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# The Eagle

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY FOR EMPLOYEES  
OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

MAGAZINE



USPS  
250

DELIVERING SINCE 1775





**PUBLISHER**

United States  
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Jeffery Adams  
Vice President,  
Corporate  
Communications

**MANAGING EDITOR**

Yvonne Yoerger

**EDITOR**

Jonathan Padgett

**ASSISTANT EDITOR**

Noah Goldstein

**DESIGNER**

Mike Quigley

**PHOTOGRAPHERS**

Daniel Afzal

Matt Conti  
*MattConti.com*

Stephen Doherty

Photographers of  
Las Vegas LLC

**CONTACT US**

*The Eagle*  
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW  
Washington, DC  
20260-2166

**EMAIL**

*The\_Eagle@usps.gov*

**DELIVERING  
FOR AMERICA**

Learn more about  
the Postal Service's  
10-year strategic plan  
at [about.usps.com/  
what/strategic-plans/  
delivering-for-america/](https://about.usps.com/what/strategic-plans/delivering-for-america/).

## From the Office of the Postmaster General

**For 250 years, the U.S. Postal Service has delivered for the nation dutifully, connecting communities, nurturing innovation and meeting every challenge. This incredible milestone illustrates the vital role USPS has played as a driver of economic growth and an essential service for every American.**



This edition of *The Eagle* commemorates an amazing story two and a half centuries in the making. The cover article and accompanying timeline open a window into our past that reminds us transformation is a defining characteristic of USPS. Since our founding on July 26, 1775, we have championed change and technological advancement, and while our mission has evolved over time, we've always risen to the occasion.

Now, four years into our current transformation, we look at some of our many successes. There is still much to do, but our achievements revitalizing our organization, modernizing our infrastructure and launching affordable, reliable shipping products have already made us much more competitive and dependable. An article on our successful Mail Growth Incentives program also demonstrates our commitment to meeting our customers' needs.

No commemoration of our 250th anniversary would be complete without Benjamin Franklin. We highlight this with a story about our first postmaster general's birthplace, and we turn the Spotlight on a namesake inspired by him. A piece on Smokey Bear, one of only two individuals with his own five-digit ZIP Code, rounds out this keepsake edition of *The Eagle*.

Today's USPS is a testament to our enduring legacy and the dedication of our employees — past and present. Congratulations to each of you for being a part of this historic achievement.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Doug Tulino".

**Doug Tulino**

Acting Postmaster General and Chief Executive Officer, March 24, 2025, to July 2025  
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](mailto:The_Eagle@usps.gov).



# Benjamin Franklin Is Alive and Well

... and living in Las Vegas, where he proudly serves both USPS and his community.

In the 1748 edition of his pamphlet *Poor Richard's Almanac*, Benjamin Franklin noted that "when you're good to others, you're best to yourself." Nearly three centuries later, a namesake is drawing inspiration from the first postmaster general's legacy.

The latter Benjamin Franklin is a mail handler equipment operator at the Las Vegas Processing and Distribution Center. He got his start at USPS in 2021, following in the footsteps of his mother, Lakesha, a retail associate in the city. He dreams of someday becoming a professional boxer, and he volunteers for local charities that help veterans and children.

Franklin has received comments on his name his entire life: "People ask me for a hundred-dollar bill or ask me how it feels to have the name of a U.S. president. I have to remind them Benjamin Franklin was never president."

November when the next one sprawls along iconic Las Vegas Boulevard: "I'm always grateful for any opportunity to give back."

As the Postal Service celebrates its 250th anniversary, Franklin is keenly aware of the importance of his name.

"It's a lot to live up to," he said, but he finds it far more inspiring than burdensome. In whatever he does, "I just focus on getting the job done and being great in my own way."

**"I'm always grateful  
for any opportunity  
to give back."**

**BENJAMIN FRANKLIN**  
Mail Handler Equipment Operator  
Las Vegas

Named for his great uncle, Franklin is unsure if the name was inspired by the Founding Father. Nonetheless, he has done research and takes great pride in the postal history associated with his name, as well as the history of the Bucket Brigade, a precursor of fire departments.

Firefighting, too, is a career Franklin has considered, although he devotes most of his time away from work to boxing. He's had a trainer from Sin City's amateur circuit for the past two years. The schedule can be daunting, often allowing for just a quick nap after his postal shift ends at 6 a.m., then heading to his training sessions and putting up his dukes.

Franklin also devotes time to his community, volunteering in logistics for the Las Vegas Honor Ride, which supports veterans' physical and mental health needs, and the UnitedHealthcare Children's Foundation Las Vegas Teddy Bear Run, which raises money for child medical grants.

"Coming from a family with a history of military service, I find the Honor Ride to be especially meaningful," Franklin said. He'll be there again in







## USPS is giving credit where credit is due for businesses boosting their use of mail.

**T**he Mail Growth Incentives program had a banner first year — and has the results to prove it.

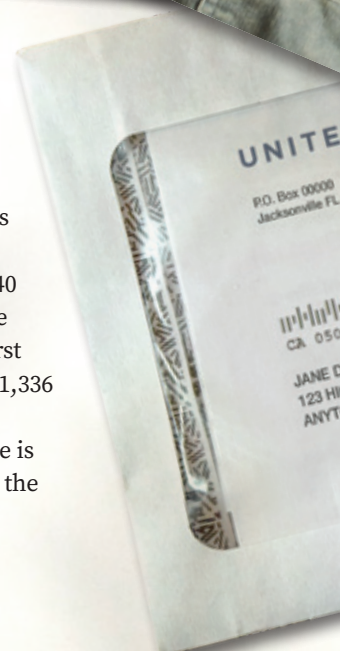
The innovative new effort that began in 2024 encourages Postal Service customers to grow their Marketing Mail and First-Class Mail volume. Those who increase their volume over a predetermined baseline can receive a 30 percent postage credit on incremental volume over that baseline.

A company with a baseline of up to 1 million mailpieces, for example, would start earning a 30 percent postage credit on any volume over 1 million. And a company with a baseline over 1 million (for example, 20 million) can start

earning postage credits when exceeding their baseline (20 million and 1 pieces).

That is a hefty sweetener, and customers responded. Participants who grew mail volume in the program generated over \$540 million in postage credits and mail volume by over 5.6 billion new mailpieces in its first year, according to USPS figures — all with 1,336 companies participating in the initiative.

It is important to note what the incentive is not: It is *not* a statement credit. The key to the program's aim is in its title: growth.





“It’s postage credits to use on mail in the future,” said Steven Mills, director of product management for Mailing Services and the lead for project, which is a Product Solutions team initiative in the chief customer and marketing officer’s group. “So, if they’re going to continue to mail with us and be good partners with us, they can continue to get the postage credits from the incentives.”

Program participants increased their use of Marketing Mail and First-Class Mail products by 9.41 percent and 1.96 percent, respectively, compared with nonparticipants, who experienced 1 percent and 2.69 percent drops in these products during the same period.

That positive reception from the mailing industry has ensured that Mail Growth Incentives is a go in 2025.

Since last year was the program’s first, the focus was on getting it up and running, not promotion.

The challenge for 2025 was getting the word out. There have been industry webinars, and the team continues to work with Sales and the Business Service Network — dedicated to supporting the Postal Service’s largest business mailers — to spread the word.

Although registration has ended for the 2025 Mail Growth

Incentives, those companies who registered can still be encouraged to mail more and mail often. Any business owner is encouraged to do so, whether or not they believe they will be able to see an immediate benefit. By the end of the calendar year, over 40 percent of registered companies earned postage credits in 2024 and the goal is to increase this number.

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**\$540 million** in credit  
generated by the program on  
**5.6 billion** new mailpieces  
in its first year.

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“We’ve had companies register with 50,000 pieces,” Mills said. “There are a lot of scenarios that make sense to register.” As just one example, a regulatory change can mean a sudden mass mailing is required. If a low-volume company is already registered, they can take advantage of the credit should they go over 1 million pieces.

Again, the first year had 1,336 companies registered in the program, and 40 percent of them were responsible for the half-billion dollars in postage credits.

This included a leading grocery store chain that was lured by the incentive to significantly increase its Marketing Mail, and an industrial equipment company that went from not mailing in 2023 to earning substantial postage credit by raising its volume in 2024.

Due to the transformation of its processing and distribution network, USPS has ample capacity to handle increased volume. And because operational cost and debt decline as more mailpieces are processed overall, every extra piece is a boon for the Postal Service.

“It’s really good when you see more mail. It’s good for the organization, it’s good for employees, it’s good for the health of our brand, it’s good for our customers who are able to leverage our platforms and channels,” said Chris Karpenko, USPS senior director of product management.

“When businesses grow, we grow, too.”



Learn more about  
Mail Growth Incentives:  
[postalpro.usps.com](https://postalpro.usps.com)



Learn more about  
creative Marketing  
Mail strategies:  
[irresistiblemail.com](https://irresistiblemail.com)

# Resetting the Standards

Fresh approaches to transportation and processing will improve the postal network's precision and reliability.



Operational improvements and refined service standards phased in since April are increasing the reliability, precision and efficiency of the postal network and improving truck utilization, all while saving the U.S. Postal Service billions of dollars in annual costs.

After four years of transformation, USPS has removed many of the redundancies of its legacy operation and installed an integrated network that allows for a more unified, logically sequenced movement of mail and packages. The success of this modernization is tangible; however, legacy service requirements, business rules and operating practices designed decades ago when letter volume was at its peak aren't relevant today.

## New approaches for a new network

In the past, USPS processing facilities were chosen because of their availability, not their location. That meant many facilities were far from their originating mail. The new regional processing and distribution centers (RPDCs) that

form the backbone of the revamped postal network, in sharp contrast, are strategically positioned to be close to the country's highest volumes of mail and packages.

The majority of that volume originates in ZIP Codes within 50 miles of each RPDC. This concentrated volume has created an opportunity for USPS to optimize how it collects, processes and transports mail and packages from this critical catchment area.

## A focus on regional transport

Under the legacy postal system, the first leg of mail and package transportation involved twice-daily

collection and drop-off (typically morning and afternoon) regardless of the facility's location. This made sense when every trip filled trucks and the load was predominantly letters, but with single-piece First-Class Mail down 80 percent from 1997 — and continuing to decline — and demand for package delivery growing, this process has become inherently wasteful, forcing trucks to travel outside that critical 50-mile radius to collect much less volume.

That second trip to distant locations is unnecessarily costly — financially and environmentally — and the long distances involved can hold up the dispatch of mail

## Reduced Truck Trips and Improved Service Timing



REGIONAL PROCESSING AND DISTRIBUTION CENTER



and package volume from USPS processing facilities into the network for many hours, compromising reliability and on-time performance.

With new operational approaches deployed over the past four months, the second trip to facilities more than 50 miles from an RPDC is ending.

The effect is meaningful. With only a modest amount of mail moved to the next morning transportation slot, USPS is substantially shortening the amount of time mail and packages spend at a processing facility. Combined with revised critical entry times, volume can now be dispatched to delivery units four to six hours earlier than before, moving mail and packages much quicker through the network.

The Postal Service's new Regional Transportation Optimization (RTO) initiative adds another dimension to these new processing efficiencies. RTO enables USPS to streamline transportation routes and allow trucks to pick up mail and packages while delivering mail and packages, even to facilities farther from the processing network. RTO also enhances the efficiency and speed of the processing network by eliminating routes, increasing truck utilization and spreading volume arrivals more evenly throughout the day.

### Broadening the Postal Service's daily reach

With more time to transport volume between facilities, USPS can expand the distance that mail and package volume moves each day.

That is a major boost to the postal network, increasing the productivity of USPS processing facilities while getting more mail and packages to more customers faster and more reliably. This means customers may receive their mail and packages sooner than they once did — including essentials like medicines and checks that typically originate in that crucial 50-mile area — even if the mail they send is picked up the morning after it is dropped off at a Post Office.

This strategy significantly reduces transportation, mail processing and real estate costs, too. With fewer trips, quicker turnaround and broader reach, the Postal Service expects to save at least \$3.6 billion annually for a total of at least \$36 billion over the next 10 years — and all of this will be achieved within the current 1-5-day service standard.

The operational changes and refined service standards are not just about making the postal network faster, even though Marketing Mail, Periodicals and Package Services will generally speed up, and standards for some 14 percent of First-Class Mail will improve. This is about revitalizing and modernizing USPS in a cost-effective and financially responsible way while elevating service standards and delivering with greater reliability. With this approach, the Postal Service can ensure it provides greater value to its customers while maintaining its core mission of serving every address in America six and seven days a week.

## Making a Stronger Postal Network

**5-Digit to 5-Digit ZIP Code service standards** bring more precision to the postal network.

**Regional Transportation Optimization** consolidates delivery and collection activities for Post Offices more than 50 miles from a regional processing and distribution center.

**Refreshed critical entry times** increase operational efficiency.

**The network's daily reach has expanded** so mail and packages can travel farther within a day between processing plants.

**Local turnaround has improved** for certain areas so that all local mail will receive a two- or three-day commitment.

**New measurement rules regarding Sundays and holidays** improve operational efficiency and better align USPS with other shippers.

### NOW

#### A single trip

One truck both delivers and picks up mail and packages.

### BEFORE

#### Two trips

One truck dropped off mail and packages in the morning and one truck picked up mail and packages in the afternoon.



Roughly 9,000 fewer truck trips per day



DELIVERY UNIT



# Delivering

USPS has embraced change throughout its 250-year history.

Continual transformation has been the U.S. Postal Service's defining characteristic since its inception on July 26, 1775, when the Second Continental Congress created an independent, trustworthy and secure mail system led by the inimitable Benjamin Franklin. With a mission rooted in connecting America, USPS has pursued technological advances and championed innovation to meet the evolving needs of a growing nation, inspired by the country's

revolutionary legacy and an enduring sense of optimism and renewal.

USPS is an institution central to America's story. With Franklin's appointment as postmaster general, the nation's founders were taking a bold and conspicuous step to create the backbone of a new country that would control its own destiny. In the ensuing Revolutionary War, this postal system would play an essential role, circumventing British efforts to intercept critical communications between the





# Since 1775

colonists. It served with distinction and proved so efficient and secure that the founders, after their historic victory, placed the Post Office at the center of their efforts to form the United States.

## Building a new nation

This transformation from a wartime communications channel into a conduit connecting the American public with its government was seamless. The Post Office quickly became a fixture in everyday life, linking towns and villages and keeping the American public informed through the widespread distribution of letters and newspapers.

The country's westward expansion and massive population growth during the late 18th and early 19th centuries were intrinsically linked with the Post Office, and it was often the first formal representative of the federal government encountered by the public. During this pivotal moment in America's evolution, the Post Office also emerged as a powerful patron of new technologies, providing much-needed investment in the nascent steamboat and rail industries and embracing Samuel Morse's telegraph system.

The Post Office, as it would be throughout its history, was there in the front row, transforming the







country, revolutionizing global communications and making mail delivery faster and more reliable.

But change was never far away. America was maturing as a nation, and its ever-growing and increasingly literate population needed an affordable communications network.

The solution took time to perfect, but over the middle decades of the 19th century, the Post Office would take formative steps in its journey to becoming the preeminent postal system it is today.

### A legacy of innovation

The mid-1800s were disruptive years in Postal Service history, dominated by the Post Office Act of 1845 and the catastrophic four-year Civil War. But from upheaval emerged a new, vital mission for the now renamed and politically elevated U.S. Post Office Department: ensuring every person in the United States — no matter who, no matter where — had equal access to affordable mail service.

During these years, many of the features now considered standard were created. Postage pricing was made more transparent and predictable and lowered to levels ordinary Americans could afford. Distance-based pricing was replaced with uniform domestic rates determined by the weight of a letter, and the introduction of postage stamps in 1847 shifted the responsibility for payment from the recipient to the sender, stabilized postal revenues and encouraged more people to send mail.

The addition of free home delivery, money orders, mail-in ballots, Parcel Post: These services and many more would again reshape the public's relationship with the country's postal system, deepening the bond of trust that continues to this day.

Over the coming decades, the Post Office Department continued to champion technological improvements that boosted its speed, reach and reliability. Airmail revolutionized global mail delivery in the early 20th century thanks to significant postal investment, and this broad reach proved instrumental in keeping morale up and connecting families during two world wars.

### Dawn of a new era

The economic boom of the 1950s and '60s, along with another rapid increase in the U.S. population and the

rising popularity of suburban living, would stretch the aging, underfunded and politically influenced postal system to a breaking point. Efforts like the ZIP Code in the 1960s would show how streamlined processing could work, but wholesale reform of the Post Office Department was necessary for the institution to survive. After years of debate, the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970 transformed the government agency into the independent, self-financing U.S. Postal Service, a business-oriented entity that was better equipped to navigate the scale and complexity of contemporary mail demand.

With a fresh identity and renewed sense of mission, the new USPS would create a modern postal network attuned to the growing needs of its residential and business customers. Passport applications could now be processed at Post Offices across the country and contracts with marketers would reshape the mailing landscape. Annual mail volume grew from 85 billion pieces in 1970 to almost 208 billion pieces in 2000.

**USPS remains a symbol of resilience and ingenuity, proving that it is as vital to American life today as it was 250 years ago.**

### Technological advances

Automation and new technology were critical to this success. In addition to the massive growth in volume, USPS also had to accommodate an increase in delivery points, which rose from around 67.4 million in 1970 to 134.5 million in 2000. A manual sorting network would have collapsed under this stress, but thankfully the new Postal Service was prepared.

Starting with investments dating back to the 1950s, America's mail system was a leading proponent of automation. The introduction of the ZIP Code in 1963 was soon followed by ZIP Code optical scanners capable of sorting up to 36,000 letters per hour. Over the coming decades USPS would expand this capacity with higher-volume sorters and cutting-edge equipment designed specifically for package sorting.





USPS also built on its successful ZIP Code system, introducing ZIP+4 in the early 1980s to allow sorting to specific streets. Optical character readers, deployed in 1982, would add additional speed to the automated sorting process by reading address information and printing barcodes on mail to represent the ZIP Code.

### Pressures of a modern world

For the first 30 years of independent operation, USPS soared. It created a national network fine-tuned to handle and deliver letter mail fast and reliably. Revenues and profits were rising to the point that Congress, in its 2006 Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act, mandated billions of dollars in financial commitments to prefund retiree health benefits.

But with the digital age underway, the legislation's timing coincided with a precipitous decline in the American public's need for letters that continues to this day. What had once been a stable, profitable operation was now burdened with an outmoded network and unrealistic fiscal responsibilities just as revenues began to shrink, and over the next 20 years, the institution would come under increasing financial pressure.

### A bold strategy

As it has done repeatedly throughout its history, USPS would again rise to the challenge. This time a modernization plan was launched in the 2020s that would reverse years of underinvestment and missed opportunities to reshape the Postal Service into a reliable, timely and affordable operation designed to meet the package needs of its e-commerce-driven customers as well as its mail customers — all while meeting its steadfast commitment to service excellence, financial sustainability and workforce empowerment.

The power of this ongoing strategy is evident. New products meet and exceed customer expectations at a price that is good for them as well as the Postal Service's bottom line. Transportation and processing are streamlined, cost-efficient and environmentally sustainable. Together, they are enhancing the Postal Service's world-leading delivery network. And as it proceeds with its latest evolutionary cycle, USPS, importantly, remains a symbol of resilience and ingenuity, proving that it is as vital to American life today as it was 250 years ago.



**USPS**  
**250**

## *Flight Path*

**The Postal Service's 250th anniversary symbol, in use throughout 2025, is known as the Eagle in Flight.**

It was created in collaboration with the Turner Duckworth agency to showcase the iconic and unique role of connecting the nation through the past, present and future.

The bald eagle has been featured on the USPS seal since 1970, when the Postal Reorganization Act was signed into law. Created by influential designer Raymond Loewy, the seal is known as the Eagle Poised for Flight, while the corporate logo introduced in 1993 is known as the Sonic Eagle, designed by a unit of the Young & Rubicam agency.



The eagle encompasses everything USPS stands for and embraces what the nation's founders chose to represent America's strength and freedom.

The face of the Eagle in Flight honors the Postal Service's roots while amplifying the notion of delivering into the future through the wings. As it takes flight, the eagle's wings show confidence and purpose, while the vibrant colors exude a spirit of celebration.

Inspired by the Eagle Poised for Flight, the Eagle in Flight leaves no doubt that the Postal Service is boldly embarking on its next 250 years.





# The Time of Our

The history of the Postal Service is a recurring pattern of innovation and growth to build an organization that binds the nation together and meets its evolving mailing and shipping needs.



## 1775

On July 26, 1775, the Second Continental Congress creates an independent postal system and appoints Benjamin Franklin postmaster general. On Aug. 7, 1775, he creates the precursor to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

## 1792

The Post Office Act of 1792 codifies the primary control by Congress over postal policy and route designation.

## 1838

U.S. railroads are congressionally designated as post routes.



## 1970

On Aug. 12, 1970, President Richard Nixon signs the **Postal Reorganization Act**, transforming the Post Office Department into the independent, self-financing U.S. Postal Service on July 1, 1971.



## 1963

The Zone Improvement Plan's **ZIP Code** is introduced July 1, 1963, to speed up mail processing. In 1965, the Post Office Department becomes the first postal system to use **optical scanners** to read ZIP Codes. These machines sort mail at a rate of up to 36,000 letters per hour.

## 1968

**Priority Mail service begins.**

## 1920

Postage meters authorized.

## 1942

**V-Mail** (or Victory Mail) becomes a critical part of the war effort, connecting troops in Europe and Asia with their families back home.



## 1913

**Parcel Post service begins** Jan. 1, 1913. More than 4 million packages are handled in the first five days, and roughly 300 million are handled in the first six months.

## 1975

Post Office class categories are eliminated.

## 1977

The last Railway Post Office makes its final run.

## 1983

The ZIP+4 code is introduced.

## 1994

The Postal Service goes online with *usps.com*.



## 2006

The **Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act** is signed into law, making more than 150 changes to USPS regulations.

## 2007

The first **Forever stamp** — the Liberty Bell — is issued.



## 2014

**Sunday package delivery begins.**

## 2017

**USPS launches its free Informed Delivery** digital preview and tracking service.



## 2020

More than 40 percent of American voters cast ballots by mail.



# Life: 1775–2025

**1845**

The Post Office starts the **first commercial telegraph service**.



**1858**

The installation of **street letter collection boxes** begins.



**1860**

**Pony Express starts** April 3, 1860. It continues through Oct. 26, 1861, two days after the completion of the transcontinental telegraph.



**1847**

The first U.S. **postage stamps** are authorized, encouraging senders rather than recipients to pay for mail.

**1911**

**First authorized U.S. Mail flight.**



**1902**

**Rural free delivery** becomes a permanent service.



**1872**

The U.S. Post Office Department is **formally established as an executive department**, with postmaster general elevated to a Cabinet position.



**1861-1865**

The Civil War marks a period of postal innovation, including the **creation of money orders, mail-in ballots, free city delivery and postage based on a letter's weight** rather than distance traveled. **The first U.S. Railway Post Office route** is established in 1864.

**1893**

**First commemorative stamps issued.**

**2021**

On March 23, 2021, **USPS enacts its Delivering for America plan** to modernize and revitalize the organization into a competitive, financially sustainable operation that can continue to meet its universal service obligation.



**2022**

**USPS assembles and delivers COVID-19 test kits** to homes nationwide. **The Postal Service Reform Act** authorizes key financial components of the Delivering for America plan.



**2024**

**The first Next Generation Delivery Vehicles** are deployed.



**2025**

**USPS celebrates 250 years** of helping to shape America.





# Forward *Momentum*

Four years into the Delivering for America plan, the Postal Service is on a promising trajectory.

**W**ith its vision of a streamlined, modernized and cost-conscious Postal Service focused on financial stability, high performance and employee well-being, the 10-year Delivering for America transformation plan has powered a long-overdue evolution of USPS. Four years after the plan's introduction in 2021, the Postal

Service's full potential is coming into focus.

#### **A new operating model**

Real progress has been made in creating an integrated processing and distribution network that speeds up mail and package handling. The revamped hub-and-spoke model is removing long-standing inefficiencies. Coupled with the new, enhanced





transportation system and a much-needed investment in vehicles and infrastructure, USPS is primed to improve reliability and service performance as the modernized processing and distribution network reaches critical mass, all while reducing operating costs.

Changes to the organizational structure have made every level more adaptable and accountable. Major investments in the postal workforce and modern sorting equipment have improved morale and helped highly trained USPS employees to better use their knowledge and skills.

### **A strengthened product portfolio**

Delivering for America has allowed USPS to take a much more aggressive approach to growing its shipping business. New products such as USPS Ground Advantage, Priority Mail Next Day and USPS Connect are changing the competitive landscape. The postal network's greater precision and efficiency are making it possible for USPS to reclaim market share and generate new revenue by providing American businesses and consumers with the affordable, reliable and dependable shipping options they need.

### **Organizational progress**

Delivering for America has been a critical driver of change. Projected 10-year losses have been more than halved despite the pressures of inflation, which has hampered stability and growth across the shipping and mailing industry since the plan began.

While Delivering for America has already produced meaningful gains, work continues to make the Postal Service a more competitive organization that can maintain its universal service obligation. With 250 years of dedication, resilience and service to the nation, USPS is not just adapting to the future — it is shaping it.

# Delivering for America: The First Four Years

**Activated 9 regional processing and distribution centers, 19 regional transfer hubs and 17 local processing centers**

**Activated 101 sorting and delivery centers,** reaching 16 million customers daily

**Acquired more than 25,000 of 106,480 planned new delivery vehicles**

**Deployed 565 package sorters** and increased daily processing capability to **60 million packages**

**Generated \$23.2 billion in revenue from USPS Ground Advantage** between July 2023 and March 2025

**Grew FY 2024 total revenue by 14.3%, or \$10.1 billion,** over Delivering for America base projections

**Cut 10-year projected losses** from \$200 billion to \$80 billion

**Moved from annual to semiannual price change**

**Invested \$18.9 billion in infrastructure**

**Increased package volume** from 6.2 billion (2019) to **7.3 billion (2024), an 18% increase**

**Delivered over 930 million COVID-19 test kits** to 91 million households

**Converted 217,000 precareer employees** to career status

**Cut supervisor vacancy rate** from 15% to 5.8%

**Eliminated 2.8 million trips annually,** resulting in **savings of \$977 million** and **avoiding more than 550,700 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions**

**Reduced long-haul truck trips** by 14%

**Lowered transportation and related processing costs** by **\$1.6 billion annually**

**Saved \$3.6 billion annually** through refined service standards

**Saved more than \$1 billion and 281,000 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions** by moving air volume to ground transportation





# Bear With Us

The Postal Service and wildfire prevention have gone hand in, um, paw for decades.



Even Mr. ZIP doesn't have his own personalized five-digit ZIP Code.

No, that distinction belongs to just two individuals: a certain jolly old elf reachable via USPS Operation Santa at 88888 and a certain slightly more serious old bear who *really* wants you to put out that fire when you pack up your campsite and leave the great outdoors behind.

That most civic-minded of ursines, Smokey Bear, turning 81 this year, was created during World War II by the U.S. Forest Service and the Ad Council. The Smokey Bear Wildfire Prevention campaign is the

longest-running public service advertising campaign in U.S. history. He became so popular — and received so many fan letters — that in 1964, a year after the ZIP Code was introduced, the Post Office Department gave him his very own: 20252. It was decommissioned in 1994 and reinstated in 2014 to mark

Smokey's 70th birthday. The Postal Service even honored Smokey Bear with a stamp in 1984.

The Forest Service initially featured Disney's superstar deer, Bambi, in a wildfire prevention campaign, but the Hollywood

studio only allowed use of the character for a year. After that, the Ad Council hired an artist to create a new mascot. Making his debut on Aug. 9, 1944, he was named after "Smokey" Joe Martin, a heroic New York City firefighter injured on the job.

Smokey Bear wears a personalized forest ranger hat, blue jeans and a belt with a gold buckle. He is often depicted with a round-point shovel. His iconic slogan, "Remember ... only YOU can prevent forest fires," was updated in 2001 to "Only YOU





can prevent wildfires.” The Forest Service wanted to encompass areas like grasslands that were also at risk, and distinguish between careless fires and controlled burns, which are a forest management strategy.

At first, Smokey appeared on posters displayed in national parks and on buses, trolley cars — and mail trucks. In the 1950s, Smokey was featured in radio public service announcements with celebrities such as Roy Rogers. The spots included a catchy tune that inserted “the” between “Smokey” and “Bear” to improve the rhythm — which is why people may mistakenly think his name is Smokey the Bear.

Smokey became part of American pop culture and a high-value commodity. In 1952, he was removed from the public domain and placed under the control of the secretary of Agriculture, so that royalties could be directed toward educating the public about wildfire prevention. That same year, a Smokey Bear toy was produced that included a mail-in card to become a junior forest ranger. By 1955, a half-million children had applied.

A short film, “Little Smokey,” narrated by William Boyd in character as famed cowboy Hopalong Cassidy, was released in 1953. It told the story of a real-life American black bear rescued from a 1950 fire in Lincoln National Forest, NM. The 3-month-old cub had climbed a tree to escape the blaze but suffered burns to his paws and hind legs. The story was picked up coast to coast,



Ranger Ray Bell with the real-life Smokey in 1950, shortly after the cub's rescue from a New Mexico forest fire.

**Smokey became so popular — and received so many fan letters — that in 1964, a year after the ZIP Code was introduced, the Post Office Department gave him his very own: 20252.**

and countless Americans followed his recovery. The orphan was named after Smokey Bear and became a living symbol for conservation and forest fire prevention. During his quarter-century at the National Zoo in Washington, DC, he received up to 13,000 or more letters a week.

The Forest Service's Smokey has appeared on TV with celebrities such as B.B. King, Leonard Nimoy, Ray Charles and Dolly Parton. Sam Elliott (who happens to share a birthday with Smokey) has voiced the character in ads since 2008, while Stephen Colbert, Al Roker, Jeff Foxworthy and

the late Betty White, an honorary forest ranger, have voiced an animated emoji of him. Smokey also assisted the Postal Service in the dedication ceremony for the Playful Otters in Snow stamps in 2021 in Otter, MT.

As wildfires become more destructive and widespread, it's more important than ever that Smokey's message is heard.

His website, [smokeybear.com](http://smokeybear.com), has tips about fire safety and protecting the nation's wildlife and natural habitats. There's a kids' section with coloring books and activities. Smokey's on social media, of course, but there's always the tried-and-true method for fans to make a connection: Write to him via the U.S. Mail at Smokey Bear, Washington, DC 20252 — and the Postal Service will know just how to get cards and letters into his friendly, beloved paws.







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Historical significance abounds in this slice of Boston's North End and downtown. The lively waterfront neighborhood known for its large Italian American community and summertime outdoor feasts was once home to the seat of British power in Boston and the first Post Office in America. It's the birthplace of Benjamin Franklin, who became the nation's first postmaster general 250 years ago on July 26, 1775.



## Boston, MA

Franklin was born in 1706 in a modest home at 17 Milk Street across from the Old South Meeting House, the organizing point for the Boston Tea Party, a pivotal event of the American Revolution. There's a Post Office on the street, too, at 31 Milk, in a classical revival building built in 1922.

The 15th of 17 children, Franklin lived on Milk Street for six years until his family moved to nearby Hanover Street, where his father's soap and candle shop was located. At the age of 17, Franklin ran away to Philadelphia to escape his apprenticeship to his elder brother. His childhood home on Milk was destroyed by a fire in 1811. The current building is adorned with a bust of the Founding Father and the inscription "Birthplace of Franklin."

Franklin had a long and decorated postal career. He spent years under the British-controlled postal system prior to the establishment of the United States. In 1737, he was appointed postmaster of Philadelphia. Elliot Benger, whose title was His Majesty's Deputy Postmaster General for North America, entrusted Franklin as the comptroller with financial oversight over neighboring Post Offices. In 1753, Franklin and William Hunter of Virginia jointly assumed Benger's duties.

By the time the Second Continental Congress created an independent postal system in 1775 under Franklin's leadership, his accomplishments already



Left: An actor impersonating Benjamin Franklin.  
Above: The Old State House. Next page: St. Anthony's Feast.

included surveying post roads and Post Offices, introducing a simple accounting method for postmasters and having riders carry mail by night as well as by day, speeding service.

Decades before Franklin's birth, his Boston neighborhood became home

to the first Post Office in Colonial America. In 1639, the Massachusetts General Court designated Richard Fairbanks' Tavern, which was located around today's 244 Washington Street, as the site for letters traveling to and from overseas posts. Though it may seem peculiar to have a Post Office in a tavern, it reflected a common European practice familiar to people in the colony who needed to communicate with those in countries they left behind.

Still in existence as a museum at 206 Washington Street is the Old State House, the center of royal government in the Massachusetts Bay Colony and the focus of many



of the Revolution's most dramatic events, including the 1770 Boston Massacre, which left nearly a dozen colonists dead or wounded at the hands of British soldiers. It was here, too, on July 18, 1776, that Bostonians gathered under the balcony to hear, for the first time, the Declaration of Independence.

A plaque in Langone Park on Commercial Street memorializes an unusual tragedy in 1919: the Great Molasses Flood. A storage tank filled with over 2 million gallons of the dark brown syrup exploded,

sending a tidal wave of molasses 40 feet high rushing through the streets at 35 mph. Among the casualties: destroyed buildings, 21 dead, 150 injured and countless deceased horses. The area reportedly remained sticky and sweet-smelling for years afterward.

Nowadays aromas waft through the air for much happier reasons: North End's 100-plus Italian restaurants and summer weekends packed with Italian religious and cultural feasts. The largest such event in New England, St. Anthony's

Feast, is a celebration dubbed "the feast of all feasts" by National Geographic.

When locals and tourists converge for the sprawling August party — the visitors among the several million drawn to North End annually — they can watch colorful parades, attend church services, enjoy strolling singers and savor endless culinary delights. And they gather on cobblestone streets that paved the way for an independent nation and the Postal Service that still proudly serves it today.







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