



## 2020 U.S. POSTAL SERVICE ELECTION MAIL PREPAREDNESS EFFORTS

### FACT SHEET

#### BACKGROUND

The United States Postal Service's number one priority between now and the November election is the secure, on time delivery of the nation's Election Mail.

In August, the Postmaster General committed to ensuring that additional resources would be made available in all areas of operations beginning October 1 to ensure the timely delivery and expeditious handling of the increased volume of Election Mail.

The Postmaster General requested the issuance of an internal directive, effective October 1, to authorize and instruct the use of these additional resources to ensure that all Election Mail is prioritized and delivered securely and on-time. These additional resources go beyond the significant resources already dedicated to Election Mail which were specified in an earlier directive issued on September 21, and a stand-up talk to Postal Service employees issued on September 24.

The information provided below is illustrative but not exhaustive of the operational readiness measures the Postal Service has implemented ahead of the November election.

#### SEPTEMBER 25 DIRECTIVE ALLOCATING ADDITIONAL RESOURCES BEGINNING OCTOBER 1

##### Processing of Election Mail: Ensuring Election Mail Moves Expeditiously

The September 25 directive outlines additional processing resources that are authorized and instructed to be used beginning October 1 to ensure that Election Mail stays current and moving through the Postal Service's network. This includes, but is not limited to, the resources mentioned below:

- Election Mail entered as Marketing Mail should be advanced ahead of all other Marketing Mail and processed expeditiously to the extent feasible so that it is generally delivered in line with First-Class Mail delivery standards.
- Processing windows on letter and flat sorting equipment should be expanded as necessary to ensure that all Election Mail received prior to the First-Class Mail Critical Entry Time is processed that same day.
- To the extent possible, Election Mail received after the First Class Mail Critical Entry Time should be processed and advanced as if it arrived prior to the First Class Mail Critical Entry Time, unless doing so would disrupt on-time service for Election Mail received prior to the First Class Mail Critical Time Entry.

- Processing windows for cancellation operations should be expanded to ensure all collected ballots are processed in a timely manner. Each cancellation site will have expanded processing windows for the week prior to and including Election Day.

### **Transportation: Ensuring Election Mail Reaches Its Destination**

- Extra transportation resources are authorized and instructed to be used to ensure that Election Mail reaches its intended destination in a timely manner.
- This use of extra transportation includes, but is not limited to, extra trips from all points of processing and delivery (e.g., retail units and plants), as necessary to connect Election Mail to its intended destination or the next stage in Postal Service processing.

### **Extra Delivery/Collections: Getting Completed Ballots to Appropriate Election Officials**

- Extra delivery and collection should be used to ensure, to the best of our ability, that completed ballots entered on Election Day reach the appropriate election official by the state's designated deadline on Election Day.
- This includes, but is not limited to, early collections the week before Election Day to ensure all collected ballots are processed in a timely manner, and delivery of ballots found in collections on Election Day to election boards within states requiring that ballots be returned by a designated time on Election Day.

### **Overtime: Staffing Teams to Deliver on Election Mail**

- Overtime is authorized and instructed to be used to support these additional resources and the completion of the additional work, as needed.

### **Expedited Handling, Extra Deliveries, Special Pick-Ups**

- To further support the timely delivery of Election Mail, and consistent with practices in past election cycles, the use of extraordinary measures beyond normal course of operations is authorized and expected to be executed by local management between October 26 and November 24 to accelerate the delivery of ballots, when the Postal Service is able to identify the mailpiece as a ballot.
- These extraordinary measures include, but are not limited to, expedited handling, extra deliveries, and special pickups as used in past elections, to connect blank ballots entered by election officials to voters or completed ballots returned by voters entered close to or on Election Day to their intended destination (e.g., Priority Mail Express, Sunday deliveries, special deliveries, running collected ballots to Boards of Elections on Election Day, etc.).

## **OPERATIONAL READINESS MEASURES**

*The following items are existing and expanded practices utilized by the Postal Service to ensure operational readiness*

- *Ballot Ambassadors.* In August, the Postmaster General expanded the Postal Service's national Election Mail Task Force to include union leadership and the leadership of Postal Service management associations. This expanded task force is leading the effort to set up localized task forces, including "ballot ambassadors". The ballot ambassadors will allow strong information sharing across the country as local teams share their findings with other local teams on a regular basis.
- *Coordination with State and Local Election Officials.* The Postal Service will continue to communicate closely with election officials to educate them on best practices and recommendations for successfully using the mail as part of their election administration. The Postal Service has also sought to educate voters across the nation to request their ballots early (if they are required to request a ballot) and to return their ballots early, if they plan on using the mail to return their completed ballot.
- *Standardized Tools.* Political & Election Mail logs, Operational Clean Sweep Checklists, and daily All Clear processes are used to help track Election Mail through Postal Service facilities as well as to ensure that Election Mail is accounted for and properly handled. Teams in the field are conducting self and peer audits to make sure these tools are being used to their maximum effectiveness.
- *Communications with Employees.* Training and tools for employees are held to ensure they have the knowledge available to support the processing and delivery of all Election Mail volume, and partner with union leadership to further emphasize these important messages.
- *Webinars.* Weekly webinars with an operational, and often Election-Mail, focus are held and attended by hundreds of leaders across the Postal Service to discuss key points and learnings, such as those gained from service reviews, and spread these messages to all locations. Weekly webinars for Political and Election Mail Coordinators are also held to review and discuss relevant topics and issues.

## **ADDITIONAL ELECTION MAIL PROCEDURES AND ACTIVITIES**

### **Mail Processing**

- No mail processing facilities will be closed or consolidated, and no letter or flat sorting machines will be removed before the November election. The Postal Service has more than sufficient capacity to process current and anticipated Election Mail volumes with the existing machine supply.
- Available machines will be returned to service if Headquarters or the Regional Vice President determine that doing so is necessary to fulfill Election Mail service commitments.

### **Late and Extra Trips**

- Late or extra trips have not been banned. They should not be restricted if they are reasonably necessary to complete timely mail delivery. Managers are authorized to use their best business judgment to meet service commitments. Focusing on the transportation schedule does not mean that mail should be left behind — it should not.

### **Collection Boxes**

- The Postal Service has suspended the removal of any collection boxes until after the 2020 election.
- There may be temporary removal or covering of boxes due to extreme weather, national security incidents, or local events such as wildfires or civil unrest.
- Any collection boxes damaged — for example, by hurricane or a car accident — must be reported and replaced as soon as possible.

### **Retail Hours**

- The Postal Service will not reduce retail hours before the November election.
- Natural disasters, civil unrest, or lack of employee availability due to the coronavirus pandemic may necessitate temporary changes, but local managers are not permitted to reduce retail hours without review and approval by both Area and Headquarters management.