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USPS DELAYS CLOSINGS AND CONSOLIDATIONS

USPS, in response to a request made by multiple U.S. Senators, has agreed to delay the closing or consolidation of any Post Office or mail processing facility until May 15, 2012.

The Postal Service will continue all necessary steps required for the review of these facilities during the interim period, including public input meetings.

USPS hopes this period will help facilitate the enactment of comprehensive postal legislation. Given the Postal Service's financial situation and the loss of mail volume, the Postal Service must continue to take all steps necessary to reduce costs and increase revenue.

EXPRESS MAIL FLAT RATE BOX TO DEBUT



Express Mail Flat Rate Boxes

Starting Jan. 22, the Postal Service's customers will be able ship a box of any weight up to 70 lbs. for overnight delivery anywhere in the country for one price. That's when the Express Mail Flat Rate Box debuts and new Shipping Services prices take effect.

The new box, priced at \$39.95 for domestic mailing, will be available to customers who need overnight service for items too large for an Express Mail Flat Rate Envelope.

Other Express Mail service changes include lower retail prices for half- and one-pound packages and commercial packages to local and close-in areas. The new retail price for the Express Mail Flat Rate Envelope will be \$18.95.



CHARLEY MILLER NAMED NEW LAKELAND DISTRICT MANAGER

Charles (Charley) J. Miller was named District Manager for the Lakeland District on September 6, 2011.

Miller began his career with the Postal Service in 1984 as a letter carrier in St. Louis, Missouri. He's had an interesting and varied postal career, advancing through positions of increased responsibility, including: Supervisor, Customer Services; Customer Relations Coordinator; Marketing Support Analyst; Sales Analyst; Postmaster, St. Peters, Missouri; and Manager, Operations Programs Support.



Miller previously held positions as District Manager of the Southeast Michigan District and Postmaster, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In early 2011, he accepted the position as acting District Manager for the Lakeland District.

Miller received a Bachelor of Science Degree at University of Missouri in 1988 and a Master of Business Administration Degree at Lindenwood University in 2001. He's a graduate of the Postal Service's Advanced Leadership Program and completed executive training programs at Columbia University. His military service included six years as a special agent with the U.S. Air Force – Office of Special Investigations. He and his wife Carol have two sons and four grandchildren.

"The Postal Service is working through changes never before seen in its history," says Miller. "But we will continue to provide the American public the service they expect as we adapt to customer needs."

THE ONLY CONSTANT IS CHANGE WITHIN THE POSTAL SERVICE

In recent months, the Postal Service has been actively working to cut costs and return to profitability. In July, 2011, close to 3,700 Post Offices began studies for potential consolidation under the Retail Optimization plan. In September, studies began on more than 250 processing facilities across the country under the Network Optimization plan in an effort to right-size a processing network that has grown too large in relation to current mail volume trends. These two initiatives are currently in moratorium until May 15, 2012. During this moratorium, no plants or Post Offices will be closed, but the Postal Service will continue all necessary steps required for the review of these facilities and hopes this period will help facilitate the enactment of comprehensive postal legislation. Given the Postal Service's financial situation and the loss of mail volume, the Postal Service must continue to take all steps necessary to reduce costs and increase revenue.

Last fall, Performance Clusters and Districts in the Postal Service were realigned. The Lakeland District lost the Upper Peninsula of Michigan territory and gained Northern Illinois. The result of this realignment made the Lakeland District the second largest district in the country.

Other initiatives undertaken during this time included a proposal submitted to the Postal Regulatory Commission announcing a change in service standards for various classes of mail, a call on Congress to reform the prefunding of retiree health benefits, and continued negotiations with our letter carrier and mail handler unions which are currently at impasse. The existing contracts will be followed until terms of a new contract are resolved. Periodic updates on these topics can be found at usps.com.

I'm glad to join you as Co-Chair of the Green Bay Postal Customer Council as the Acting Postmaster of Green Bay and look forward to the changes and challenges that lie ahead. We wish Tim Lewis success on his temporary assignment in Northern Illinois – His enthusiasm for expanding participation in the Green Bay PCC will continue to strengthen our group!

Jan Wittkopf

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MOVING BEYOND FASTFORWARD®

Effective Oct. 1, 2012, the FASTforward service will no longer be a viable option to satisfy the Move Update requirement, leaving existing FASTforward licensees, many of whom are presort mailing bureaus, to seek other alternatives to meet the Move Update requirement within the Optical Character Reader (OCR) environment.

FASTforward licensees wanting a smooth transition to using another approved Move Update option within the OCR environment can use the National Change of Address Link (NCOALink) Mail Processing Equipment (MPE) service offering. This solution, which is similar to the FASTforward system, approves the use of NCOALink data on Multiline Optical Character Readers (MLOCR) to update and spray change-of-address (COA) information on mailpieces prior to submission to USPS.

The NCOALink MPE solution allows mailers to process their mailpieces against the Postal Service national COA database, which provides current address information for customers who have filed a COA order. The NCOALink Product is a secure dataset of approximately 160 million permanent USPS COA records. NCOALink MPE Data User Licensees receive an 18-month data file on a weekly basis. This solution improves mail deliverability by providing mailers with current, standardized, delivery point system (DPS) addresses for individual, family and business moves.

For more information about the NCOALink MPE, contact the National Customer Support Center, Licensing and Certification, at NCOALink@usps.gov or call 800-331-5746.

In addition to the NCOALink MPE Solution, the Postal Service has the following options available to help meet the needs of mailers to satisfy the Move Update requirement:

- NCOALink Service (List Processing)
- ACS™/OneCode ACS® Service
- Ancillary Service Endorsements
- Alternative Methods (First-Class Mail only)

STANDARDS FOR FOLDED SELF-MAILER PUBLISHED

The Postal Service appreciates the effectiveness of a creative mailpiece campaign that drives consumer response — as well as the machinability of mailpieces on postal processing equipment that claim automation prices.

Standards for folded self-mailer and unenveloped style letters were finalized and published in the Federal Register on Dec. 01, 2011.

The updated standards:

- Provide options for emerging designs and contain costs.
- Reduce confusion and inconsistent rulings at acceptance.
- Reduce appeals to the Pricing and Classification Service Center and expedite production to meet mailing timelines.
- Level the playing field for all mailers, whether small, medium or large.
- Reduce damage to mail, machine jams and subsequent diversion from letter automation in order to contain costs.
- Improve machinability, improves visibility.

Collaboration with the mailing industry helped to produce the final standards that balance innovation of mailpiece designs with machinability. . A "Folded Self-Mailer Reference Material" that can be accessed via the Folded Self-Mailer home page located on RIBBS. The reference material contains diagrams and graphics of sample design formats to illustrate the revised standards.

Although these revised standards are not required until Jan. 05, 2013, we encourage mailers to begin using the requirements immediately.



Thank you to all of our members and member organizations who contributed door prizes for our annual party. Attendance was great and we all had an enjoyable time being entertained by Tom's Tunes. Hope everyone can join us next year!

A Different Mailing Industry

By Jim Bott, Account Executive, FulfillNet Inc

I am often asked about the future of the post office and the direct mail industry. My one-word response: different.

Yes, there are many “postal doomsday” cynics stating the case that the post office and mailing industry are heading to extinction. They have valid points. According to the USPS PCC Insider Nov Dec 2011 issue, the post office closed out a difficult fiscal year that ended Sept 30, 2011:

- Overall financial losses of \$5.1 billion
- Total mail volume decrease of 1.7%
- Decrease in first class mail volume of 5.8%
- First class mail revenue decreased \$2 billion

These numbers are why I say the post office and mailing industry must be different. The presence of the internet is here and it will not be going away. But that does not mean that direct mail will only be seen in museums in the future.

Think of radio for a second. In the 1950's, pundits were claiming TV would make radio extinct. To an extent, they were right: radio's then-current format needed to “die” to allow new innovations to lead it to the future. New radio formats and features started developing in the 50's and 60's: the Top 40, sports coverage, all news radio, and local DJ's. Furthermore, savvy marketers started realizing they could use both TV and radio together to maximize their message. Ultimately, positive attitudes and creative solutions re-invented the radio industry.

Positive stats have been overlooked by the “postal doomsday” cynics . Again, from USPS PCC Insider Nov Dec 2011 issue:

- Shipping Services increased 6.3%
- Standard Mail volume increased 2 billion pieces
- Standard Mail revenue increased 2.9%
- Operating expenses decreased \$4.8 billion

Creative solutions in the mailing industry are already developing, just like radio's positive developments in the 50's:

- Email blasts following up or announcing a direct mail offer
- Personalized URL's and QR codes on mail pieces directing internet traffic
- Direct mail follow ups to internet requests or campaigns
- New postal categories, such as marketing parcels

So, as an industry, we can listen to the cynics and just plain “die.” Or, we can take a look at the way radio changed itself over half a decade ago, and how relevant it still is to our lives today. Will the post office be the same today 50 years from now? Of course not. One guarantee though: it will be different.

Jim Bott is an Account Executive for FulfillNet Inc, and has nearly 11 years of direct mail experience. He can be reached at 800-514-1119 ext 108 or jbott@fulfillnetinc.com.

EMCM - Executive Mail Center Manager Program

The EMCM is an extremely challenging program, and usually requires four days in Norman, Oklahoma for training and testing. The Central Wisconsin Postal Customer Council is bringing the training to Wausau, WI on March 13, 14 and 15. An overview of the course can be found at <https://www.usps.com/business/emcm-curriculum.htm>.

If you are interested please send an email to marv.anderson@libertymutual.com. Cost is \$900.00.