

VOLUME 4 · ISSUE 2

The Eagle

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY FOR EMPLOYEES
OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

MAGAZINE

Fewer Trips, Fuller Trucks

On the Road to Greater Efficiency





Mailin' it!

The Official Podcast of the United States Postal Service

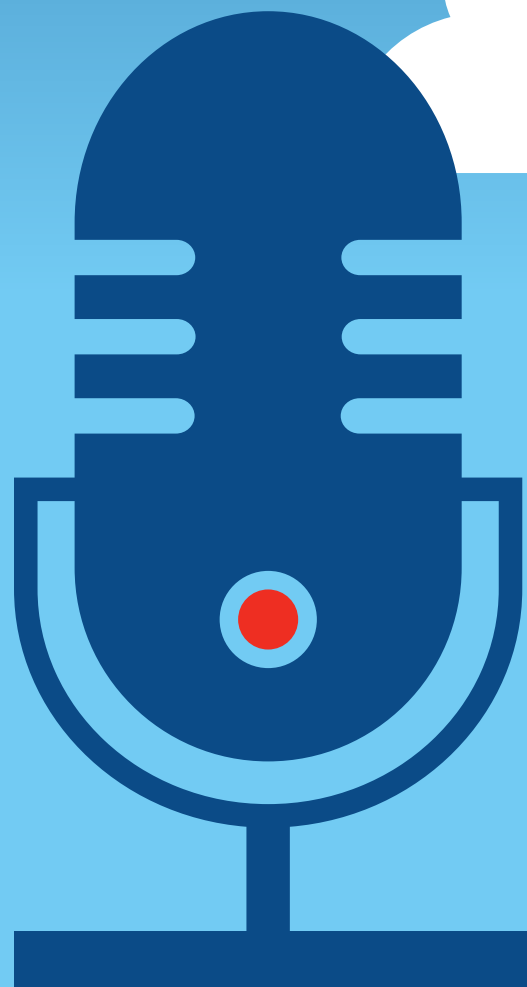
Nearly every person in America experiences the Postal Service every day — by saying hello to a mail carrier, passing postal vehicles on the street, visiting a Post Office or just by the simple act of reading one's mail. But really, how well do you know the United States Postal Service?

Mailin' It! takes you behind the scenes and explores the rich role and history of a thoroughly American institution. Join our hosts for a fun look at your United States Postal Service.

Visit about.usps.com/newsroom/ or scan the QR code to listen.



You can also listen at youtube.com/usps/podcasts. 



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**DELIVERING
FOR AMERICA**

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the Postal Service's
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From the Postmaster General



An important aspect of the Delivering for America plan is its flexibility. When we find ways to do things more efficiently and at a lower cost, we adjust our approach without compromising our long-term vision.

One such adaptation — the introduction of regional processing and distribution centers — is the subject of this issue's cover article. RPDCs increase the efficiency of long-distance mail and package movement, are cost-effective, and dovetail seamlessly with our broader network transformation.

From the beginning, the plan sought to establish a stable workforce of engaged, well-equipped employees. I am pleased to say that with the conversion of more than 190,000 precareer workers to career status, and a clear career path for all new precareer hires, we are optimizing the alignment of employees to organizational needs.

This issue of *The Eagle* explores how success in positioning and developing employees is cementing the organization's reputation as an employer of choice and gives each member of our workforce the opportunity to build a rewarding career at USPS.

As we begin our 250th year serving the American public, the article on the Direct Effect program is a pertinent reminder that we are relentlessly focused on the future. Through this effort, we are connecting with tomorrow's marketers to teach them the power of mail and the value of partnership with the United States Postal Service.

The Eagle will continue to capture our progress on these and future topics and provide context for the strategies and initiatives that are guiding us forward.

I hope you find this magazine useful and engaging.

As always, thank you for the great work you do every day.

Louis DeJoy
Postmaster General and Chief Executive Officer
United States Postal Service

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SPOTLIGHT SEARCH >

Know a postal employee who is making a difference through volunteer work or community service? Send Spotlight nominations to The_Eagle@usps.gov.

A Special Type of Guy

This USPS employee's blood is a rarity that's in constant demand.

Do you know your blood type? A survey commissioned by Quest Diagnostics in 2022 revealed that more Americans know their astrological sign (66 percent) than their blood type (51 percent).

Steven Murphy, a WestPac logistics regional manager of implementation strategy, knows his blood type: O negative, which makes him a universal donor. His blood can be used in transfusions for anyone.

There are eight blood types: A positive, A negative, B positive, B negative, AB positive, AB negative, O positive and O negative. The designations A, B, AB and O are determined by the presence or absence of A and B antigens on the surface of the red blood cell. In addition, a protein called the Rh factor is described as either present (positive) or absent (negative). Only 7 percent of the population is O negative.

Murphy is also cytomegalovirus (CMV) negative. "I had no idea what that was, until the phlebotomist explained it to me," he said. This flu-like virus is related to the pathogens that cause chickenpox, herpes and mononucleosis. "Apparently it's pretty rare to be my age and still not exposed to it," noted Murphy, 52. Only 15 percent of the population is CMV negative.

Though CMV is not problematic for most people, it can be fatal to babies and individuals with weakened immune systems, such as cancer and transplant patients. "Someone like my wife, who had leukemia when she was a kid," Murphy said.

Being both O negative and CMV negative is a rare combination that's present in only 2 percent of the population. There is a constant need for this blood type. Murphy feels a sense of responsibility to donate regularly. He visits the blood bank about every two months, the recommended interval between donations of whole blood.

The donation process takes around an hour. "They ask a few questions, check your blood pressure, fill a couple little vials for testing, and then you're good to go," Murphy explained. It takes just 8-10 minutes to collect a pint of blood.

"Typically they don't tell you where your blood donation is going. But that doesn't matter to me," he said. "I feel good that I can play a part in hopefully saving someone's life. It's very rewarding."

STEVEN MURPHY
Logistics Regional Manager
of Implementation Strategy
San Diego

"I feel good that I can play a part in hopefully saving someone's life."

Learn more about blood donation at [redcrossblood.org](https://www.redcrossblood.org).

Making Employee Progress

USPS career development is key to personal growth and organizational strength.

Employees are the foundation of the Postal Service's success. They differentiate it from its competitors thanks to a deep understanding of the communities they serve, and they offer the experience and

institutional knowledge that make it one of the nation's most trusted federal agencies.

Ensuring that employees are retained and best placed to meet the needs of the organization is a pillar of the Delivering for America plan,

and USPS is committed to using its unparalleled scale and reach to help each employee shape a fulfilling career.



a Priority

A sense of direction

Postal Service employees often begin their careers as letter carriers, or in a processing facility or Post Office, usually near their place of residence. From there, as individual career goals evolve, other interests and skills – and perhaps the desire to live elsewhere – may

spark the desire to seek a promotion, take on different responsibilities or just try something new.

There are myriad roles and career paths within the Postal Service, from cybersecurity to industrial engineering to cross-country trucking to support jobs like accounting or human resources.

With virtually unlimited paths for building a career, how does

someone go from their

current role to doing something more challenging – even completely different – within the Postal Service?

It starts with a fresh approach to learning. USPS

is investing to build a culture of self-development and employee well-being. This investment includes a wide variety of self-paced, classroom and virtual training options, one-on-one career conversations, individual development plans and on-the-job growth opportunities.

Every year,
USPS recruits
180,000
new employees.

Over the
past three years,
33,908
postal employees
have attended

122
USPS career
events.

The USPS learning management system has been updated with more than 120,000 resources, including videos, books, audiobooks and podcasts to accommodate various learning styles and that employees can easily access.

Can we talk?

The Postal Service has standardized its approach to the more than 50 career conferences it hosts nationwide each year to give all employees consistent and equal access to career advancement and the opportunity to network with leaders across the organization.

These in-person gatherings have been designed to be highly engaging. In addition to core elements centered on interview tips, career development and insights on supervisor roles, this year USPS added new information sessions to help employees build skills in areas important to them, such as maintaining a positive workplace culture, team development and maximizing benefits.

These revamped career conferences are proving to be very popular. “There’s something for everyone at our career conferences,” said Jennifer Utterback, vice president of organization development. “Each

functional group has a dedicated booth set up to discuss their respective roles and responsibilities, what vacancies they have open and how to apply. There are workshops



for employees looking to advance to a supervisor role, and for postmasters and supervisors, there's an opportunity to network with local leadership.”

Internal virtual job fairs are also held year-round. Available to current postal employees, these events are more targeted than career conferences, often focused on one functional group to help employees considering a career pivot or lateral move.

For instance, a recent series of in-depth virtual fairs about sales force recruitment explained the strategic

Focusing on Employees

Delivering for America has renewed the Postal Service's commitment to retaining and developing employees through:

Converting precareer employees to career status after two years of service.

Empowering front-line supervisors with better tools, more resources and a training program tailored to their needs.

Creating a culture of organizational focus, transparency and accountability with supportive, collaborative leaders who inspire and engage their employees.

Helping postal employees advance into new roles through defined career paths, training tracks and hiring fairs to fill vacancies.

importance of revenue growth to the success of Delivering for America, the roles and responsibilities of territory representatives and senior territory representatives, and the number and locations of vacancies. The fairs also offered advice on navigating the USPS Careers online page, creating an eCareer profile and how to effectively highlight relevant qualifications.

Deepening the talent pool

Virtual career fairs are also a prominent part of the Postal Service's drive to recruit the



Details, Details!

The idea of finding a new job or shifting a career path can be daunting. To help employees gain better insight into new opportunities or simply learn more about the organization, USPS offers temporary assignments, known as details, that typically last 30 to 90 days.

These details do not compromise the security or career progression of an employee's current position. Instead, they offer a low-risk opportunity to work with different functional groups within the Postal Service. This experience can enlighten employees on potential career paths or help them gain new skills and experience that enhance their current roles.

Details also give managers access to a broader pool of talent outside their normal hiring streams and are a useful training tool for staff seeking new skills not typically associated with their function.



front-line supervisors who are crucial to achieving the full potential of the Delivering for America transformation.

Through virtual career fairs like Focus on the Front, USPS offers informational webinar sessions to educate potential applicants on the expectations and responsibilities of front-line supervisors. The sessions also provide tips on applying for postal positions and participating in job interviews.

USPS has also expanded its managerial and advanced leadership programs to prepare high-performing, high potential employees for their first executive assignment. It also nurtures a pipeline of new leaders outside of the Postal Service's core leadership programs by expanding management and leadership training opportunities.

"Bringing our complement of front-line supervisors to full

strength is one of our most essential tasks," said Utterback. "There is an immediate need to ensure the smooth rollout of our transformative Delivering for America plan, but just as importantly, this is where we will find the postal leaders of tomorrow. And this is not mere rhetoric; many


of today's senior leaders — our district managers, our vice presidents and even our executive officers — started their careers on the front lines, learning firsthand what it takes to successfully run the world's largest mailing operator."

The success and well-being of postal employees is at core of the Postal Service's transformation, as is the goal of being an employer of choice in every American community. Helping employees shape their careers by pursuing and preparing for opportunities is a critical part of the modernization of the Postal Service under the Delivering for America plan.


The Postal Service has hired **more than 15,000 new supervisors** since 2021.

Find Out More

USPS career conferences are open to all employees off the clock. Details on the dates and locations of the 2025 career conferences can be found on the secure [rsvpBOOK](#) website.



USPS virtual supervisor job fairs are typically held on Sundays for about two hours. Employees must complete an online registration form on [LiteBlue](#) or [Blue](#) to attend a virtual fair during nonwork hours.



Conversion for the Win-Win

Providing career status to 190,000 precareer employees has proved to be a victory for USPS and its workforce.

After a decade of the Postal Service relying on a two-tiered staffing structure, the COVID-19 pandemic focused attention on the availability and on-the-job knowledge of precareer employees. At the pandemic's height, it was challenging to maintain a full staff complement, and many precareer employees were rotating in and out of roles and not gaining the experience needed to perform optimally.

Since then, the conversion of 190,000 precareer employees to career status has become one of the most notable early achievements

of the Delivering for America plan. The results were immediately positive, strengthening reliability in most facilities and putting the organization on a strong path toward high performance across a range of operations and functions.

A new professional trajectory

Beginning in 2021, eligible precareer employees were granted career positions, and all new precareer hires are now automatically offered career status after two years with



the Postal Service. Onboarding of precareer employees has been overhauled, too, with a focus on retention. Supervisor training has been updated to reinforce the Postal Service's commitment to being an employer of choice.

Because of these measures, staffing levels at USPS are more stable than ever before, which is an important factor when the Postal Service needs a depth of employee experience to staff the new facilities that are part of its network transformation. Turnover

of precareer USPS employees has significantly declined as well, with rates now consistently half the level recorded before Delivering for America's implementation.

The precareer turnover of the past was impeding performance, escalating operational costs and undermining morale — significant obstacles for an organization undergoing transformation. The conversion of precareer workers simultaneously provided the organization with a more stable workforce and offered those employees a clear trajectory toward a fulfilling full-time postal career.

Better prepared for peak

In addition to bolstering staffing levels, the conversion program has allowed USPS to reshape its approach to peak season operations. Traditionally, the holiday season was preceded by a massive recruitment program that swelled Postal Service ranks with tens of thousands of temporary workers. While this approach was necessary to ensure the network could manage peak volumes, it was costly to administer and still saw staffing shortfalls at times. The inexperience of seasonal workers could also adversely affect service performance during the busiest time of the year.

Converting precareer workers to career status provided the opportunity to overhaul this hiring practice. Where USPS would typically add nearly 30,000 temporary workers every peak season, those numbers have substantially dropped in

recent years, with 20,000 temporary staff added in 2022-23 and 10,000 in 2023-24. Just 7,500 seasonal workers were recruited for 2024-25.

This is possible because the Postal Service can now be more strategic with its peak season planning. With a much larger pool of full-time employees, it can better manage overtime and leave-taking throughout the rest of the year to ensure that it has a full complement of experienced, well-trained staff on hand during peak season. This makes the organization much more competitive.

A strategy for everyone's success

The conversion to career status can have a dramatic effect on the lives and livelihoods of employees. Beyond the financial safety net of a full-time job, these individuals now have access to comprehensive benefits — including health insurance, retirement plans and paid leave. Internal career paths that were inaccessible as precareer workers are available, too.

In return, USPS has a more resilient workforce. Lower turnover allows supervisors to become more familiar with each employee's skills and reduces the demands of managing the scheduling and staffing needs of multiple employment categories.

With its staff stabilized, the Postal Service is focused on investing in employees' futures, crafting training courses and acquiring equipment that will elevate opportunities for everyone. This is a win for employees and a win for USPS — and a clear indication that the strategies and vision of Delivering for America are working to build a stronger Postal Service that is a great place to have a career.



Fewer Trips,

USPS is on the road to greater efficiency.

As the future U.S. Postal Service processing, logistics, delivery and retail networks continue to take shape under the Delivering for America plan, there are strong examples emerging of the high-performance potential of a modernized postal system. One of the biggest areas of transformation and improvement is transportation.

The legacy transportation network — developed over decades and now being methodically redesigned — required a patchwork of truck routes between myriad facilities. This often resulted in trucks traveling mostly empty between facilities.

In fact, the average postal truck going from one facility to another in 2020 was roughly one-third full, implying that two out of every three trips were unnecessary.

Exacerbating this inefficiency, mail and package volume also traveled separately and followed different routes from one region to another, even when a piece of mail and a package originated at the same place and were headed to the same destination. This occurred because mail and packages moved on two separate processing networks and operating models, as required by law at the time. The logistics of this approach, which



Fuller Trucks

was cobbled together over many years, became complex, unreliable and wasteful.

Better transportation enabled by better network design

The logistics network now being built is based on a simpler hub-and-spoke model, in which regional processing and distribution centers (RPDCs) serve as the hub for each region and the only location for transportation into or out of that region. While USPS has used a disaggregated model for decades, the transformed network will have far fewer originating processing facilities — around 60 RPDCs when fully implemented. This approach dramatically simplifies transportation across the nation. Additionally, whereas mail and packages used to be processed and transported according to separate operating models, they will travel together

through a fully integrated network as Delivering for America transformation initiatives continue. This has the effect of significantly reducing truck trips and exponentially increasing the amount of mail and packages carried on each trip — a major boost to efficiency and productivity.

Under the transformed operating model, the Postal Service has significantly decreased air transportation, saving more the \$1 billion and over 281,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent by shifting air volume to surface transportation.

In just fiscal year 2024, total transportation expenses decreased by \$1.3 billion, or 13 percent. Roughly half of this result is due to shifting mail and package volume away from air transport to less expensive ground transport, with the remainder due to consolidation of trips, using freight auctions to identify lower-cost vendors, implementing new



transportation systems and more actively managing trips, especially during peak volume periods. This impact is particularly important given that around 95 percent of First-Class Mail and packages now travel via ground transportation.

Each of these transportation strategies is tied to the greater efficiencies enabled by the RPDC network now being built, according to USPS Chief Logistics and Infrastructure Officer Ronnie Jarriel. “It is very encouraging that these gains were realized with just four fully active RPDCs,” he said. “This leaves room for significant and ongoing efficiency improvements as more of these state-of-the-art facilities are brought fully online each year.”

Jarriel notes that seven RPDCs are scheduled to become fully operational in fiscal year 2025.

When all network efficiencies are considered, including both direct transportation costs and related operational expenses, the Postal Service last year saved more than \$3 billion, and these savings will expand in years to come.

The power of aggregating mail and package volume

A core logistics strategy to gain transportation efficiencies is to aggregate mail and package volume in specific facilities so that truck trips between RPDCs can be planned with full loads every day, or even several times a day. This daily volume can then be directed to the destination region efficiently and reliably. Based on geography and the flow of mail and packages within the postal network, certain RPDCs will play a larger role as volume aggregators, serving as important distribution points for long-haul transport.

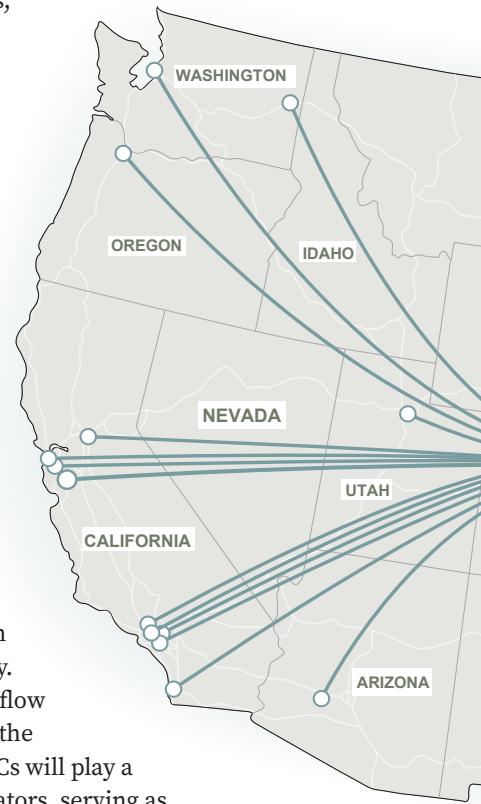
An important benefit of this approach is that truck trips can be planned to cover long distances with regularity, resulting in reliable, regular workflows, reduced handling and faster transit times. This enables processing facilities to more logically sequence and sort volume coming into a region and reach higher performance levels.

The Indianapolis example

The Indianapolis RPDC shows the power of aggregating volume at a well-placed facility. It processes more than 1.3 million packages daily and serves as the distribution point for mail and package volume coming from the West Coast bound for the Great Lakes, the Northeast and the Southeast.

This is part of a Go East, Go West logistics strategy, in which originating facilities aggregate volume heading in one direction. This simple model for long-distance volume creates enormous operational efficiencies.

Eastbound mail and package traffic converges at the Indianapolis RPDC, where there is no long-distance westbound traffic. The facility sorts the long-haul eastbound volume and sends it to other RPDCs and processing facilities to be sorted for last-mile delivery.



Better Transportation Efficiency Is Reducing Costs and Improving Performance

780K total truck trips eliminated*

\$534M total savings from reduced transportation costs*

68.5M fewer miles traveled*

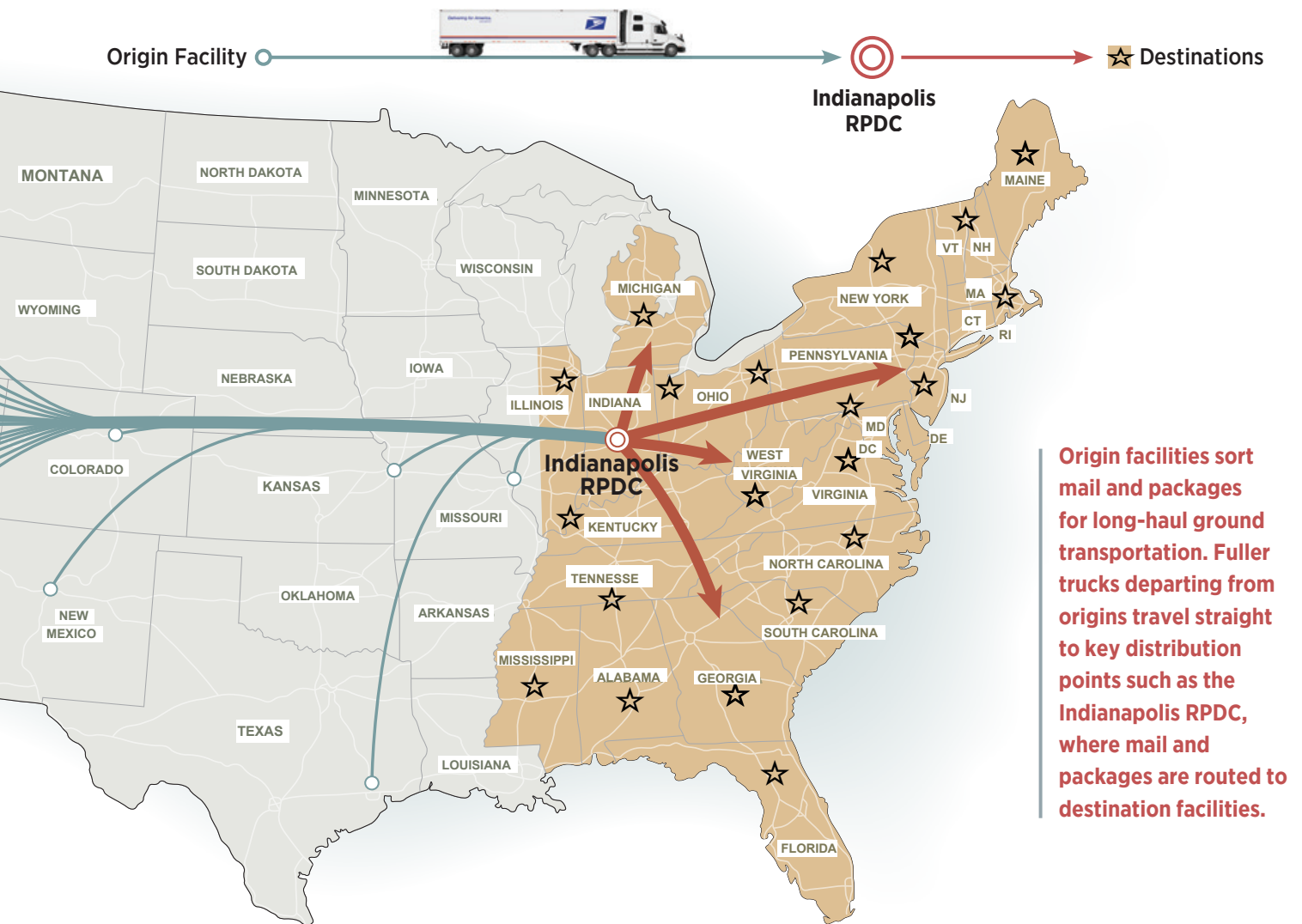
98,191 metric tons of CO₂ avoided*

38% increase in truck capacity utilization since 2020

*Improvement from FY 2023 to FY 2024



Indianapolis: An RPDC in Action



Origin facilities sort mail and packages for long-haul ground transportation. Fuller trucks departing from origins travel straight to key distribution points such as the Indianapolis RPDC, where mail and packages are routed to destination facilities.

Consider a package sent from an origin plant to a destination plant. Under the legacy system, a process starting in San Francisco may have been sorted to 200 destinations. In the new model, San Francisco would only sort to RPDCs and regional transfer hubs, significantly lowering the number of sorts. The RPDC or hub would then sort the package to its final local processing center. This means fewer sorts at origin, more full containers of product and less transportation required to move that product across the country. This is leading to surface transportation savings, supplementing the more than \$1 billion in air savings already accomplished.

This ground journey with limited stops exemplifies how volume aggregation at key facilities ensures the best possible use of transportation and processing resources. The massive volumes flowing east and west through key RPDCs enable more direct, uninterrupted routes

from origin to destination, resulting in fewer handlings, fuller trucks and more streamlined movement over long distances.

The Indianapolis RPDC demonstrates the Delivering for America transformation plan in practice. The combination of upgraded and greatly expanded processing capacity and a more logical long-distance transportation approach is producing strong operational performance and cost reduction benefits, particularly in the movement of mail and packages sent via ground transportation over long distances.

The facility is just a preview of the high-performance postal network that is now being built. As more RPDCs are brought online in the coming years, and their supporting local processing centers, sorting and delivery centers and delivery units are upgraded and modernized — the Postal Service will become one of the world's most efficient and low-cost national delivery platforms.

GO EAST, GO WEST

ROBERT CINTRON

RONNIE JARRIEL



Ronnie Jarriel, chief logistics and infrastructure officer and executive vice president, and **Robert Cintron**, vice president of logistics, discuss how evolving long-distance transportation and logistics strategies are yielding big efficiency and performance gains.

Regional processing and distribution centers (RPDCs) are the anchors of the future postal processing and transportation network. What is the logic that makes their role so important?

Jarriel: Orienting our national transportation model around RPDCs is already making the long-distance transportation of mail and packages across the country simpler and more efficient. Wherever we have sufficient regular network volume to justify the trip of a full truck across the country, we create a very efficient, lower-cost route. When we aggregate 30 or 40 of these long-distance full-truck routes into a single destination RPDC, we get a tremendous multiplier effect in terms of operational performance and cost savings. The hub-and-spoke model basically gives us a very regular streamlined flow of volume to feed our facilities for less money.

Cintron: The Indianapolis RPDC gives us a glimpse of our future. Much of the facility's incoming volume is from the Western states; it's quickly sorted and then heads to destination facilities and then out to delivery. The trucks coming in are now at least 90 percent full and the trucks going out are at least 68 percent full. It is a lean, fluid system that will improve on-time scores for volume crossing the country and for products like USPS

Ground Advantage. We are working toward a day when we have 60 RPDCs and they are all being fed by trucks that are more than 90 percent full and have no wasted time or energy.

Is there anything unique about the Indianapolis RPDC?

Jarriel: No — and that's the idea. Every future RPDC will have an enormous capacity to process mail and packages, serve its region and operate as a hub for the movement of mail packages around the country. However, we had a blank slate in Indianapolis because the building and equipment are brand new. That's a fantastic opportunity to design

and engineer everything for a specific mission and daily operation. What we have now is a simple, logical flow of mail and packages within the facility, tied to simple, commonsense logistics and transportation outside the building.

Cintron: The Indianapolis RPDC gets fed mail and packages from a steady stream of eastward-bound trucks. We continually sort them and load them onto outgoing trucks, and as soon as one is full, it goes. It's a very fluid process, and the results so far speak for themselves. Cross-country volume moves through that facility quickly, exceeding all our targets. I would also say that we have cultivated a real sense of progress throughout the transportation team around the country, and that comes from starting something new with a new team and building it together. I'm very proud of the work done so far and the commitment to high performance, which is evident every day.

Tell us about the Go East, Go West approach. Is it going to be applied at every RPDC?

Cintron: Since we started implementing the Delivering for America plan, we knew that we needed to better aggregate cross-country volumes to significantly increase efficiency. So, the Go East, Go West initiative was launched: Using a single RPDC as a major distribution center for a particular flow of eastward or westward volume gives us an ideal model for getting high-performance transportation and logistics. As we build more RPDCs and refine our transportation models to take advantage of these facilities, some RPDCs will primarily serve their particular region, and some will play the dual role of being a transportation hub for major flows of cross-country volume.

Jarriel: The vision for our national ground transportation is a continually flowing movement of mail and packages on full trucks, fully integrated with our RPDCs. We optimize and refine every day, we look at every truck trip and every logistics operation, and we keep an open mind about how to get better performance and better efficiency. We are on a great trajectory, and even better results are yet to come.

We Go Everywhere!

ZIP Code™

25425



The Appalachian Trail is a public footpath that traverses nearly 2,200 miles through 14 states — from Georgia to Maine — along the Appalachian Mountains. The views are inspiring, but the trek is no easy feat, especially with a backpack of gear. Savvy hikers lighten the load by having supplies mailed to a Post Office farther ahead. One such stop is Harpers Ferry, ZIP Code 25425.



Harpers Ferry, WV

Harpers Ferry is a good place to take a “zero” day, meaning time off the trail. This picturesque town sits in the Shenandoah Valley between the Blue Ridge and Allegheny mountains, both part of the Appalachian range.

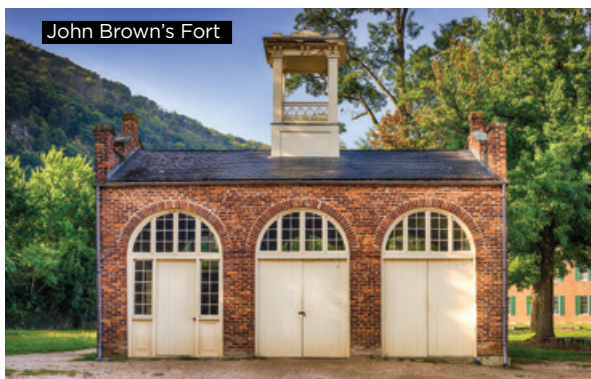
Hikers often have a friend or family member mail them a resupply box at specific intervals. Some send themselves a “bounce box” — filled with backup items such as batteries, seasonal clothes, replacement shoes and socks — that they

continually send. Priority Mail is favored, since tracking is available, and an unopened package can be forwarded without charge.

Boxes are sent to the recipient in care of general delivery at the Post Office address and marked “hold for A.T. hiker” along with the expected arrival date. At the Harpers Ferry Post Office, packages are logged as they come in, organized on a shelf by last name, then verified with photo ID as they are picked up.

A popular stop in town is the headquarters of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, where hikers take commemorative photos at what





the group calls “the psychological midpoint” of the trail.

Storer College, which operated from 1867 to 1955, is a block away. What began as a one-room school for the formerly enslaved became one of the first institutions of higher learning open to men and women of all races.

Lower Town is a historic district maintained by the National Park Service; it has museums and vintage buildings including a boardinghouse, dry goods store, tavern and confectionery, as

well as quaint shops and eateries.

The town is also home to John Brown's Fort. It was here that abolitionist Brown and his men raided the federal armory in an attempt to initiate a slave revolt in 1859, nearly two years before the start of the Civil War.

Nearby, carved into a hillside, 44 steps lead past Harper House — built by the town's founder, Robert Harper — to St. Peter's Church. Behind the church is a longer set of stairs that ends at Jefferson Rock, where Thomas Jefferson stood and admired a view he described as “worth a voyage across the Atlantic.”

This last leg is part of the Appalachian Trail, so, technically, that would make for a “nero” (near-zero) day of hiking.

Harpers Ferry is filled with history, postcard-worthy scenery and a plethora of diversions, offering weary hikers a refreshing change of pace. Then it's off for another stretch of hiking, and the next resupply box.



Collegiate teams gather at the October 2024 Direct Effect Innovation Challenge in Boston.

A DIRECT EFFECT *on Tomorrow's Marketers*



USPS is teaching students how to harness the power of mail in their future careers.

It's been a topsy-turvy environment for America's marketers in recent years. After generations of turning to print, radio and TV for outreach, the past two decades have seen a wholesale shift away from these traditional tools. Today, nearly 70 percent of marketing outlay goes to digital media. This is a natural progression for an increasingly connected world, but it has left younger marketers with little exposure to the advantages of mail and its ability to elevate a digital marketing campaign.

That knowledge gap is increasingly apparent as consumers become fatigued by overexposure to digital media and more concerned about the medium's potential threats to privacy. Thankfully, the United States Postal Service has prepared for this day by developing the Direct Effect® program, a collaboration between academia, the printing and mailing industry and USPS that introduces direct mail to young marketers, changes the perspective of how students, professors and marketers view direct mail, and ensures there is a bench of future mailing and

advertising professionals well-equipped to extract the full value of direct mail to promote their brands.

A hit with professors and students

The Direct Effect program channels the same vision included in the Delivering for America transformation



Direct Effect Innovation Challenges include time for students to make prototypes for their mail campaign proposals.

plan: to educate the next generation of marketers. In 2017, the Postal Service started working with Bentley University in Massachusetts to develop curricula for business students on the power of mail. The response from professors and students was overwhelmingly positive. From there, the Direct Effect program dramatically expanded — and has reached more than 176 colleges and universities across the country.

Students are taught the fundamentals of direct mail, how to use it to influence consumer behaviors such as driving traffic to a retail location or a website, and more complicated uses of mail in integrated marketing campaigns.

Today, the Direct Effect program provides online curricula for universities, online learning for students, speakers for classes and opportunities for students to earn credentials.

“I’m proud of how the Postal Service and our partners have grown Direct Effect into this powerful initiative,” said Margaret Pepe, USPS executive director of product solutions. “It’s taken effort and commitment from our team, the volunteer Direct Effect advisory council and our many partners, but we have built a program that resonates with marketing students nationwide, teaches them valuable skills that will give them a competitive edge in their careers, and creates future professional relationships for the Postal Service.”

Up for the challenge

Direct Effect Innovation Challenges, which pit teams against each other to see who can develop the best mailpieces, are an important part of the program.

The Postal Service has hosted 17 of these challenges since the inaugural event in April 2019 at the THINK Center in Wilkes-Barre, PA, involving nearly 200 institutions of higher education and thousands of students across the United States. Like the recent Direct Effect Innovation Challenge in October 2024 in Boston, students and their professors enter each event knowing only that they have an afternoon to respond to a marketing challenge for a brand and they need to develop a great direct mail campaign to win.

These brands range from local success stories and nonprofits to internationally renowned organizations, including Capital One, ESPN, Legoland and The Boston Globe.

After executives from the brands explain their business needs, the clock starts ticking and the teams quickly get to work. When time is up, each team presents their campaign to the executives, who choose a winner.



**DIRECT
EFFECT**

Innovation Challenge



The Direct Effect Vision

The Direct Effect academic outreach program delivers educational content as a public service to students and faculty primarily through:

- **E-learning and certification** via online offerings on mail and integrated marketing topics;
- **Direct Effect Innovation Challenges** to develop real-world marketing campaigns through experiential learning;
- **Classroom tools** for teaching about marketing industry concepts, players and innovations through an engaging course curriculum; and
- **Classroom speakers** from the printing, mailing and marketing industries.

The response from students, teachers and executives is resoundingly positive, reflecting the potential of direct mail to play an intrinsic role in campaigns for a new generation of marketers.

“Direct Effect was so much fun! I’m so grateful for the unique experience and I was truly impressed by the students’ ideas,” Claire Nicholas, content operations manager for The Boston Globe, said after awarding

Students show off their creations at the challenge held in Tampa, FL, in November 2024.



The winning team in Boston consisted of music marketing students from Berklee College of Music.



The Florida State University team triumphed in Tampa.

the winning team from Berklee College of Music their trophy. (The team's campaign, called "The Boston Starter," featured the tagline "Your B-side" to drive young people to the newspaper's website.)

This sentiment is common among brands that have participated in Direct Effect Innovation Challenges. Lauren Taylor, director of sports marketing at ESPN, said she was "blown away by what the students put in front of us" after the spring 2023 challenge in Charlotte, NC. At the fall 2023 challenge in Washington, DC, a Capital One representative observed: "Not only is it a fun and successful way to market, it's an advantage to have the skills to use it."

Students who participate in the events can earn Direct Effect credentials and an opportunity to showcase their thinking and creativity to a major brand. Most importantly, they gain valuable experience to take with them into their careers.

"Having never worked with mailing before to now feeling it, understanding it, receiving it, mail is memorable," Appalachian State University student

Alex McKinley said after the Charlotte challenge. Audreyanna Loguerre, a student at Georgetown University, noted after the Capital One challenge that the event "changed my perspective on the value of direct mail. I see it as something innovative now."

Educators applauded the program, too. "I think this program and how mail helps us innovate is a great opportunity for the students," Rodney Williams, a professor at Bowie State University in Maryland, said during the Washington event.

Direct Effect is proving to be popular on campuses nationwide and is achieving its goal of educating and inspiring the next generation of marketers about the role mail can play in successful marketing campaigns.

Academic Outreach With Impact

- **5,644** Direct Effect certificates earned online by marketing students in the United States
- **309** College and university faculty members who have participated in programming and taught Direct Effect curricula
- **17** Direct Effect Innovation Challenges (13 in-person and four virtual)
- **11,224** Students who have participated in Direct Effect challenges
- **4** "Marketing Madness" national launches for Direct Effect online micro-credentials



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