



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Nov. 12, 2021

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Send Your Packages Early This Holiday Season

Peak Season Means Extra Mail and Package Volumes

WASHINGTON, DC — There are many factors that go into creating your holiday plans. Do you stay home or go visiting? Do you send gifts or deliver them Santa-style to friends and loved ones?

If you're like many of us, no matter what happens, you will likely send at least one or two special gifts to people for the holidays. Regardless of how many packages and greetings you drop in the mail, it's always important to mail your gifts and cards early.

The 2020 holiday season was a record-setting year for the Postal Service. Specifically, 13 billion letters, cards and packages were processed and delivered under some of the most difficult circumstances we've faced in the past century.

For the 2021 peak season — the period between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day — the Postal Service will deliver more mail and packages to homes than any other shipper. It's anticipated that between 850 million and 950 million **packages** will be delivered for the holidays. The total number of letters, cards and packages processed and delivered is estimated to be more than 12 billion.

The Postal Service will expand Sunday delivery, beginning Nov. 28, to locations with high package volumes. USPS already delivers packages on Sundays in most major cities and expects to deliver more than 9.7 million packages each Sunday throughout the holiday season. Mail carriers will also deliver packages for an additional fee on Christmas Day in **select** locations.

The Postal Service plans all year for the peak holiday season. This year's preparations include leasing 7.5 million square feet of additional space across more than 40 annexes to handle the increase in the number of packages being mailed. The Postal Service is also currently hiring for more than 40,000 seasonal positions to help process and deliver the mail.

Since April, the Postal Service has installed 88 of 112 new package sorting machines, reflecting the "[Delivering for America](#)" plan's \$40 billion of planned investment over 10 years. Additionally, more than 50 machines that can sort large packages are expected to be up and running prior to December. The new machinery gives the Postal Service the capacity to process an additional 4.5 million packages each day.

New for This Year

As of Aug. 29, the cost of a Forever stamp increased to 58 cents from 55 cents. There are also **temporary price increases** in place through 12:01 a.m., Central Time, Dec. 26, on all retail and commercial domestic competitive parcels for some of our more-popular shipping products, which also includes military shipping — Priority Mail Express, Priority Mail, First-Class Package Service, Parcel Select, USPS Retail Ground and Parcel Return Service. International products are unaffected. These temporary rates will keep the Postal Service competitive while providing the agency with the revenue to cover extra costs in anticipation of peak-season volume surges similar to levels experienced in 2020.

Here are the temporary pricing increases for Priority Mail, Priority Mail Express, Parcel Select Ground and USPS Retail Ground and First-Class Package Service:

- Priority Mail and Priority Mail Express Flat Rate Boxes and Envelopes: 75 cents
- Zones 1-4, 0-10 pounds: 25 cents
- Zones 5-9, 0-10 pounds: 75 cents
- Zones 1-4, 11-20 pounds: \$1.50
- Zones 5-9, 11-20 pounds: \$3
- Zones 1-4, 21-70 pounds: \$2.50
- Zones 5-9, 21-70 pounds: \$5
- First-Class Package Service: 30 cents

A zone-pricing calculator can be found [online](#). A complete list of business products and prices is also available [online](#).

The temporary price adjustment is one part of “Delivering for America,” the Postal Service’s 10-year plan for achieving financial sustainability and service excellence, which calls for appropriate pricing initiatives. Even with the temporary increase, the Postal Service has some of the lowest mail postage rates in the industrialized world and continues to offer great values in shipping.

Busiest Mailing and Delivery Days

The busiest time of the year begins two weeks before Christmas. It’s expected that customer traffic at all Post Office locations will steadily increase beginning the week of Dec. 6. The week of Dec. 13-18 is anticipated to be the busiest mailing, shipping and delivery week. Additionally, the Postal Service predicts that nearly 2.3 billion pieces of First-Class Mail, including greeting cards and packages, will be processed and delivered the week of Dec. 13.

Skip the Trip and Ship Online

Consumers don’t have to leave home to ship their packages. They can visit [usps.com](#) for available at-home shipping options. It’s estimated nearly 500,000 consumers will use the [Click-N-Ship](#) feature and other online services on Dec. 14 to order free Priority Mail boxes, print shipping labels, purchase postage and request free next-day Package Pickup.

Dec. 19 is predicted to be the Postal Service’s busiest day **online** with more than 12.5 million consumers expected to visit [usps.com](#) for help shipping that special holiday gift. And [usps.com](#) is always open.

2021 Holiday Shipping Deadlines

The Postal Service recommends the following mailing and shipping deadlines for expected delivery by Dec. 25 to Air/Army Post Office/Fleet Post Office/Diplomatic Post Office (APO/FPO/DPO) and domestic addresses*:

- Dec. 9 — APO/FPO/DPO (all ZIP Codes) Priority Mail and First-Class Mail
- Dec. 15 — USPS Retail Ground service
- Dec. 16 — APO/FPO/DPO (**except ZIP Code 093**) USPS Priority Mail Express Military service
- Dec. 17 — First-Class Mail service (including greeting cards)
- Dec. 17 — First-Class packages (up to 15.99 ounces)
- Dec. 18 — Priority Mail service
- Dec. 23 — Priority Mail Express* service

Alaska to/from Continental U.S.

- Dec. 18 — First-Class Mail
- Dec. 18 — Priority Mail
- Dec. 21 — Priority Mail Express

Hawaii to/from mainland

- Dec. 17 — Priority Mail and First-Class Mail
- Dec. 21 — Priority Mail Express

*Not a guarantee, unless otherwise noted. Dates are for estimated delivery before Dec. 25. Actual delivery date may vary depending on origin, destination, Post Office acceptance date and time, and other conditions. Some restrictions apply. For Priority Mail Express shipments mailed Dec. 22 through Dec. 25, the money-back guarantee applies only if the shipment was not delivered, or delivery was not attempted, within two business days.

Delivering for the Military and Overseas

The Postal Service also processes mail for overseas Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of State (DoS) recipients. The DoD measures mail volumes in pounds not pieces, and USPS expects to process more than 12.6 million pounds of mail for APO/FPO/DPO destinations this holiday season.

More tips for a successful holiday mailing and shipping season:

- Use free Priority Mail Flat Rate boxes. They are available at Post Office locations or online at usps.com/freeboxes.
- Make it easy with the [Click-N-Ship](https://usps.com/ship) feature. You can create shipping labels and pay for postage online at usps.com/ship.
- Schedule a free Package Pickup when the carrier delivers your mail. It's free regardless of the number of packages. Pickups can be scheduled at usps.com/pickup.
- Mail and packages that weigh more than 10 ounces or are more than a half-inch thick and using stamps as postage cannot be dropped into a collection box or left for a carrier to pick up. Instead, take them to a local Post Office.

Additional news and information, including all domestic, international and military mailing and shipping deadlines, can be found on the Postal Service Holiday Newsroom at usps.com/holidaynews.

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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More USPS holiday news, including shipping deadlines and Santa mail, 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/news/media-contacts/usps-local-media-contacts.pdf