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OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

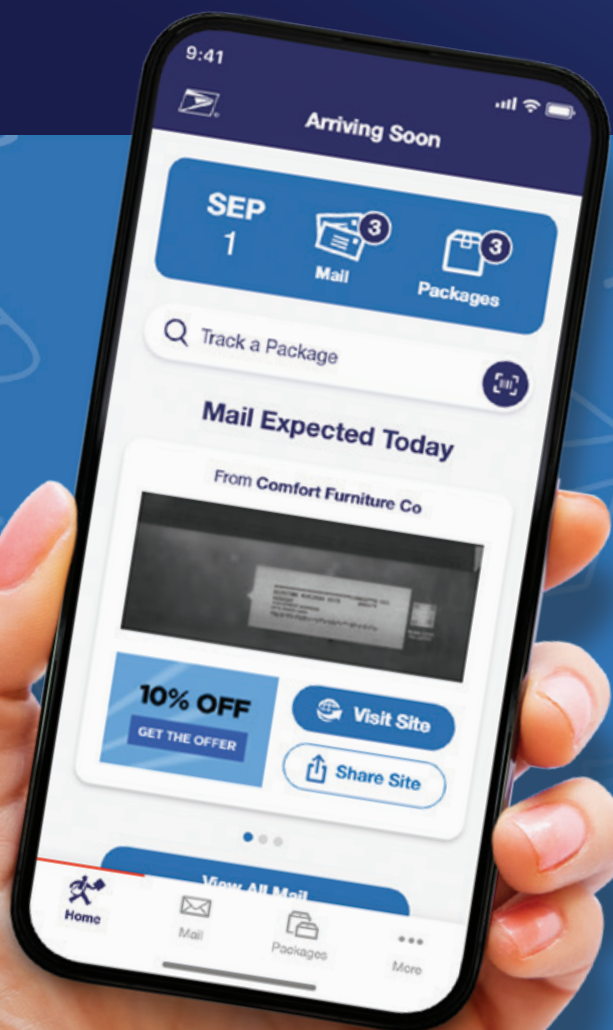
MAGAZINE

DATA-DRIVEN TO SUCCEED



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The new standalone Informed Delivery Mobile app provides you with greater convenience for managing mail and packages — anytime, anywhere.



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PUBLISHER

United States
Postal Service

Jeffery Adams
Vice President,
Corporate Communications

MANAGING EDITOR

Yvonne Yoerger

EDITOR

Jonathan Padgett

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Karim Shah

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR

Steve Kochersperger

DESIGNER

Mike Quigley

ILLUSTRATOR

Yasmine Gateau

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Daniel Afzal

Lynsey Prosser

Cameron Wilder

IMAGE SOURCES

National Park Service

Gates Frontiers Fund
Wyoming Collection and
Jon B. Lovelace
California Collection,
Carol M. Highsmith Archive,
Library of Congress,
Prints and Photographs
Division

CONTACT US

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

The_Eagle@usps.gov

From the Postmaster General



As the U.S. Postal Service continues its journey of transformation, the organization is embracing a fresh approach to collecting and using data.

By unifying our functional groups and leveraging the power of our network modernization, we are renewing vigor in our operations. Guided by consolidated data analysis, we are creating a superior customer experience and working diligently to elevate our service performance and position USPS well for continued improvement.

As we transition this year from celebrating the 250th anniversary of the American mail system to celebrating the country's semiquincentennial, the past continues to provide insightful perspectives, as we highlight in this issue of *The Eagle*.

Pony Express admirers can revisit its accomplishments as they support an annual re-creation in June. We also look back at E-COM, a forgotten but influential part of our notable history of postal innovation, when USPS pushed the boundaries of electronic communications years before its widespread use. And we recognize the vigilance and protection provided by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service for more than two and a half centuries.

These features remind us that dedication, inspiration and customer focus have always guided our public service mission.

Thank you for reading *The Eagle*.

Your commitment to the Postal Service and our customers is the foundation of our strength and success. Stay safe and keep moving forward.

David P. Steiner

Postmaster General and Chief Executive Officer
United States Postal Service

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A visit to ZIP Code 88220

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.

The Rest of the Story

Spotlight

A postal employee makes a difference by building beds for kids — for keeps.

Stacy Douglas has served Sioux Falls, SD, for over two decades as a letter carrier. Two years ago, when the lifelong South Dakotan learned of a pressing community need — providing beds for children — she didn't even have to sleep on it.

The Sioux Falls chapter of the national charity Sleep in Heavenly Peace was reopening in 2024 after a COVID-19 pandemic hiatus, and a friend recruited Douglas to volunteer with building, delivering and assembling beds, as well as drumming up donations of new mattresses, protectors, sheets, comforters and pillows.

It took only one delivery to connect with the organization's mission on a deeply personal level.

"It was for a 16-year-old boy," Douglas recalled, "and he told me this was the first bed he'd ever had. That really spoke to me because my son was the same age. I was blown away by how appreciative this young man was. He was so grateful for something that most of us take for granted. That really touched my heart."

Since reopening, the Sioux Falls group — one of over 200 Sleep in Heavenly Peace chapters — has delivered more than 850 beds, each one illuminating unseen needs behind closed doors.

"The effect it has on these kids is remarkable. I've had them tell me they've slept on the floor, on an air mattress, a pool float, a pile of clothes, on couches, a blanket," Douglas said.

"I just had a friend, a teacher, seeking help for a student who sleeps in the bathtub."

"The effect it has on these kids is remarkable."

STACY DOUGLAS

Letter Carrier
Sioux Falls, SD

Families can request a bed on the organization's website. Deliveries are typically made in under two weeks, thanks to a whirlwind of volunteer activity behind the scenes, including "build days," hosted by local businesses and churches, that focus on cutting lumber, predrilling holes, sanding and staining frames, and putting together headboards.

Upon delivery, volunteers will often find an extra pair of hands excited to help with final assembly: those of the young recipients themselves.

The connection Douglas feels to the cause has resonated with postal colleagues, too. She led 2024 and 2025 holiday season donation drives that resulted in over 100 bedding sets, as well as

numerous mattress protectors, comforters and pillows. Her co-workers have also been inspired to help with bed deliveries.

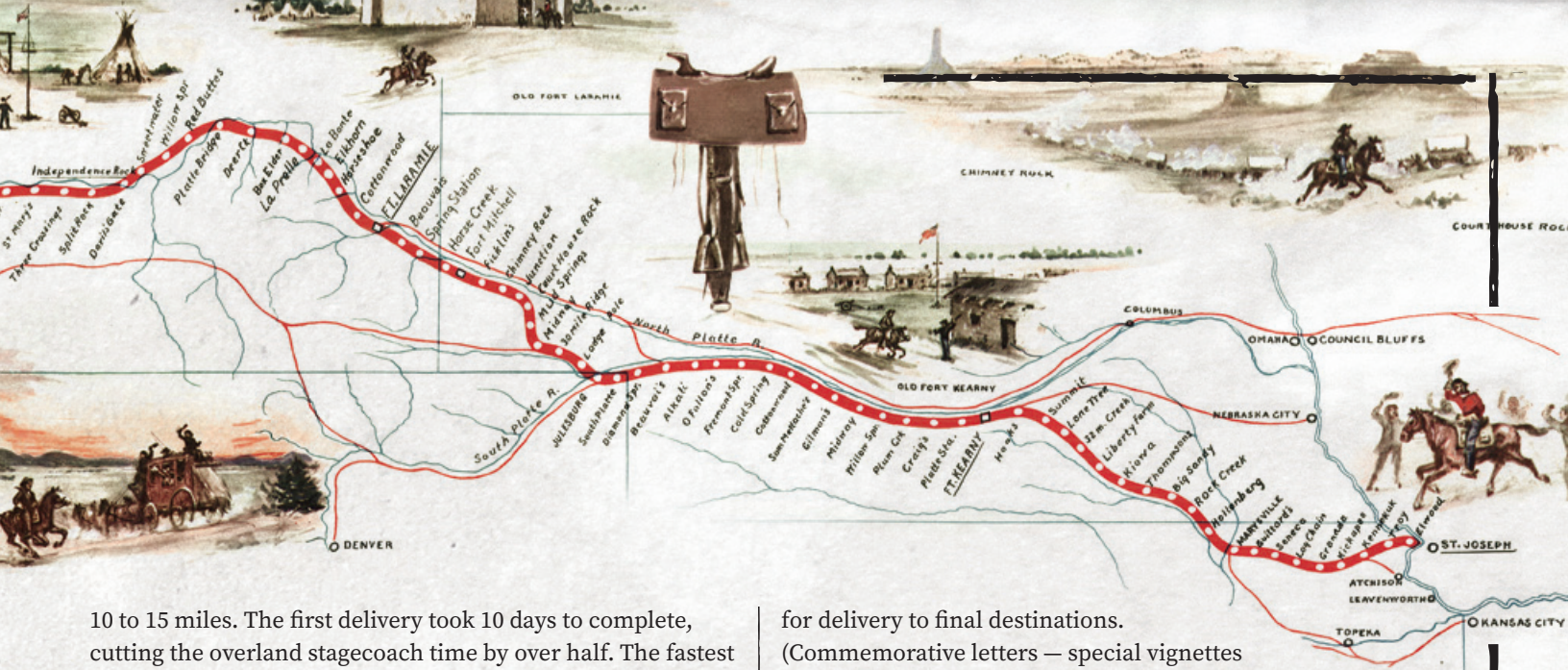
"It's amazing when our postal community comes together like this," said Douglas, who also serves as the South Dakota state president for the National Association of Letter Carriers. "Clerks, management, carriers — everyone has pitched in and made a big difference for kids in Sioux Falls."

And supporting Sleep in Heavenly Peace has become more than just a postal family affair. Douglas now counts her husband and her son among her fellow volunteers.

"My son does deliveries with me," Douglas said. "He's really moved by the impact this has on kids. And I like how I'm passing this down to him, imparting how important it is to give back to our community."

Learn more at
shpbeds.org.





10 to 15 miles. The first delivery took 10 days to complete, cutting the overland stagecoach time by over half. The fastest delivery took place in March 1861 when President Abraham Lincoln's inaugural address was carried from St. Joseph to Sacramento in an impressive 7 days and 17 hours.

In July 1861, the Pony Express, deeply in debt despite charging as much as \$5 a half-ounce for a letter at a time when ordinary U.S. postage was no more than 10 cents, began operating under contract as a mail route. By late October, upon the completion of the transcontinental telegraph line, the company folded. Still, over a century and a half later, its memory lives on.

The National Pony Express Association's Annual Re-Ride, a 10-day June event, recreates the original 1,966-mile route from St. Joseph to Sacramento. Riders carry personal and commemorative letters that are handed off to USPS

for delivery to final destinations.

(Commemorative letters — special vignettes of Pony Express history — can be purchased for the 1860 price of \$5. Personal letters can be sent for \$10 each. Those interested in sending a letter can learn more at the association's website, nationalponyexpress.org.)

"The Re-Ride is our way of keeping the legend of the Pony Express alive," said Petra Keller, the association's spokesperson. "It's a tremendous accomplishment. We celebrate with special events along the trail with the hope of engaging younger riders who will take up the mantle of preserving the history of the Pony Express for future generations."

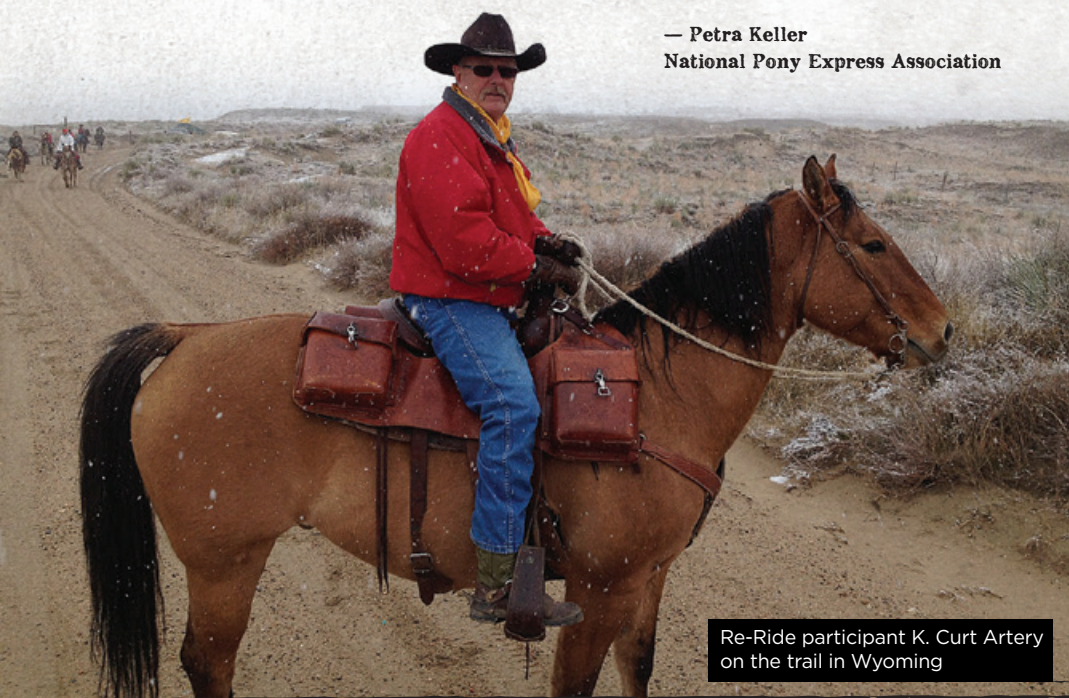
Community celebrations and educational activities take place in partner towns along the Re-Ride path, with a special nod this year to the 250th anniversary of the Declaration

of Independence. Those who wish to follow the journey online can view an interactive National Park Service map on the association's website thanks to a nifty modern-day addition to the saddlebag: a GPS device.

"It's important to highlight the Pony Express during America's semiquincentennial because of the vital role in connecting California and the Midwestern territories to other parts of the country," Keller said. "It's also important to express appreciation for the way communication has evolved. Now we can send a text message and get a response in a few seconds. Back then, you had to wait at least a week or two if you were waiting for a reply. It's remarkable to see where we were and compare that with today."

"The Re-Ride is our way of keeping the legend of the Pony Express alive."

— Petra Keller
National Pony Express Association



Re-Ride participant K. Curt Artery on the trail in Wyoming

CASE(S) CLOSED

From mail bombs and biological threats to global fraud schemes, postal inspectors have spent 250 years safeguarding the nation's mail — and the trust Americans place in it.



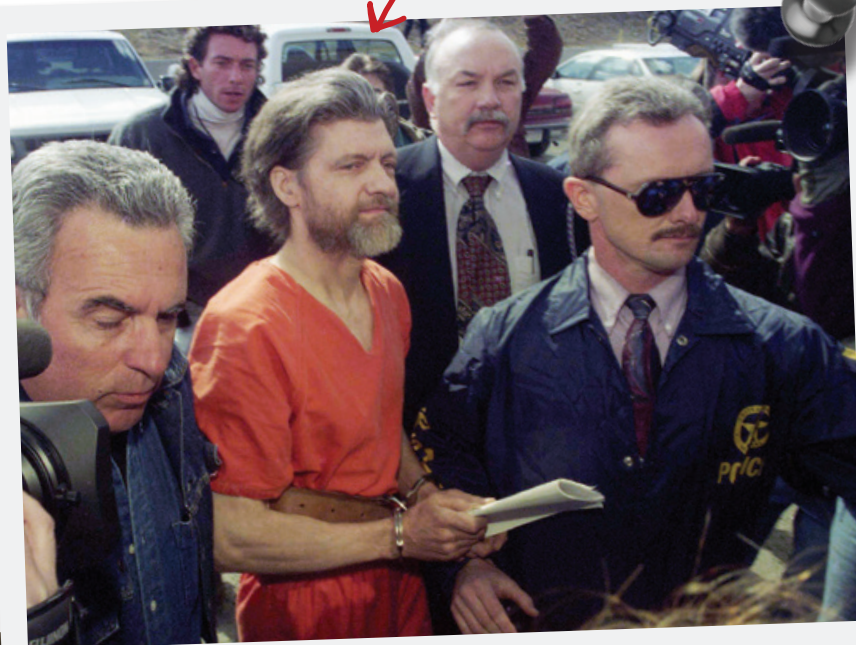
n May 25, 1978, a passerby found a package in a University of Illinois parking lot. Believing the package was undelivered mail, university officials returned it to the sender listed on the label. When the package arrived at his office, Northwestern University professor

Buckley Crist Jr. grew suspicious. He hadn't mailed the package in the first place, and he didn't know where it had come from, so he called campus security.

The package later exploded, injuring security guard Terry Marker. Over the next 17 years, the "UNABOM" case — code-named for the UNiversity and

Airline BOMBing targets involved — became one of the most challenging in the long history of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and helped modernize forensic mail analysis and interagency cooperation.

Working with an FBI-led task force, postal inspectors and Postal Inspection Service forensic specialists identified patterns in packaging, postmarks and mailing locations. These investigative steps, combined with a tip, culminated in the 1996 arrest of Theodore Kaczynski, whose bombs killed three people and injured nearly two dozen.



Support and protect

The Postal Inspection Service, like the Postal Service itself, originated in 1775, making it the nation's oldest law enforcement agency. Formed during wartime, its goal was to protect the nation's mail when reliable communication was essential to the country's survival. As mail routes expanded across the new nation, so

did the need to safeguard correspondence from theft, fraud and interference.

Postal inspectors now enforce more than 200 federal statutes, but their core mission remains the same: support and protect the Postal Service and its employees, infrastructure and customers; enforce the laws that defend the nation's mail system from illegal or dangerous use; and ensure public trust in the mail.

Ending a biohazard attack

That mission was uniquely tested at the start of the 21st century, when the nation faced a new and invisible menace moving through the mail.

Just a few years after Kaczynski's arrest, another dangerous threat to postal employees and facilities surfaced when letters containing anthrax spores were mailed to news organizations and U.S. senators.

From late September through November 2001, the public was on high alert as postal inspectors led efforts to trace contaminated mail, secure postal facilities and protect postal employees and the public. Postal inspectors worked alongside the FBI, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and public health agencies to reconstruct mail flows and identify exposure points.

Five people were killed — including two postal employees, Joseph Curseen Jr. and Thomas Morris Jr. — and 17 others, including a postal inspector, were infected. The case transformed mail security nationwide, leading to new screening technologies, biohazard protocols and long-term investments to protect the mail system from chemical and biological threats.

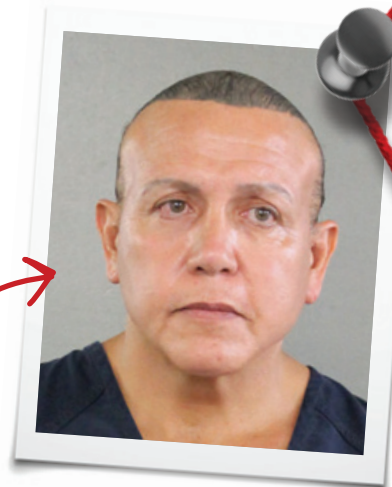
Racing against time

In 2018, the Postal Inspection Service again faced a coordinated campaign of mailed explosive devices, this time aimed at political figures, media organizations and public officials nationwide. Postal inspectors led the mail-tracking and recovery effort, working rapidly to intercept devices — containing a mix of explosive powder from fireworks, shards of glass and pool chemicals — before they detonated.

Their analysis of mailing patterns and packaging helped locate the perpetrator, Cesar Sayoc, within days by identifying where and how the packages entered the mailstream. Postal inspectors also assisted in securing suspicious parcels, coordinating

their safe handling and transport to federal labs and integrating postal data with forensic evidence such as fingerprints, DNA and surveillance video.

The following year, Sayoc — who mailed 16 pipe bombs — pleaded guilty to 65 felonies and was sentenced to 20 years in federal prison. The case reinforced the Postal Inspection Service's role in protecting the mail system from terrorism and ideologically motivated violence.





Rooting out robbery

Lower-profile cases are no less important to the Postal Inspection Service, which works tirelessly every day to keep employees and the mail out of harm's way. Facing increased reports of mail theft and related violent crimes against letter carriers, the Postal Service and the Postal Inspection Service jointly launched Project Safe Delivery in May 2023, yielding notable results.

In July that year, 19-year-old Lamarion Gray of Cincinnati approached a letter carrier delivering mail on foot. He brandished a gun, pointed it at her and demanded her keys. After she complied, he ran from the scene. Postal inspectors canvassed the neighborhood, talked with residents and found surveillance footage showing Gray going into his girlfriend's home.

When postal inspectors executed a search warrant at Gray's residence, they recovered large amounts of stolen mail, including many stolen checks. In March 2024, he pleaded guilty to one count of robbery of U.S. property. He's serving a prison sentence of seven and a half years.

Taking a stand against scams

Not all threats to the mail system arrive in padded envelopes or target public figures. Many take quieter, more persistent forms.

For more than two decades, a mail-based psychic fraud using the name Maria Duval exploited Postal Service customers' trust in personal correspondence.

Beginning in the mid-1990s, mysterious letters — often addressed directly to recipients — promised spiritual insight, predictions and guidance from a famed psychic. Once victims responded with money, they were drawn into an ongoing cycle of increasingly personalized letters, requests for additional payments and mailed trinkets portrayed as meaningful or valuable.

Postal inspectors first detected the scheme in the early 2000s after identifying unusual patterns in change-of-address requests and mail forwarding tied to a small group of addresses.

That trail led postal inspectors to an international mass-mailing operation led by a Canadian man, Patrice Runner. At its peak, the scam targeted thousands of victims each week. In 2023, Runner was convicted on multiple federal fraud charges. Four co-conspirators pleaded guilty.

Through sustained investigation and enforcement, the Postal Inspection



The Crystal Pendulum Gift I am offering you today is identical to the one mentioned in the true stories inside —

Service dismantled one of the largest fraud schemes in U.S. history — totaling an estimated \$200 million stolen from more than 1.3 million individuals — and ultimately helped make living victims whole through lawsuits against several data brokers.

An enduring legacy

For 250 years, the Postal Inspection Service has adapted to new threats while staying grounded in a single mission: protecting the mail and the people who depend on it. These cases span decades and disciplines, but together they underscore a constant truth — public trust in the Postal Service begins with keeping the mail safe.

DATA-DRIVEN TO SUCCEED





The Postal Service is using new, wide-ranging metrics to accelerate service improvement.

and that every postal operation is aligned to operating plans — and with the organization's strategic vision of financial sustainability and service excellence.

Accurate, actionable data

A pivotal breakthrough in this process was the creation of what has become known as “a single source of truth” for performance metrics. Rather than relying on spreadsheets created independently by each functional group, the Postal Service has consolidated the collection of the vast amounts of data generated across its operations.

That consolidation, implemented in early 2025, now yields unified, cross-functional datasets that serve as the primary benchmarks across all postal functions.

This fresh approach has been highly effective, particularly for processes where multiple operating functions meet, such as the first leg of the mail and package journey.

It's there that customer service, transportation and processing come together to induct volume into the mailstream. There are multiple touchpoints, and failure at any one of them will have a ripple effect on service performance.

In the past, ownership of data was held by each operating function, which could create a fractured picture of the entire process. Now, thanks to the coordinated, single-source-of-truth approach to operational integrity, consolidated data provides full visibility — down to the minute — from first touch through all stages of transportation to the time processing takes possession.

This approach is not about apportioning blame. Instead, it gives USPS the power to correctly identify a chokepoint and quickly diagnose and remedy an issue to keep

Since early 2025, the U.S. Postal Service has consistently and deliberately improved its service performance. Much of this can be attributed to the compounding effects of network modernization since 2021 reaching critical mass. But behind the scenes, another transformation has occurred — one where every operational function is now working collectively with the same unambiguous and trusted data to achieve excellence.

Together, Retail and Delivery, Logistics, and Processing and Distribution Operations have added accountability and visibility to the speed, capacity and enhanced reliability of new streamlined operations. Overseeing the effort is the Chief Solutions and Strategy Office, including the network solutions, performance excellence, integrated operations and planning, continuity and preparedness, and field operations support teams.

Streamlining and enhancing network planning decision-making and execution provides strong alignment across operational, sales and marketing stakeholders.

This approach ensures mishaps or delays are not being missed,

operations in line with expected service performance.

A visual guide

Speed is enabled by turning data into concise, tailored, easy-to-understand visual tools that present the issue and appropriate solutions step-by-step, all sent directly to managers' desktops and tablets.

In addition to resolving immediate issues, these visuals also support long-term improvement of postal operations by allowing employees to track trends, compare output and confirm whether operational changes are having the intended effect.

The result is a system where challenges are visible sooner, solutions are clearer and progress is measured. Employees at every level gain a shared understanding of performance, reinforcing a culture of accountability, transparency and continuous improvement.

Turning Things Around

The Postal Service's focus on discipline and consistency has a broad effect on operations, especially at regional processing and distribution centers where fiscal first quarter 2026 First-Class Mail service performance markedly improved over the same period in 2025.

FACILITY	PERCENTAGE POINT CHANGE
Atlanta, GA	↑ 10
Portland, OR	↑ 8
Richmond, VA	↑ 1
Boise, ID	↑ 8
Houston, TX	↑ 5
Chicago, IL	↑ 2
Charlotte, NC	↑ 3
Indianapolis, IN	↑ 3
Jacksonville, FL	↑ 7
National	↑ 3

Effective oversight

For data to work, it must be accurate, verified and trusted. To meet that standard, USPS has embraced a rigorous, continuous, boots-on-the-ground verification approach known as Gemba.

Based on proven Japanese lean management concepts, Gemba emphasizes direct observation and learning from the facility floor rather than relying solely on reports or dashboards. For USPS, this means deploying specialized teams of postal employees to hundreds of facilities to review processes, engage front-line employees, and assess safety and compliance.

Gemba teams — which can conduct walks up to five times per day at high-priority sites — compile checklists and photographs into executive reports that validate data and pinpoint bottlenecks.

These audits are not intended to be simple compliance checks. Rather,



they serve as diagnostic tools that can be used to refine processes and identify root causes that — coupled with continuous tracking of leading indicators such as customer call volume, package processing capacity and service performance — ensure USPS is continually measuring and evaluating its operations, all with an eye on improving the customer experience.

Modern network, disciplined execution

But why was this strategic shift in operational oversight required?

The modernization of USPS is one of the largest overhauls in the organization's history, and such an extensive undertaking will naturally present challenges. But when inevitable service disruptions arose, some outside observers misperceived them as directly connected to the redesign plan and streamlining

For the Postal Service, improved service performance translates directly into financial stability and strategic flexibility.

of the postal processing and distribution network.

Internal analysis found instead that most of the new and upgraded postal facilities were performing at or above expectations and much better than the legacy operating model. Where service shortfalls occurred, they were typically concentrated in a handful of large, critical facilities where

process discipline and consistent execution had lagged.

The solution was a fresh approach to oversight and analysis that championed data-driven, cross-functional collaboration among postal functions rather than individual, siloed problem-solving.



Making a difference

This disciplined strategy has produced measurable gains in service performance since its deployment, but the ultimate test of its resilience was the 2025 peak season.

The results speak for themselves. During its busiest season, and with volume increasing to 16 billion mail items and packages, the Postal Service delivered within 2.5 days on average. This is compared with 2.8 days during the 2024 holiday season, when volume was lower.

On-time delivery scores were higher virtually across the board, rising for single-piece First-Class Mail, Presorted First-Class Mail, Marketing Mail, Periodicals and packages. Other benchmark performance data showed improvement, too, including a 23 percent decline in calls to the Customer Care Center (1-800-ASK-USPS) and a 44 percent drop in package-related inquiries, metrics that typically rise during service disruptions.

USPS has brought stability, accountability and greater visibility to every workflow and, importantly, deployed a problem-solving process that is quick and effective.

Overall customer satisfaction scores related to inquiries went up 6.4 percentage points year-over-year for the 2025 peak season.

These gains were not isolated, either. They were reported across the entire network, even at previously

Trending Upward

Since USPS deployed its new data strategy in spring 2025, on-time performance has consistently improved, reflected in comparisons of fiscal first quarter 2026 with fiscal first quarter 2025.

CATEGORY	PERCENTAGE POINT CHANGE
Marketing Mail Destination Entry	↑ 1.6
Package Services	↑ 1.5
Periodicals	↑ 1.4

97.2%

Fiscal first quarter 2026
Package Services
on-time performance

95.1%

Fiscal first quarter 2026
Marketing Mail Destination Entry
on-time performance

87.35%

Fiscal first quarter 2026
First-Class Mail Composite
on-time performance

underachieving facilities, such as at several new regional processing and distribution centers that struggled as they began operations. All performed at or above expectations during the busiest period of 2025.

Setting a new standard

This is the new service performance baseline that customers can expect from USPS. With this cross-functional, collaborative approach firmly established as the standard operating procedure, USPS has brought stability, accountability and greater visibility to every workflow and, importantly, deployed a problem-solving process that is quick and effective.

For business customers, this adds yet another layer of confidence to use USPS as their preferred shipping partner. More consistent schedules allow companies to optimize their inventory and logistics systems; cleaner, more efficient postal processing reduces potential disruption to deliveries; and reliable on-time performance enhances customer satisfaction and brand loyalty.

For the Postal Service, improved service performance translates directly into financial stability and strategic flexibility. As it becomes more reliable and precise, USPS can scale package volume processing, launch new services and better utilize the capacity gains of its massive ongoing investment in employees, facilities and transportation systems. Together, this sets the stage for more revenue.

Recipe for success

The Postal Service is on a mission to improve operations. By ensuring every function is aligned based on trusted, actionable data, USPS is meeting that goal while adding discipline and consistency to its operations. The result is a more agile, accountable and customer-focused Postal Service that is better positioned to meet the demands of an increasingly competitive shipping landscape.

Seeing Is Believing

Sharon Young, Processing Operations Southeast Division senior director, discusses the U.S. Postal Service's improved service performance and the data-driven strategies powering those gains.

How has the use of consolidated data improved service?

In the past, we had different sources of data, which brought different perspectives and different answers. What really makes a difference now is that consolidated data is presented to us visually in a way that spells out the problem and provides step-by-step fixes you can take to the floor. There's follow-up, too, with daily push reports on our desktops that track how each action worked. So, if the first step doesn't work, the report tells you the next step and so on until the root cause is found and corrected. That gives us invaluable insight that we didn't have before. Now we know exactly where to go to fix things.

Are rising service and facility scores reflecting a cultural shift at USPS in terms of communication and problem-solving?

Success seems to be leading to a different attitude — and that's translating into stronger productivity and a better customer experience. It's a virtuous cycle. I see that especially at the Atlanta Regional Processing and Distribution Center. If you walk into that building now versus a year ago, the employees act and talk

very differently, far more positively. We only saw that improvement because everyone, at every level, believed we could succeed. That ownership has turned into follow-through as well. Rather than just smiling about the improved performance, I see my teams talking to each other more, tracking actions and pushing results to keep that momentum going. The most telling sign of the cultural shift was when employees who moved to the Atlanta center were given the option to return to their old facilities. Almost all chose to stay.

Is the improved level of service performance the new normal, and should USPS customers be confident that we'll continue this upward trajectory?

I have 32 years of service, and I've been part of this modernization effort for the last four years, and I can honestly say I now sleep well. We have the right processes in place, people know what they have to do and when, and we have the tools in place to tell us when something's wrong. We've turned a huge ship, and now that it's straight, it would take a lot to push it off course. Sure, we'll hit weather we can't control, but we control how we respond, and we've built the contingencies to recover quickly.





USPS *Celebrates* 250 Years of American Independence



Coming Soon

National stamp cancellation design

July Fourth pictorial postmark

Special Priority Mail boxes

U.S. semiquincentennial window
decorations and signs for Post Offices

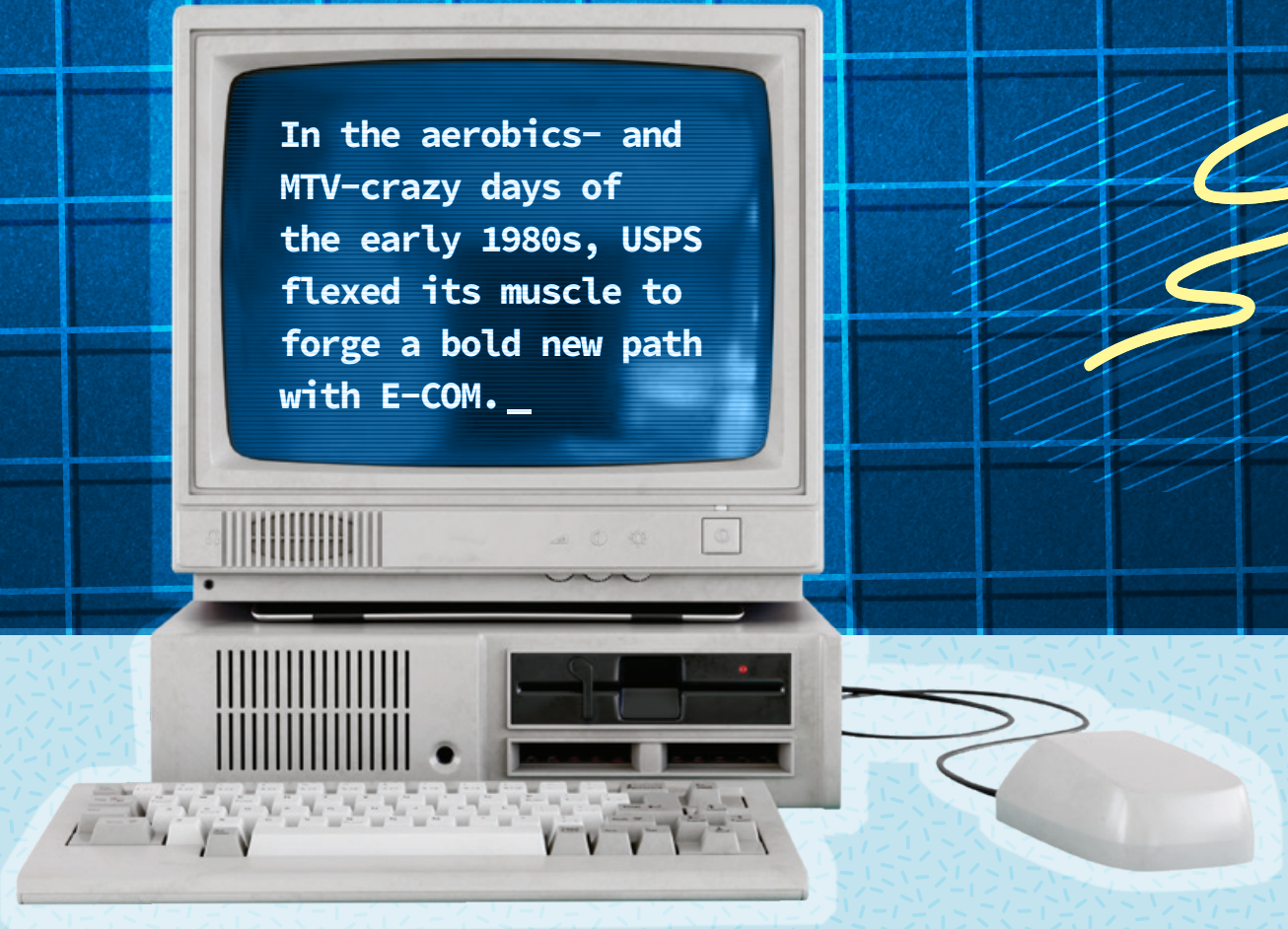
Collectible merchandise for sale
in 3,000 USPS locations

Festive events at Post Offices
open since 1775

Look for More Information About Postal Observances
of This Remarkable Historical Moment!



Let's Get DIGITAL, PHYSICAL

A vintage beige computer monitor and system unit are centered in the lower half of the image. The monitor screen is blue and displays white text. Below the monitor is a matching beige system unit with a floppy disk drive and a keyboard slot. In front of the system unit is a beige keyboard, and to the right is a beige mouse connected by a black cord. The background is a dark blue grid pattern with yellow wavy lines on the left and right sides.

In the aerobics- and
MTV-crazy days of
the early 1980s, USPS
flexed its muscle to
forge a bold new path
with E-COM. _

Long before most Americans ever heard the word “email,” the U.S. Postal Service was already experimenting with it. On Jan. 4, 1982, Postmaster General William Bolger sent the first official E-COM message — electronically transmitted, printed at a distant Post Office, sealed in a blue envelope and delivered like any other letter. It was a quiet moment in postal history, but it marked one of the earliest large-scale attempts to merge digital communication with physical delivery.

E-COM — short for Electronic Computer Originated Mail — let businesses use their own computers to transmit messages via telecommunications lines to one of 25 designated receiving facilities nationwide. USPS then printed each message on letter-size bond paper, sealed it in a blue E-COM envelope and delivered it through the regular mailstream. Senders were limited to two pages, and USPS guaranteed two-day delivery anywhere in the contiguous United States.

For businesses, E-COM offered something no other electronic service could match: a Postal Service date stamp — an early form of trusted digital-to-physical documentation.

What made E-COM especially remarkable was how far outside the traditional postal toolbox it reached. USPS had always embraced innovation, from the nation's first public telegraph office in 1845 to wartime V-Mail and even missile mail. E-COM was a bold effort to stay relevant as computers reshaped communication.

Reaching that point wasn't easy. In the years leading up to launch, E-COM faced a long series of reviews, hearings and regulatory hurdles. Telecommunications firms developing their own electronic mail systems lobbied to restrict USPS to hard-copy delivery. The Postal Rate Commission spent months evaluating the proposal and ultimately required USPS to contract out the electronic transmission portion. That ruling increased costs and shaped the pricing that followed.

Still, the Postal Service pressed forward. E-COM launched at 26 cents for the first page, 5 cents for the second and a \$50 annual fee. In its first year, customers sent 3.2 million messages. By 1983, volume had grown to 15.3 million, and USPS proposed expanding the service by dropping the 200-piece minimum and adding reply-envelope options.

Momentum continued into 1984, when E-COM handled 23 million messages and surpassed 1,000 certified customers. For a brief moment, it looked like the Postal Service had carved out a promising new niche in the emerging world of electronic communication.

But pricing challenges persisted. When USPS requested a modest rate adjustment, the Postal Rate Commission instead recommended sharply higher prices — first 52 cents for the initial page, then 49 cents after reconsideration. The Board of Governors rejected both, warning that such rates would price E-COM out of the market. Without viable pricing and no private buyers willing to take over the system, USPS retired E-COM on Sept. 2, 1985.



Even so, E-COM left a meaningful legacy. It showed that USPS could innovate far beyond traditional mail. It confirmed that customers were ready for hybrid digital-physical services. And it proved that USPS could adapt to new technologies while staying true to its mission of connecting people and businesses across the nation.

Today, as USPS explores and expands tools and technologies — from *usps.com* to Click-N-Ship to Informed Delivery — E-COM stands as a reminder of something essential: The Postal Service has always been willing to imagine what comes next — and bold enough to try it.

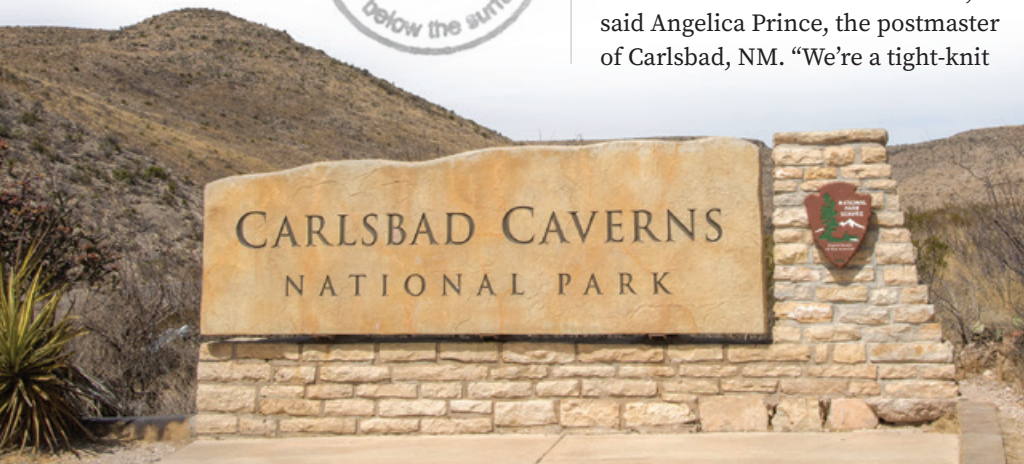


We Go Everywhere!

ZIP Code™
88220



**Meander through
stunning caves, send
a postcard from an
underground mailbox
and if you're into bats,
this is where it's at.**



Carlsbad, NM

It's a land of visual delights, whether you're exploring the underground expanses of sprawling caverns, marveling at the sight of the Guadalupe Mountains or taking in the panoramic vistas of the Chihuahuan Desert.

"The sunsets are beautiful here," said Angelica Prince, the postmaster of Carlsbad, NM. "We're a tight-knit

community of hardworking people — the typical New Mexico city. What makes us unique is our caveman pride."

She's referring to the local high school's athletic team names, the Cavemen and the Cavegirls, and their inspiration: Carlsbad Caverns National Park. The popular attraction has welcomed over 45 million visitors since the establishment of Carlsbad Cave National Monument in 1923 and the national park in 1930.





Explorers-for-a-day descend 750 feet underground where more than 100 caves await them. The most popular tour, the 1.25-mile-long Big Room Trail, rewards guests with what actor and humorist Will Rogers memorably described as “The Grand Canyon with a roof over it.”

The park is also known for many other subterranean spaces. The Green Lake Room, named for its malachite-colored pool, was once considered for use as a nuclear fallout shelter. The King’s Palace features an imposing castle-like formation. The Guadalupe Room, the park’s second-largest, is known for its density of soda-straw-shaped stalactites. And Lake of the Clouds, named for its distinct cloud-like rock formations, is the park’s deepest known point, over 1,000 feet down, where warmer temperatures are ideal for certain bats among the park’s 17 different species. From



spring through fall, the large colony of Brazilian free-tailed bats wows tourists with its spectacular evening outflights.

In the park’s Underground Lunchroom, visitors will find snacks, a gift shop and, surprisingly, a mailbox. After they buy postcards and postage and jot down greetings to addressees,

they can mail the cards on the spot. Before taking them up, up, up to the visitor center to be collected by a carrier, a park employee will apply a rubber stamp that leaves a distinctive impression: “Mailed from 750 feet below the surface at Carlsbad Caverns National Park.”



“The park is the most unique service point in our ZIP Code,” said Prince. “It’s what we’re famous for.”

Other postal connections affirm the park’s beauty. It was recognized with a 23-cent postal card issued in 2002. Fourteen years later, in celebration of the National Park Service’s centennial, Carlsbad Caverns was one of 16 national parks featured on a pane of commemorative Forever stamps.

Aboveground in Carlsbad, population around 32,000, Prince oversees two Post Offices: one in 88220 and another in 88221. Letter carriers drive routes as long as 20 miles and as short as 8 miles, delivering to a mix of boutiques, galleries, restaurants, inns,



homes and more. Those who serve the city’s rural outskirts — some with fewer than 60 service points — will often pass more livestock than people.

“Carriers will drive past cows, goats, deer and sometimes they’ll have to watch out for the occasional road hazard: snakes,” Prince said.



Carlsbad Postmaster Angelica Prince

Although tourism is Carlsbad’s most visible industry, its economy is also bolstered by potash mining and petroleum production. The common name for potassium-bearing minerals and salts, potash is primarily used as a fertilizer, and an estimated 80 percent of the U.S. supply is produced in Carlsbad Basin mines. The greater Permian Basin, which spans across southeastern New Mexico into western Texas, is the highest-producing oil field in the United States.

Carlsbad goes to show that the Land of Enchantment, as New Mexico is known, is a bountiful one indeed — both above the surface and far, far below it.





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