

POSTAL NEWS

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1. Canada Post to assess the risk of rural delivery

by Nadine Armstrong/Hants Journal

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We've all heard the cliché that neither rain, nor sleet, nor hail will stop the mail, but Canada Post now claims rural delivery has become a risky business. As part of a nationwide initiative, Canada Post will conduct a Rural Mail Safety Review of mailboxes on three West Hants routes in order to determine the level of safety for delivery drivers and customers.

Canada Post says the study was created in response to driver complaints. In a letter to the Municipality of West Hants, Canada Post communications spokesperson Tinna Bonner said the corporation has fielded hundreds of complaints or refusals from delivery employees within the past three years. And though in those cases, a solution has been found, she said they need to address those risks.

Canada Post has said it has a responsibility to provide a safe working environment for all staff, including postal drivers, and stated that the nature of many of Canada's rural and suburban areas is changing. As well, increased traffic has made rural mail delivery potentially hazardous for mail carriers and other drivers. Although Canada Post has taken steps to increase the visibility of postal vehicles with rooftop signs and flashing lights, there is still no predicting the response of other drivers.

"Enhanced visibility does not address all situations where Canada Post employees, customers and other drivers are at risk," Bonner said.

Newly-developed assessment tool

During the West Hants review, each rural box will be judged according to Canada Post's newly-developed Traffic Safety Assessment tool, and should a box not meet the criteria, the residents would have up to 15 days to find an alternative.

For those affected customers, Bonner said a corporation representative would meet with them face-to-face to explain their options, which could include relocating the box or rerouting mail to a Community Mailbox (CMP) or a free PO box.

“I should point out that our priority is to maintain rural mailbox delivery wherever possible, and changing a customer's delivery mode is only considered as a last resort,” she said.

Some members of municipal council, however, are not convinced rerouting mail is such a great idea. Deputy Warden Gary Cochrane said could pose a hazard to Canada Post customers. “I think there is just a complete disregard for safety on our highways, and our residents are the scapegoats.”

He fears shifting mail delivery could do more harm than good if customers need to walk to a community mailbox. “What we'll end up with is a lot of dead residents and that would be a dire, dire tragedy.”

Sincere safety effort

Coun. Randy Matheson said although he is not in favour of putting any customers in jeopardy, especially seniors, he understands the risk some areas pose to delivery drivers. “In some streets the whole street poses a risk. This is a sincere effort to try to be safe.”

Canada Post said that in the past three years alone, there have been more than 70 traffic accidents and three deaths directly related to rural mailbox delivery.

Cindy Hebb a driver with the Windsor Post Office says there have been times she's put herself at risk delivering the mail. “There are some spots that are really are quite dangerous,” especially where traffic is heavy or where large transport trucks run, she said.

Hebb noted that customers also need to take weather conditions into consideration. Last winter, she said, delivering mail along rural routes was a real headache because so many customers neglected to clear the snow and ice from around their box. “Sometimes it's almost impossible to get to their box at all.”

The safety review will apply a set of details criteria, which will consider factors such as volume, types of vehicles and speed of traffic, sight lines and stopping distances, as well as the delivery vehicles position on the road.

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2. Postal Obsolescence

Last Update: 4/11 10:19 am

The U.S. Postal Service plans to scrap thousands of stamp-dispensing vending machines from their walk-in offices this year. (Toledo Blade/SHNS)

By Larry P. Vellequette
Toledo Blade

Connoisseurs of Sacagawea and Susan B. Anthony coins be warned: the tall gray behemoths that have served for decades as the primary distributors of the United States' most unpopular currency will soon be no more.

The U.S. Postal Service is scrapping thousands of stamp vending machines this year. The Post Office said that the machines -- which dispense change only in coins -- are obsolete, in part because they can't be fixed and they don't take credit cards.

"Not as many people are using them as they once did," said Ray Jacobs, a spokesman for the U.S. Postal Service, in explaining the machines' retirement. "Maybe we've put ourselves out of business because we've done such a good job of finding other places for customers to purchase stamps."

In high-traffic locations, the machines' duties have been taken over by full-service "automated traffic centers," where customers can use credit cards to purchase all kinds of postal products.

First rolled out several decades ago, the tall postal vending machines were intended to reduce lines at post offices.

"We began talking about that in the 1980s, that there was no reason somebody should have to stand in line to buy stamps," Jacobs said.

At the time of their rollout, the Postal Service had "worked out a deal" with the U.S. Department of Treasury for the machines to dispense Susan B. Anthony dollar coins in change. In this decade, the machines also began distributing the Sacagawea dollars.

First-class stamps, which will be going up to 42 cents each on May 12, will be available at many large retailers as well as through many automatic teller machines.

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Kentucky Post

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3. Postal workers plan industrial action

Friday, April 11 2008

The local Postal Workers Union has threatened to take industrial action if management fails to expedite a quick resolution to outstanding salary negotiations for the period 2005/2007.

At a press conference held Wednesday at the Old Arouca Post Office the union's General Secretary, Reginald Crichlow, stated that members of bargaining units One and Three were still being forced to live on 2004 salaries.

He also pointed out that having gone to key stakeholders, including Labour Minister Lenny Saith, Public Utilities Minister Mustapha Abdul Hamid and Chief Personnel Officer, Nariemen Hosein Ahmad, they were yet to "see a light at the end of the tunnel." Crichlow said management has offered eight percent for the period January 2005/ August 2006, a three percent increase for 2006/2007, and four percent increases each for the periods 2007/2008 and 2008/2009. He explained that delivery officers currently receive \$2,960 and with management's proposals they would receive approximately \$4,243 in 2009.

However, Crichlow stated that with inflation, the salary of a delivery officer needed to be approximately \$6,000.

"We have therefore proposed a 15 percent increase for 2005/2006, \$450 and a nine percent increase for 2006/2007, a six percent increase for 2007/2008 and \$225 and a five percent increase for 2008/2009.

"If the management of TT Post wishes to be tardy then they are doing it at their own peril. The workers are extremely fed up" said Crichlow.

He explained that the union was certified in August, 2006, to bargain for the workers but they were told by TT Post management that they could not negotiate for the period between January 2005/August 2006.

The union has given management today's deadline to respond.

Crichlow further added that many of the workers were forced to operate in adverse working conditions which included health and safety issues, and security.

"In some offices there are 30 workers with only two toilets" said Crichlow adding that many of the offices lacked proper equipment.

He revealed that delivery drivers operating along the East/West Corridor in places such as Arima and Arouca were attacked by criminals, who wanted to cash in on welfare cheques.

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