

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE
CHIEF FOIA OFFICER REPORT

March 2011

This report is submitted in response to Attorney General Holder's directive to Agency Chief FOIA Officers to review and to report each year to the Department of Justice on their progress in improving transparency.

The Postal Service's mission is to provide the nation with reliable, affordable, universal mail service. The basic functions of the Postal Service were established in 39 U.S.C. § 101(a): ". . . [T]o bind the Nation together through the personal, educational, literary, and business correspondence of the people." The Postal Service is "an independent establishment of the executive branch" of the government, created by the Postal Reorganization Act, (PRA), 39 U.S.C. §§ 101, et seq., and directed to conduct its operations in accordance with sound business principles.

Under the USPS Chief FOIA Officer, the Manager, Records Office, is responsible for the Postal Service's compliance with the FOIA, except for records maintained by the Postal Inspection Service and the USPS Office of Inspector General (OIG). The Office of the General Counsel (OGC) is responsible for FOIA appeals for the Postal Service and the Postal Inspection Service. This report represents responses from the following FOIA program offices:

- U.S. Postal Service (USPS) FOIA Program
- USPS General Counsel (appeals for USPS and Postal Inspection Service)
- USPS OIG FOIA Program (initial requests and appeals)
- US Postal Inspection Service FOIA Program

The USPS, OIG, and Postal Inspection Service offices serve as FOIA Requester Service Centers.

I. Steps Taken to Apply the Presumption of Openness

1. Description

Postal Service:

Under the direction of the Chief FOIA Officer for the Postal Service, the Manager, Records Office, is responsible for the overall administration of the USPS FOIA Program. The Records Office reports to the Chief Privacy Officer, who reports to the Chief FOIA Officer. The USPS FOIA program is decentralized. The Postal Service has over 32,000

facilities throughout the country at which records are maintained. FOIA Coordinators have been designated to assist records custodians in each one of the USPS Headquarters departments, and each one of the Area and District offices. The FOIA Coordinator, an ad-hoc position, provides procedural guidance on the FOIA to records custodians.

The Records Office is responsible for developing a program and framework to assist records custodians to process FOIA requests. As such, it issues detailed instructions to records custodians on the FOIA. The Records Office staff is available to assist FOIA Coordinators and records custodians or their designees throughout the organization with releasability determinations and other FOIA matters. The General Counsel's office at Postal Service Headquarters and the Law Department's field legal offices provide advice to records custodians on the FOIA, including the applicability of exemptions.

It is Postal Service policy to make its official records available to the public to the maximum extent consistent with the public interest. Postal Service policy requires a practice of full disclosure subject only to the specific exemptions required or authorized by law. Postal Service regulations provide that a custodian may disclose exempt information as a matter of discretion if that disclosure is not prohibited by law and would not cause any foreseeable harm. This policy has been in place for some time, and prior to the issuance of President Obama's FOIA Memorandum.

All of the Records Office staff received training concerning the President's FOIA Memorandum and the Attorney General's FOIA Guidelines and is responsible in carrying out those responsibilities as they respond to FOIA requests. The Records Office is responsible for the development and delivery of FOIA training to FOIA Coordinators, records custodians, and other agency personnel. In the past year, three such training sessions were conducted. These training sessions all covered the provisions contained in the Open Government Act of 2007, and President Obama's Memorandum on the FOIA. In each training session, it was emphasized that the Postal Service is to "adopt a presumption in favor of disclosure" and that the "foreseeable harm" standard is to be applied when withholding agency records. Attendees were also informed that exempt information may be disclosed as a matter of discretion if that disclosure is not prohibited by law and would not cause any foreseeable harm. The Records Office developed a slide presentation titled "Overview of the FOIA." This presentation was posted to the Records Office internal website as a resource for postal employees. This training presentation includes a list of FOIA reference material.

The Records Office has consistently underscored the importance of the presumption of openness to postal employees at all levels of the Postal Service organization. When coordinating the processing of records, the Records Office has diligently applied the presumption of openness, paying particular attention to the "foreseeable harm" standard articulated in the Attorney General's Guidelines. For example, we now continue to regularly release records that may have formerly been withheld under FOIA Exemption 2, such as postal employee email addresses, and in cases where there is no foreseeable harm, we release records that may have formerly been withheld under FOIA Exemption 5. In addition, we have been able to release records originally withheld on the basis of commercial sensitivity (under FOIA Exemption 3 and 39 U.S.C. 410(c)(2)) where the passage of time has significantly decreased such sensitivity or the subject matter records concerns a program or technology that is obsolete. Consideration is also given to any public interest that may exist.

Furthermore, the Records Office works closely with Corporate Relations in responding to news media inquiries. In many instances, Corporate Relations is able to provide news media outlets with information about the Postal Service without a written FOIA request.

Office of General Counsel (OGC):

OGC has continued to underscore the importance of the presumption of openness to its clients at all levels of the Postal Service organization – from custodians of documents on the “front lines” to senior agency management at the Vice Presidential level. Moreover, when deciding administrative appeals, the OGC has diligently applied the presumption, paying particular attention to the “foreseeable harm” standard articulated in the Attorney General’s Guidelines. For example, we now regularly release records that may have formerly been withheld under FOIA Exemption 2. Moreover, we have been able to release records originally withheld on the basis of commercial sensitivity (under FOIA Exemption 3 and 39 U.S.C. 410(c)(2)) where the passage of time has significantly decreased such sensitivity.

Office of Inspector General (OIG):

OIG FOIA staff attended training given by the Office of Information and Privacy and conducted training for OIG offices on a quarterly basis. The OIG has updated relevant sections of its “Inspector General Manual.” OIG records do not indicate the extent to which it waives exemptions. However, because of its presumption of openness, it routinely maximizes the amount of information released. The most notable waived exemption is FOIA Exemption 7(A). The OIG, in certain cases, avoids applying Exemption 7(A) even when investigations have not officially concluded if the release would not endanger the investigative or prosecutorial action. Recommendations contained in OIG audit reports and documents, in part because of direction to the OIG from Congress, are seldom withheld under FOIA Exemption 5 unless there is a vulnerability associated with the release. All OIG FOIA determinations and releases are reviewed by a manager for conformance with its information disclosure guidelines and the FOIA.

Postal Inspection Service:

The President’s FOIA Memorandum and the Attorney General’s Guidelines have been disseminated to all Inspection Service FOIA personnel. During the past year, the Inspection Service FOIA staff attended several FOIA training classes provided by the U.S. Department of Justice. The Inspection Service FOIA office reviewed documents with a presumption of openness and deliberated on documents that may have previously been withheld under FOIA Exemption 2 by applying the foreseeable harm standard.

2. Disclosure Comparisons

Postal Service:

	<u>Full Grants</u>	<u>Partial Grants</u>	<u>Full Denials</u>
FY2010	445	161	183
FY2009	896	151	170

In FY 2010, full disclosure was made in approximately 33% of the requests it responded to. In FY 2009, full disclosure was made in 48% of the requests it responded to.

In FY 2010, out of the 344 requests in which records were withheld in full or in part, FOIA Exemption 2 was cited in only 3.8% of those requests (13) compared to 18.7% in FY2009. FOIA Exemption 5 was cited in 12% of these requests (42) compared to 11.8% in FY 2009.

The Postal Service's substantial infrastructure and coordination with both private industry and other government agencies required the generation of schedules, manuals, and plans that could be used to circumvent a variety of legal requirements, including anti-terrorism laws. This type of information is withheld under FOIA Exemption 2. Discretionary disclosure is not appropriate in these instances.

In those cases in which records were withheld, the FOIA Exemption cited most often was FOIA Exemption 6. FOIA Exemption 6 was cited 242 times and the primary reason for withholding records was for personal privacy reasons. The Postal Service commonly protects personal information about its employees, customers or other individuals which would be a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. The type of information requiring protection to prevent the unwarranted invasion of an individual's personal privacy covered by FOIA Exemption 6 is not subject to discretionary disclosure.

FOIA Exemption 3, in conjunction with 39 U.S.C. 410(c)(1), was relied upon 56 times. 39 U.S.C. 410(c)(1) permits the Postal Service to withhold the name or address, past or present, of any Postal Service customer. This Exemption 3 statute is frequently used along with FOIA Exemption 6 for privacy reasons.

In FY 2010, the FOIA Exemption cited the second most often was Exemption 3 in conjunction with 39 U.S.C. 410(c)(2). This statute was relied upon 109 times to withhold records from disclosure. Section 410(c)(2) of Title 39, U.S. Code, provides that "information of a commercial nature, including trade secrets, whether or not obtained from a person outside the Postal Service, which under good business practice would not be publicly disclosed," is exempt from the disclosure requirements of the FOIA. This section was enacted as part of the Postal Reorganization Act, 39 U.S.C. § 101 et seq. (1970), which designated the Postal Service as an independent establishment of the executive branch and generally directed it to conduct its operations in accordance with sound business principles. The public disclosure of the information described above could cause competitive harm to the Postal Service.

Office of General Counsel (OGC):

	<u>Full Grants</u>	<u>Partial Grants</u>	<u>Full Denials</u>
FY 2010	26	56	48
FY 2009 ¹	35	57	58
FY 2008 ²	32	57	65

When compared to previous years, OGC has shown a notable increase in the number of appeals where records have been released in full or in part. In FY 2007, only 37% of 155 appeals resulted in the release of records. Following a change in management of the OGC's FOIA Appeals office in FY 2008, this number increased to 55% (out of 162 appeals). After the issuance of President Obama's FOIA Memorandum and Attorney General Holder's FOIA Guidelines in FY 2009, OGC released records in 60% of its 154 appeals. In FY 2010, OGC released records in 63% of its 130 appeals.

Office of Inspector General (OIG):

The numbers for the OIG FOIA Officer are unavailable because of the operating status in the previous period, during which data was combined with another postal unit (Postal Inspection Service). Comparing FY 2008 and FY 2010, however, while the real number of releases in full pursuant to formal FOIA requests rose from 14 to 19, the approximate percentage dropped slightly from 13% in FY 2008 to 12% in FY 2010. Most of these requests involve law enforcement records from the OIG's Office of Investigations. The OIG aggressively protects the rights of persons named in such documents. Moreover, the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, prohibits the release of agency employee names in most investigative situations.

Postal Inspection Service:

The OIG and Postal Inspection Service FOIA offices were combined during FY 2009 and separated in FY 2010. For this reason, direct comparative data for that period is not available.

¹ OGC received 154 appeals in FY 2009. Four appeals were closed after the requester did not respond to our interim request for clarification.

² In FY 2008, OGC received 162 appeals. Six appeals were closed after the requester did not respond to our interim request for clarification and two appeals were processed in 2009.

II. Steps Taken to Ensure that Your Agency has an Effective System for Responding to Requests

Postal Service:

The USPS Chief FOIA Officer is responsible for overseeing Postal Service compliance with the FOIA, making recommendations to the Postmaster General regarding the Postal Service's FOIA program, and monitoring and reporting on FOIA implementation and performance for the Postal Service. The Manager, Records Office, serves as the Postal Service FOIA Public Liaison and is responsible for managing the FOIA Requester Service Center (Center), establishing procedures and guidelines to ensure that record management practices comply with the FOIA, and providing procedural guidance to records custodians. The USPS does not have an established Open Government Team.

FOIA requests are received through the USPS FOIA Requester Service Center (Records Office). Upon receipt, requests are entered into the FOIA Tracking System and assigned a tracking number. An acknowledgement letter is sent to the requester advising of the receipt of the request and the tracking number. The request is then assigned to an analyst for review. If the request is lacking any information that is needed for processing (e.g., a proper description of the records sought, etc.), the analyst will contact the requester to seek the required information or clarification. Once the request has been perfected, the request is referred to the appropriate records custodian(s) for processing and response through the designated FOIA Coordinator(s). FOIA Coordinators or Records Custodians may also contact the requester if clarifying information is needed or for fee-related matters. FOIA Coordinators ensure that the Center receives a copy of the final response sent to the requester. Once the final response is received, the analyst closes the case in the FOIA Tracking System. For requests that are coming up on their 20-day timeline, the analyst is alerted to follow up with the FOIA Coordinator with a reminder. Centralized tracking of requests received enables the Center to ensure that a final response is made to all requests received. The FOIA Tracking System has a robust report function. The report function allows the Center to accurately and timely produce required reports and management reports. Letter templates and referral memoranda are stored electronically in the FOIA Tracking System. The FOIA Tracking System allows for requests to be referred electronically to the appropriate office.

For requests that are not received in the Records Office, Headquarters and field offices are instructed to promptly submit any FOIA requests received to the Records Office so that a FOIA tracking number can be assigned.

Under the Chief Information Officer, an information technology portfolio manager is assigned to work with the Records Office to ensure that necessary IT support is available for system maintenance and software updates for the FOIA Tracking System. Information technology also provides assistance in conducting searches for electronic records, such as e-mail communications.

FOIA Coordinators, located within each Headquarters department, area office, and district office, are responsible for coordinating FOIA requests referred to or received by a functional or geographical area; providing procedural guidance to records custodians; and assisting the manager of the Records Office with national records management

activities, such as annual reporting of local FOIA activities. FOIA Coordinators are responsible for ensuring that requests referred to them for processing are properly tracked and accounted for, and that all reporting requirements are met.

The Records Office is responsible for maintaining an external and internal website. Contact information for the Requester Service Centers is found on both external and internal websites, and contact information for all FOIA Coordinators is found on the internal website. Sample letters for responding to requests are available on the Records Office internal website for use by records custodians on their designees. Links to other resource material (e.g., DOJ's FOIA website; the USPS AS-353 Handbook, Guide to Privacy, the FOIA & Records Management; 39 Code of Federal Regulations § 265, etc) can also be found on the internal and external websites.

In FY 2010, a new analyst position was added to the Records Office staff, and a loaned employee was utilized throughout the year to ensure the Postal Service meets its statutory obligations under the FOIA.

General Counsel (OGC):

In considering appeals, and in providing assistance with the processing of initial FOIA requests, the OGC works regularly, and closely, with the Records Office and agency IT personnel to ensure all potential responsive records are identified. Moreover, the OGC completed its transition to the use of an automated processing system in FY 2010.

Office of Inspector General (OIG):

The OIG FOIA staff has efficient and effective IT support from the OIG's Chief Information Officer. The OIG employs performance data on a monthly basis. When performance standards cannot be achieved, it evaluates the causes, including staff shortages. However, as performance remains at a high level, staffing is not a current issue. The OIG utilizes performance metrics and modifies them to drive efficiency and effectiveness. In addition, the OIG has adopted a new platform for processing.

Postal Inspection Service:

The Inspection Service has adequate IT support. All FOIA staff utilizes the Helpdesk for IT support. The Office of Information Technology provides support to the FOIA staff when responding to requests for electronic records. In addition, two designated IT specialists are assigned to the Inspection Service for local, technical support associated with the FOIA Tracking System.

Current staffing for the Inspection Service's FOIA program is adequate. No specific steps have been taken to address staffing issues. The staff continues to perform at a high level and is able to keep up with the workload and to meet the FOIAs obligations.

The Inspection Service's FOIA program operates efficiently and effectively. Therefore, no changes have been made in the last year.

III. Steps Taken To Increase Proactive Disclosures

Postal Service:

“To say that USPS has embraced the Internet stops well short of describing the new face of the Post Office. Almost every service that can be found by standing in line in real time can be found online for less time, including buying stamps, putting a hold on mail, changing address, finding a PO Box, tracking packages and applying for passports.” — David Gunter, Bonner County (ID) Daily Bee.

The Postal Service uses the Internet to add service and value for its customers, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Postal Service Internet, found at www.USPS.com, provides customers quick and easy access to Postal Service information, products, and services. It offers individualized information and services tailored to meet each customer’s business or personal needs, it allows customers to purchase Postal Service products and services conveniently from their homes or offices, and it provides traditional hard-copy Postal Service brand assurances, including trust and security, online. The Postal Service has an official Facebook Page at: <http://www.facebook.com/USPS>

With 32,000 retail locations and one of the most frequently visited websites in the federal government, the Postal Service relies on the sale of postage, products and services to pay for operating expenses. Named the Most Trusted Government Agency six consecutive years by the Ponemon Institute, the Postal Service has annual revenue of more than \$67 billion and delivers nearly 40 percent of the world’s mail. A self-supporting government enterprise, the Postal Service is the only delivery service that reaches every address in the nation — 150 million residences, businesses and Post Office boxes. The Postal Service receives no tax dollars.

Vision 2013 (<http://www.usps.com/strategicplanning/vision2013.htm>) published in 2008, lays out the Postal Service’s internal plan for the future, and is guided by one principle: we exist to serve our customers. This vision is the Postal Service’s commitment to ensuring a vital Postal Service for future generations. This includes use of the full potential of the Internet. As part of *Vision 2013*, the Postal Service has committed to create a more customer-friendly *usps.com* and new mobile applications that offer immediate access to postal information and services.

In the March 2, 2010, *Ensuring a Viable Postal Service for America: An Action Plan for the Future* (<http://www.usps.com/strategicplanning/futurepostalservice.htm>), the Postal Service highlighted the need for expanded access to postal products and services to meet the changing needs and behaviors of customers and provide services in locations already frequented by customers. The Postal Service outlined a plan to accomplish this goal through partnerships, kiosks, and improved online offerings, all while reducing costs through a more efficient network. 2010 has proven to be a year of progress. This is just one way in which the Postal Service is modernizing the existing retail network to better match the changing needs of its customers, while efficiently managing costs. In the past year, the Postal Service has also improved and expanded its online offerings, allowing greater numbers of customers to access a full range of postal services from the

convenience of their homes or businesses. In addition, the Postal Service continues to expand online offerings via USPS.com.

The USPS currently provides a significant amount of information to the public through its website at www.usps.com, and maintains 35,000 informational pages on its website. The USPS.com Group manages the overall direction and presentation of the USPS website, and coordinates the creation of organization-wide web-based solutions. More specifically, USPS.com ensures that web-based solutions launched on the corporate website serve key customer needs.

In FY 2010, the USPS.com Group added 6,707 new pages to the USPS website. The primary types of information found on the USPS website, and posted proactively without the need to submit a FOIA request, are:

Online Tools

- Find a Zip Code
- Locate a Post Office
- Post Office operating times
- Track and Confirm
- Calculate postage
- Collection box locations and pick up times

About USPS & News

- Organization Information – from the day-to-day operations that touch every household to the USPS strategic direction and plans for moving forward
- News & Events
- USPS Newsroom
- Press Releases
- Audio News Releases
- Executive Speeches
- Stamp Releases
- Congressional Testimony
- Postal Customer Insider
- Board of Governors Press Releases
- Postal Bulletins
- Postal Customer Council (PCC) publication editions/issues

About USPS Leadership

- Postmaster General and Executive Leadership Team
- Officer Bios
- Organization Chart

General Information

- Postal Explorer – a virtual library of postal information designed for business mailers
- Mailing & Shipping Guidelines
- Forms and Publications
- Quick Service Guides
- Postal History
 - Postmaster Finder
 - Postmaster by City
 - Postmaster and Where They Served
 - Post Offices by County
 - Post Offices by State
 - Post Office by Established Date
 - Post Offices by Discontinued date
 - Post Offices by ZIP Code
- Public Auction Schedule
- Customs Forms and Information
- Serving the Community
- Financials

Customer Service

- Acronyms & Abbreviations
- Glossaries
- Product & Service Help

Government Services

- Passport Application Information
- USPS Careers
- No Fear Act EEO Data

Reports

- Compliance Act Report
- Green Report
- Strategic Planning Transformation Report
- Strategic Planning Five-Year Report
- Operations Reports
- Annual Performance Plan
- Household Diary Studies (nonprofit standard mail)
- Customer Experience Measurement System

Financials

- Quarterly Reports
 - Financial Conditions & Results
 - Revenue, Pieces & Weight Reports
 - Quarterly Statistics Reports
- Fiscal Year Reports
 - Annual Reports
 - Cost & Revenue Analysis Reports
 - Cost Segments & Components Report
 - Form 10K
 - Comprehensive Statements on Postal Operations
 - Revenue, Pieces & Weight Reports
 - Integrated Financial Plans
- Periodic Reports
- Financial Public Releases
- Senior Financial Code of Ethics
- Quarterly Statistical Reports

Other

- Mailing & Shipping Guidelines
- Stamp Collecting
- Catalogs & Publications
- Purchase Cardholder List
- USPS owned and leased facilities
- Supplier information (Supply Chain Philosophy, Supplier Performance Awards; Postal Supplier Counsel; Pass-Through Pricing, Supplier Disagreements, and more)
- Schedule of trade shows and mailer events
- Vision 2013 Statement
- Delivering the Future – Ensuring a Viable Postal Service for America: An Action Plan for the Future
- Postal Facts
- Frequently Asked Questions

Also found on the USPS website is a link to Postal Service “News & Announcements.” News releases can be found under this website link. For broadcast quality video and audio, photo stills and other media resources, the public may visit the USPS Newsroom at www.usps.com/news.

The “*USPS Action Plan for the Future*” and information about the USPS five-day delivery proposal can be found under the “Delivering the Future” link. The Action Plan includes a number of legislative and regulatory changes needed for the Postal Service to become a flexible, agile agency able to respond to change. To provide customers with details of that proposal, the USPS posts information to its website - www.usps.com/communications/five-daydelivery. The website contains background information about the proposed change to five-day delivery, overviews and sections for business mailers and household customers, and answers to frequently asked questions.

The Postal Service posts current studies on consolidating mail processing operations at www.usps.com/all/amp.htm.

The USPS Rapid Information Bulletin Board System (RIBBS) website (www.ribbs.usps.gov) has site indexes that are searchable from A to Z or by topic. Here, the public has access to USPS Federal Register notices, the Postal Bulletin, and more.

The USPS FOIA Reading Room contains a link to the Postal Regulatory Commission's website. The Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) is an independent establishment of the Executive Branch that exercises regulatory oversight over the Postal Service. The PRC proactively publishes information of interest to the mailing community and general public. The PRC's online Library contains an array of information about the Postal Service of interest to the public. The PRC's online Library includes: dockets, PRC reports and studies, USPS periodic reports, mail classification schedule, and more.

Going forward, each USPS Officer has appointed a contact person for each department to work with the Records Office to identify records to proactively disclose on the web. In addition, subject matter experts within each department determine what information should be posted and work closely with Corporate Communications and in joint posting opportunities, such as news releases, fact sheets and videos. The USPS FOIA Tracking System provides full-text search capability which can be used as a tool to identify records meeting the "frequently requested" standard.

In addition, the Postal Service has started to make video available on <http://www.usps.com/green/welcome> to highlight Postal Service sustainability accomplishments and to report on the progress of its sustainability goals. The Postal Service is working towards making sustainability information more accessible to the public and is the first federal agency to publicly report greenhouse gas emissions and get third party verification. Found at this website are: 2009 Sustainability Report, green ideas for direct mailers, information about how Lean Green Teams are helping the Postal Service save money and generate revenue, information about eco-friendly packaging, and more.

Office of Inspector General (OIG):

For more than a decade, and in compliance with the e-FOIA Amendments of 1996, the OIG has posted Congressional testimony, audits reports, performance and strategic plans, news releases and semiannual reports to Congress, on www.uspsoig.gov. The OIG segregates information as necessary to allow for such postings.

In the past year, more than 100 audit reports and white papers, news items, items of interest to the public, budget and planning documents, Congressional testimony, and reports to Congress have been posted.

The review of classes of documents is an assigned duty for certain OIG communications and FOIA staff.

Finally, the OIG uses social media including Facebook, Twitter, and actively maintained blogs, all housed on its public website, to share and debate policy and ideas about the Postal Service and provide alerts.

Postal Inspection Service:

As one of the country's oldest federal law enforcement agencies, the Postal Inspection Service has a long, proud, and successful history of fighting criminals who attack our nation's postal system and misuse it to defraud, endanger, or otherwise threaten the American public. Postal Inspectors enforce more than 200 federal laws in investigations of crimes that may adversely affect or fraudulently use the U.S. Mail, the postal system or postal employees. The Inspection Service's website contains a list of some of its more important areas of jurisdiction (<https://postalinspectors.uspis.gov/>).

Postal Inspectors respond when criminals try to use the mail to commit crimes of any sort against postal customers, from mail theft to mail fraud and even child exploitation. But prevention is often the best way to fight crime: Inspectors use the Internet to teach people how to spot scams before they become victims. The Postal Inspection Service posts scheme alerts, fraud alerts, wanted and reward posters, and related information on its website. The Inspection Service's website outlines many tips to avoid becoming a victim of mail fraud or ponzi schemes or identity theft. Publication 162, *Because the Mail Matters*, informs postal customers and employees about the Postal Inspection Service. This and a host of other fraud-prevention publications are available online for viewing and printing at the Postal Inspection Service's website.

The Postal Inspection Service proactively posts material thought to be of public interest (without the requirement of a FOIA request) to its website. The following types of information are proactively disclosed and made available on the Postal Inspection Service's website:

About Us:

- Mission
- Chief Postal Inspector Bio
- History
- Fallen Officers
- Jurisdiction & Laws
- Forensic Laboratory Service

Investigations:

- Mail Fraud Schemes
- Revenue Protection
- Asset Forfeiture
- Mail Theft
- Violent Crimes
- Global
- Security
- Child Exploitation
- Dangerous Mail
- Homeland Security

Press Room:

Public Information Officers

Inspectors in the News

Press Releases

Publications

Scheme Alerts

Videos

Wanted and Reward Posters

Consumer Awareness:

Learn how to protect yourself from fraudsters

Don't Fall For It!

Identity theft

IV. Steps Taken To Greater Utilize Technology

Postal Service:

1. Electronic receipt of FOIA requests:

All three agency components (Postal Service, Postal Inspection Service, OIG) have the capability to receive FOIA requests electronically. The public is able to submit and track FOIA requests over the internet on the Postal Service's FOIA website. In addition, the Postal Service receives FOIA requests via facsimile.

2. Electronic tracking of FOIA requests:

All three agency components track FOIA requests electronically. The Postal Service's FOIA Tracking System is a comprehensive, web-based commercial-off-the-shelf (cots) application. The OIG FOIA Office and the General Counsel (appeals processing) also use the same application to track FOIA appeals.

3. Electronic processing of FOIA requests:

All three agency components have the capability to process requests electronically. The OIG and Postal Inspection Service have centralized FOIA processing offices. The Postal Service's FOIA Program is decentralized, having over 32,000 facilities throughout the country at which records are maintained. The majority of requests received by the Postal Service are referred to the appropriate records custodian for processing and response. The many records custodians throughout the country that receive and process FOIA requests do not have access to the FOIA Tracking System and, for the most part, do not have electronic FOIA processing capability. There has been no change in the number of components or offices having electronic processing capability since the last Chief FOIA Officer Report.

For those requests that are processed by the Records Office with the FOIA Tracking System, requests and appeals can easily be entered into the system. The FOIA Tracking System electronically stores, retrieves, redacts, and prints documents for delivery to requesters. It computes and tracks invoices and fees. In addition, it allows multi-level access control and privileges, the creation and use of templates to quickly generate correspondence, scanning and importation of files, and more.

4. Electronic preparation of your Annual FOIA Report:

The Postal Service's FOIA Tracking System is a comprehensive, web-based commercial-off-the-shelf (cots) application which is a FOIA-specific technology. The FOIA Tracking system contains a specific report function for generating the Annual FOIA Report.

General Counsel (OGC):

1. Electronic receipt of FOIA requests:

The OGC receives FOIA appeals electronically via e-mail and facsimile.

2. Electronic tracking of FOIA requests:

FOIA Appeals are tracked electronically using the Postal Service's comprehensive, web-based application.

3. Electronic processing of FOIA requests:

OGC uses the Postal Service's FOIA tracking system in the processing of FOIA appeals.

4. Electronic preparation of your Annual FOIA Report:

OGC uses the Postal Service's FOIA tracking system in the preparation of the Annual FOIA Report.

Office of the Inspector General (OIG):

1. Electronic receipt of FOIA requests:

The OIG receives FOIA requests via e-mail, web-based request forms, facsimile, and through the internet.

2. Electronic tracking of FOIA requests:

All FOIA requests and appeals received by the OIG are tracked electronically through the USPS FOIA Tracking System, a comprehensive, web-based commercial-off-the-shelf (cots) application.

3. Electronic processing of FOIA requests:

The OIG processes requests electronically, and has done so for more than five years. It uses the FOIA Tracking System to electronically store, redact, and print documents for delivery to requesters. It also uses other software products to process requests.

4. Electronic preparation of your Annual FOIA Report:

The Postal Service's FOIA Tracking System is a comprehensive, web-based commercial-off-the-shelf (cots) application which is a FOIA-specific technology. The FOIA Tracking system contains a specific report function for generating the Annual FOIA Report.

Postal Inspection Service:

1. Electronic receipt of FOIA requests:

The Inspection Service receives FOIA requests through the internet and through a dedicated facsimile number.

2. Electronic tracking of FOIA requests:

All FOIA requests received by the Inspection Service are tracked electronically through the USPS FOIA Tracking System, a comprehensive, web-based commercial-off-the-shelf (cots) application.

3. Electronic processing of FOIA requests:

100% of all FOIA requests are processed electronically utilizing the USPS FOIA Tracking System. With the FOIA Tracking System, requests can easily be entered into the system. The FOIA Tracing System electronically stores, retrieves, redacts, and prints documents for delivery to requesters. It computes and tracks invoices and fees. In addition, it allows multi-level access control and privileges, the creation and use of templates to quickly generate correspondence, scanning and importation of files, and more.

4. Electronic preparation of your Annual FOIA Report:

The Postal Service's FOIA Tracking System is a comprehensive, web-based commercial-off-the-shelf (cots) application which is a FOIA-specific technology. The FOIA Tracking system contains a specific report function for generating the Annual FOIA Report.

V. Steps Taken to Reduce Backlogs and Improve Timeliness in Responding to Requests

Postal Service:

1. Backlog Status

	<u>Backlogged requests at end of Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Oldest Pending Request</u>
FY 2010	31	506 (February 2009)
FY 2009	75	322 days (June 2007)

The Postal Service reduced its backlog of requests at the end of FY 2010 when compared to the end of FY 2009. The number of FOIA requests received by the Postal Service over the last fiscal year remained high, but overall fewer requests were received when compared to the previous fiscal year. The steps that were taken in FY 2010 that enabled a reduction in the backlog: 1) one new position was added to the Records Office staff, 2) a loaned employee assisted with logging in new FOIA requests and processing requests, and 3) other important projects were put on hold. Factors which caused delays in responding to complex requests in a timely manner include: 1) the Records Office was administratively closed for several weeks for the installation of new carpet and the Office's subsequent move to a new location, and 2) staffing issues. Eight of the ten oldest pending requests from FY 2009 were closed and two complex requests remain open. These requests are still pending due to their complexity.

2. Backlog Reduction Steps

Not applicable.

3. Steps to Improve Timeliness

The Records Office routinely sets goals and monitors the progress of its FOIA case load. A weekly report is sent to the Chief FOIA Officer. The weekly report includes the number of new requests received for that week, the total number of requests closed, the total number pending, and the total number of backlogged requests. One new analyst position was added to the Records Office staff last year; however, a senior analyst left the agency. Another employee has been temporarily assigned to fulfill the duties of the vacant position. Software upgrades to the commercial-off-the-shelf FOIA Tracking System are included in the contract between the USPS and the vendor.

General Counsel (OGC):

At the end of FY 2010, OGC had a backlog of two FOIA appeals. This represents an increase of two over the previous fiscal year. One contributing factor was the loss of one seasoned, full-time FOIA/Privacy attorney. An additional factor was the increase in the number of initial FOIA matters and Privacy issues OGC was called upon to handle in FY 2010. OGC routinely monitors the progress of its FOIA caseload, with an eye to completing all appeals in a timely fashion. Additional resources have been identified to support the FOIA appeal process this fiscal year on an "as needed" basis.

Office of Inspector General (OIG):

1. Backlog Status

The OIG has no backlog of FOIA requests or FOIA appeals.

2. Backlog Reduction Steps

Not applicable.

3. Steps to Improve Timeliness

Not applicable.

Postal Inspection Service:

1. Backlog Status

At the end of FY 2010, the Inspection Service had a backlog of 2. To date, that number has been eliminated. In comparison to FY 2009, the Inspection Service, combined with the OIG, ended with a backlog of 3. The Inspection Service, combined with the OIG, closed all of its 10 oldest pending cases from FY 2009.

2. Backlog Reduction Steps

Not applicable.

3. Steps to Improve Timeliness

One of the Inspection Service's goals is to immediately forward requests to the appropriate FOIA Requester Service Center for response when the requested records do not come under the jurisdiction of the Chief Postal Inspector. An additional goal is to ensure that within 24 hours of receipt, all requests are logged into the FOIA Tracking System. To monitor the progress of the FOIA caseload, the FOIA Manager routinely runs an "all open cases" report to determine the status of each case and the remaining days to complete the processing of the request.

Spotlight on Success

In 2010, the Postal Service and Postal Inspection Service launched www.deliveringtrust.com to help educate the public about the dangers of fraud. Consumers can visit this website for free fraud education and prevention videos about identity theft, work-at-home scams, Internet fraud, foreign lotteries, investment scams and more. Viewers can follow the Chief Postal Inspector and Postal Service Consumer Advocate as they walk through the top ten scams to watch for. The website also offers tips on recognizing scams and instructions on reporting scammers to appropriate authorities.

The Postal Service implemented a new Customer Experience Measurement (CEM) program in Fiscal Year 2010, providing an expanded view of the customer experience and a customer focused approach to measurement. CEM provides an end-to-end approach to assessing experience with the Postal Service from the customers' perspective, including quality of service received. On March 25, 2010, the Postal Service announced that its new system to measure customer experience had produced its first report and made the results for the first quarter of fiscal year 2010 available to the public online at www.usps.com/serviceperformance/_pdf/CEM-Quarterly-Performance.pdf