at their local Post Office, for a complete list of restricted items:

- Alcohol (any kind, including hand sanitizer)
- Perfumes/colognes (they are generally made with alcohol)
- Aerosols
- Lithium metal batteries (nonrechargeable/rechargeable, used to power flashlights or laptops)

Retail clerks at any Post Office location are also available to help with information on how to properly ship a package.

Package Size and Weight Requirements

Did you know that there are size and weight restrictions for packages sent through the Postal Service? Unless you are using Priority Mail or Priority Mail Express services, the price you pay to ship items depends on the shape and weight of your package.

In some cases, oddly shaped packages, such as tubes, are charged a higher price because those pieces must be processed manually.

Packages sent domestically via the Postal Service must weigh no more than 70 pounds and can't measure more than 108 inches total in length and around the widest part of the package. There are also different standards for international and military shipments, based on the destination country. More information and specific restrictions for APO, FPO and DPO can be found on our [website](#). International restriction information can also be found on our [international page](#).

All packages must be large enough to hold the required delivery and return addresses, mailing labels and postage on the outside of the package.

Regardless of the contents, mail and packages weighing more than 10 ounces and/or that are more than a half-inch thick cannot be dropped into a collection box or left for a carrier to pick up if you're using stamps for postage. Instead, take them to a retail associate at your local Post Office location.

Reusing Boxes? Not So Fast!

It may be tempting to reuse some of those boxes you have sitting around the house, and while recycling is always a good idea, in this instance it isn't the wisest choice. Reused boxes aren't as sturdy as a new box and can weaken, become damaged or break open in transit.

If you do decide to reuse boxes, make sure any labels or markings are removed or completely covered over or crossed out, especially if the box you choose to reuse has labels or markings associated with hazardous, prohibited or restricted materials. Better yet, use the FREE Priority Mail or Priority Mail Express boxes. You can ship for one flat rate, with tracking and basic insurance included ([with some restrictions](#)). The boxes are available at any Post Office location or order them online* at [usps.com](#).

*Boxes are delivered within the U.S. with your regular mail, usually within 7 to 10 business days. Exclusions apply, for details and to order, visit <https://store.usps.com/store>.

Keeping Postal Service Employees Safe

The safety of our employees and the communities we serve is always a top priority. Following the tips below will not only help keep our carriers safe as they deliver your holiday gifts, but you and your family as well:

- NEVER overpack a box. Overpacking can cause the sides or the seams to bulge or break, as well as cause injury to postal employees.
- If you can't fit everything in one box, consider getting a larger box or send items in multiple shipments. Customers can get free Priority Mail and Priority Mail Express boxes, in a wide variety of sizes, at their local Post Office and online at [usps.com](#).

In and Around the House

Take care to clear any snow or ice on steps, sidewalks and driveways, and around your mailbox. Also make sure to salt the cleared areas to prevent refreezing.

Snow and ice aren't a problem where you live? Great! But that doesn't mean you don't have to look for outside hazards. Yard equipment, toys and yard trimmings on the lawn, walkways or steps can cause a tripping hazard or serious injury. More often than not, your mail carrier will have their hands full of packages and could miss seeing obstacles in their path. It only takes a few moments to make sure your yard and sidewalks are clear of hazards to keep everyone safe.

Furry Family

If you have a pet, you don't have to be told how much happiness they bring to our lives. Your dog or cat may even have better manners than some family members. But even the best-behaved pet can pose an unfortunate hazard to people they don't know.

More than 5,800 postal employees were attacked by dogs last year. Many attacks can be avoided if dog owners would take a few extra moments of precaution. The Postal Service participates in [National Dog Bite Awareness Week](#) every year and here are a few tips to keep you, your carrier and your dog safe during the holidays and year-round:

- If a carrier delivers mail or packages to your front door, place your dog in a separate room and close that door before opening the front door. Some dogs have burst through screen doors or plate-glass windows to get to visitors. Dog owners should keep the family pet secured.
- Parents should remind their children and other family members not to take mail directly from carriers in the presence of the family pet, as the dog may view the person handing mail to a family member as a threatening gesture.

The Postal Service places the safety of its employees as a top priority. If a carrier feels threatened by a dog, or if a dog is loose or unleashed, the owner may be asked to pick up their mail at their local Post Office until the carrier is assured the pet has been restrained. If a dog is roaming the neighborhood, the pet owner's neighbors also may be asked to pick up their mail at the area's Post Office location.

Additional holiday news and information, including all shipping deadlines, can be found at the Postal Service [Holiday Newsroom](#).

The Postal Service generally 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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Please Note: For U.S. Postal Service media resources, including broadcast quality video and audio and photo stills, visit the [USPS Newsroom](#). Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Pinterest](#), and [LinkedIn](#). Subscribe to the [USPS YouTube Channel](#) and like us on [Facebook](#). For more information about the Postal Service, visit [usps.com](#) and [facts.usps.com](#).

More USPS holiday news, including shipping deadlines and the North Pole postmark, can be found at [usps.com/holidaynews](#). For reporters interested in speaking with a regional Postal Service public relations professional, please go to [about.usps.com/newsroom/media-contacts/usps-local-media-contacts.pdf](#).