

Project Safe Delivery: An Initiative to Combat Mail Theft and Improve Employee Safety

The increase in crime throughout the country over the past several years has resulted in escalating criminal incidents against Postal Service employees and the mail. Every postal employee deserves to work in safety and to be free from targeting by criminals seeking to access the public's mail. The public should expect their mail and packages to reach their intended destination safely and securely.

In an increasingly challenging environment, the Postal Service and the Postal Inspection Service are highly focused on protecting postal employees and property and ensuring the secure delivery of the nation's mail and packages. That focus has resulted in an expansion of the Project Safe Delivery crime prevention initiative to combat mail theft and improve employee safety.

Project Safe Delivery:

Prevent: Education and Awareness

The Postal Service is undertaking a robust educational campaign to combat mail theft and improve employee safety. For example, Stand Up Talks will educate employees on safety, mail theft awareness and prevention, and arrow key security. The Postal Service is also crafting external prevention messaging to customers through various sources like social media, public service announcements, and Informed Delivery®.

The Postal Service will also continue community engagement efforts with local and state law enforcement to identify trends, partner to enforce the law, amplify messaging, and implement targeted prevention activities in high postal crime areas.

Protect: Hardening the Target

There has been an increase in letter carrier robberies nationwide where criminals are targeting letter carriers for their arrow keys, which can be used to access collection boxes, outdoor parcel lockers, and cluster box units. Criminals use these keys to steal mail from secure mail receptacles to commit financial crimes, including altering checks to commit check fraud. To improve employee safety and mitigate arrow key risk, we are moving from antiquated technologies and upgrading to more secure blue collection boxes.

The key point is that 82 percent of carrier robberies are motivated by arrow key theft. As a result, the Postal Service plans to install 49,000 electronic locks in the coming years. These new locks require two-factor authentication, meaning that arrow keys alone will be less valuable to criminals; thus, decreasing the motivation to target a mail carrier.

The Postal Service also plans to deploy 12,000 high-security collection boxes, at a rate of 1,200 a month, to areas with greater security risks. These high-security boxes feature several cutting-edge features to prevent a variety of methods of mail theft such as brute force attacks and "mail fishing."

Enforce: Collaborating with Law Enforcement Partners

The Postal Inspection Service is the primary law enforcement, crime prevention, and security arm of the Postal Service. Our Postal Inspectors are federal law enforcement agents who carry firearms, make arrests, execute federal search warrants, and serve subpoenas. Over 1,200 Inspectors enforce roughly 200 federal laws covering crimes that include fraudulent use of the U.S. Mail and the postal system.

The Inspection Service is prioritizing robbery and mail theft investigations, with increased focus on cyber-enabled financial crime associated with mail theft and carrier robberies. The Inspection Service is also deploying postal inspectors and analysts to areas with high postal crime. In addition, the Inspection Service has increased the coordination with law enforcement partners, including the Department of Justice.



Furthermore, the Inspection Service employs state and local law enforcement officers as Inspection Service Task Force Officers (TFOs). TFOs are force multipliers and allow postal inspectors to share intelligence data in real time with our state and local law enforcement partners. The Inspections Service also strategically employs Special U.S. Attorneys to assist in the prosecution of postal crimes.

Combatting COA Fraud

The Postal Service processed more than 33 million change of address (COA) transactions in Fiscal Year (FY) 2022. Most COA fraud is driven by an identity theft motive separate from the Postal Service. In April, the Postal Service implemented dual authentication Identity Verification Services for online COA transactions to provide enhanced security controls to reduce fraud. In addition, the Postal Service now offers enhanced in-person COA transactions at Post Offices and retail outlets. Furthermore, customers seeking a COA will now receive a validation letter at their old address and an activation letter at their new address. As an additional safeguard, the Postal Service will no longer accept third-party COA submissions.

Defeating Counterfeit Postage

In FY2022, the Postal Service and the Inspection Service seized more than 340,000 packages with counterfeit postage and more than 7.7 million counterfeit stamps with an estimated \$7.8 million loss avoidance for the Postal Service. To combat counterfeit postage the Postal Service will fully exercise new authority to take possession and dispose of packages identified with counterfeit postage. The Postal Service is also taking action to shut down websites and eCommerce accounts selling counterfeit postage. The Postal Service also deployed updated mail processing equipment capable of identifying counterfeit postage and isolating packages for seizure.

Setting the Record Straight - Clarifying and Confirming the Limited Statutory Authority for Postal Police Officers:

The Postal Service Law Department advised the Inspection Service that Postal Police Officer law enforcement authority relates to the protection of Postal Service real property. In 2020, a federal court confirmed, in response to the Postal Police Officers (PPOs) Association's contrary assertions, that the Postal Service's determination was a reasonable interpretation of the law.

As an operational agency that is an independent establishment of the Executive Branch, our employees, and certainly any components of our law enforcement arm, must always adhere strictly to actions they have the statutory authority to perform. Past failures to adhere to that limited authority must not be a justification for continuing to do so. Further, while there are some advocates who believe we should overstep our authority, doing so would not only exceed the legal limitations, but would in any event not effectively address the negative impact of rising crime on the Postal Service, our employees, or the public we serve.

Furthermore, the Inspection Service would likely not deploy PPOs in a different manner than they are used today, even if the jurisdiction of the PPOs was legislatively modified. PPOs are assigned to certain facilities because the Inspection Service has determined that these facilities require the presence of uniformed, trained, and armed officers. At those facilities, PPOs enforce order and act as a deterrent to criminals or employees who may wish to compromise the U.S. mail or potentially harm the people inside. Removing those officers from Postal Service property, where a significant concentration of mail and employees exist, would put at risk not only postal facilities, but also the employees and customers who use those facilities every day.

Furthermore, the Inspection Service already engages in off-site protection of the mail and our letter carriers. Postal inspectors, not PPOs, regularly conduct surveillance and appropriate enforcement actions in areas where high numbers of letter carrier robberies and mail thefts have been reported.

The Postal Service and the Inspection Service are taking all appropriate steps to crack down on postal crime and ensuring the safety of our letter carriers who we ask to walk the streets of our communities every day.

Project Safe Delivery Progress to Date:

Project Safe Delivery is already showing results. Multiple departments within the Postal Service, including the Inspection Service, the Office of the Chief Information Officer, and the Office of the Chief Retail and Delivery Officer are working together to support the ongoing campaign. While efforts are ongoing and continuously evolving, the period from May to October 2023 has already yielded significant outcomes for Project Safe Delivery.

- Enforcement Surges Completed in Chicago, San Francisco, and Ohio; More than 600 Individuals Arrested for Postal Crimes.
- 700 Investigative Actions and 375 Prevention Activities.
- 10,000 High-Security Blue Collection Boxes Installed Nationwide.
- 99.3 Percent Reduction in Fraudulent Change of Address Submissions After Implementation of Electronic- and In-Person Authentication Procedures.
- Replaced More Than 6,500 Antiquated Arrow Locks with Electronic Locks in Select Cities.
- 50 Percent Reduction in Counterfeit Package Postage in the Postal Network Due to Increased Controls and Enforcement.
- Increased Monetary Rewards to Bring Criminals to Justice. Details Below.

USPIS MONETARY REWARDS FOR INFORMATION LEADING TO ARREST AND CONVICTION OF A PERPETRATOR OF MAIL CRIME* (Effective August 21, 2023)		
Offenses Against USPS Employees/Contractors		
<i>Murder or Manslaughter of a Postal Service Employee or Contractor</i>	\$250,000	The unlawful killing of any officer, employee, or contractor of the Postal Service while engaged in or on account of the performance of his or her official duties.
<i>Assault on Postal Employees</i>	\$150,000	Forcibly assaulting any officer or employee of the Postal Service while engaged in or on account of the performance of his or her official duties.
<i>Robbery</i>	\$150,000	Robbery or attempted robbery of any custodian of any mail, money, or other property of the United States under the control and jurisdiction of the Postal Service.
Offenses Involving Theft of Mail or USPS Property		
<i>Burglary Of Post Office</i>	\$100,000	Breaking into, or attempting to break into, a Post Office, station, branch, a building used wholly or partly as a Post Office, or any building or area in a building where the business of the Postal Service is conducted, with intent to commit a larceny or other depredation therein.
<i>Theft Of Mail Or Postal Service Property</i>	\$100,000	Theft or attempted theft of any mail, or the contents thereof, or the theft of money or any other property of USPS under the custody and control of the Postal Service from any custodian, postal vehicle, railroad depot, airport, or other transfer point, Post Office, or station, receptacle, or depository established, approved, or designated by the Postmaster General for the receipt of mail; possession of any item above which was stolen from Postal Service custody; or destroying, obstructing, or retarding the passage of mail, or any carrier or conveyance carrying the mail.
<i>Postage Or Meter Tampering</i>	\$100,000	The unlawful use, reuse, or forgery of postage stamps, postage meter stamps, permit imprints, or other postage; or the use, sale, or possession with intent to use or sell any used, forged, or counterfeited postage stamp or other postage.

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49,000 electronic locks to replace antiquated arrow keys.

New two-factor authentication improves carrier safety by making traditional arrow keys less valuable.

12,000 high security collection boxes to be installed.

New collection boxes designed to combat brute force attacks and mail fishing.