USPS Continuity of Operations Update

March 19, 2020

The Postal Service has developed localized continuity of operations plans that are employed in the case of emergencies to help ensure that the nation's postal system continues to function for the American people. With a longstanding history of quickly adapting its operational plans to changing conditions, the Postal Service maintains steady communications with mailers during natural disasters or other events that require emergency responses and advises residential customers, business mailers, and international mailers with regard to postal facility disruptions that may impact delivery in an affected area via its USPS Service Alerts webpage at: https://about.usps.com/newsroom/service-alerts/.

In the event they are required, the activation of localized continuity of operations plans depends on the specific effects of an emergency in an impacted area. Due to the variance in possibilities and factors, it would be impossible to predict what the effect of such emergencies would be on a specific customers' mailing prior to the event, but the planning enables us to continue or quickly reestablish mail operations in regions facing the impact of strong hurricanes, flooding, wildfires, etc., and they have been prepared to respond to pandemic-related circumstances as well. As a result, we recommend that customers refer to *USPS Service Alerts* for service-disruption updates. Another key component of our communications portion of USPS contingency plans remains the Industry Alert.

For those business mailers who utilize the Business Service Network (BSN), we encourage them to continue to maintain the line of communication with their representative on changes to the postal system. If a customer or mailing partner needs to shut down its operations due to the current situation, they should contact their BSN contact, Sales contact, or their local Business Mail Entry contact to discuss their plans. These local contacts will notify the Districts, Area, and Headquarters of any needed assistance or broader impacts.

The Postal Service continues to use its existing processes for many of the more common impacts customers are concerned about. Some questions that have been raised are:

- **How is USPS handling mail for closed businesses?**
  Mail on the delivery route is returned to the Delivery unit and will be held for 10 days under current policies. Customers can request a temporary hold for their mail up to 30 days. Caller Box customers should contact their local office to discuss how they will be handling the pickup of this volume. Any high volume customer will be contacted to discuss pickup options as well.
- **How is USPS delivering mail under shelter in place declarations?**
  The Postal Service is classified as an essential government service operation, which allows us to continue operations.
- **How safe is the mail and mail transport equipment?**
  Current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) guidance continues to indicate there is no evidence the virus is spreading through the mail. According to WHO, the likelihood of an infected person contaminating commercial goods is low, and the risk of catching the virus from a package that has been moved, traveled, and exposed to different conditions and temperatures is also low. This guidance remains true for mail transport equipment.

- **Is the USPS experiencing capacity issues due to reduced airline routes?**
  There are no domestic air capacity issues at this time. The Postal Service continues to work with International air carriers and contract air carriers to keep mail moving.

Industry and commercial customers can email questions or concerns about COVID-19 and the mail to industryfeedback@usps.gov with COVID-19 in the subject line. Mailers can also sign up for Industry Alerts at industryfeedback@usps.gov

For more information, see the USPS Coronavirus Statement at about.usps.com/newsroom.