

POSTAL NEWS

No. 132/2008

**Formulated by UNI-Japan Post in cooperation with UNI-Apro,
ASPEK Indonesia and SPPI**

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1. Postal Official Offers Lost-Check Explanation

POSTED: 11:41 am EST December 8, 2008

UPDATED: 11:45 am EST December 8, 2008

GREENVILLE, S.C. -- Postal Service officials said Monday that human error was to blame for the mishandling of more than 2,500 Social Security checks that were delayed by several days last week.

Spokesman Harry Spradlin said almost all, if not all, of the checks had been delivered by Saturday and that post offices were no longer receiving calls about missing checks.

Social Security offices were reissuing those checks that still have not been delivered.

All but four of 29 post offices that reported problems with the checks had resolved the issued by Friday, Spradlin said.

"There's really no 'mystery' to this type of situation," he said in an e-mail explanation of a question about the cause of the problem. "Because we are in the process of moving millions of pieces of mail daily, we can't just walk into a facility and find a quantity of mail. It's a process that takes time to go through."

Spradlin said that the Postal Service delivers more than 200 billion pieces of mail each year and that more than 97 percent of it is delivered on time.

At that percentage, about 6 billion pieces of mail are NOT delivered on time.

Spradlin said that this is the fourth and largest occurrence of delayed checks in his 11 years with the Postal Service.

"In each case, the reason for the delay was human error," he said. "Check distribution problems can include mislabeling or mis-sending on our part, computer or distribution

error on the part of the issuing agency or addressing problems on the part of the recipient."

Individual pieces of first-class mail are not tracked, Spradlin said, meaning that the Postal Service only knows there's a problem when a customer calls.

When a call is received, "we begin to communicate and comb the system, letting all postal facilities know to be on the lookout for mis-sent or mislabeled checks, in order to speed them home as soon as they're found," Spradlin said.

It usually takes three days for this process to be accomplished, he said.

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2. China, Taiwan Start Direct Air, Sea, Postal Links

By Stephanie Ho

Beijing

15 December 2008

China and Taiwan have begun direct air, sea and postal links. The move Monday marks a historical milestone in cross-strait relations, after the two sides split following a civil war nearly six decades ago.

Chen Yunlin, China's top ranking official, left, Lien Chan, former chairman of Taiwan's Nationalist Party, third from left, and Chinese officials attend a ceremony in Tianjin, China, as the first cargo ship leaves Tianjin port to Kaohsiung, Taiwan, Monday, Dec. 15, 2008

Tensions have run high between China and Taiwan, ever since the Nationalists fled to the island after losing a civil war to the Communists in 1949.

China considers Taiwan part of its territory, and has vowed to use force, if necessary, if the independently-governed island declares independence.

On Monday, this conflict was overshadowed by what officials on both sides refer to as the realization of the three links - direct flights, direct shipping and direct postal service.

The head of China's Postal Bureau, Ma Junsheng, spoke at a ceremony in Beijing.

Ma says compatriots on both sides of the strait are linked by blood ties. He says he believes that postal bureaus on both sides of the strait will work together and bring about a better tomorrow.

Lin Feng-cheng, vice-chairman of Taiwan's Nationalist, or Kuomintang, Party, also attended the ceremony.

Lin says having direct links is a big accomplishment that will benefit compatriots on both sides of the strait. The Taiwanese official acknowledges this has come late, but says it is still to be treasured.

Following the civil war, all transport by air and sea from Taiwan could only enter the Chinese mainland through a third place. But under an agreement signed last month, China will open 63 ports and Taiwan will open 11 harbors for direct cross-strait shipping. Also, there will be more than 100 weekly flights between the two sides.

The direct links reflect a marked improvement in relations that began with swearing-in of Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou. In sharp contrast to his predecessor, President Ma favors tightening cross-strait economic ties and moving aggressively to reduce tensions.

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PRESS RELEASE

3. Earth Class Mail Opens New York City Retail Location; Now Anyone Can Have a Prestigious Park Avenue Address

Company Provides Manhattan Mailing Address and Postal Mail Delivery Through the Internet

Last update: 7:15 a.m. EST Dec. 17, 2008

SEATTLE, Dec 17, 2008 (BUSINESS WIRE) -- Imagine having a mailing address on one of the best-known, most prestigious streets in the world, even if you reside in another city or another country -- and being able to access, read and manage postal mail sent to that address online, 24/7, from wherever you may be. That's exactly what Earth Class Mail, the global leader in delivering postal mail via the Internet, provides its worldwide customers with the opening of its retail location on Park Avenue in New York City. The new location lets customers enjoy the cachet of a Manhattan address for their business or personal use and the conveniences of online postal mail, onsite package hold and will-call pickup, shipping services, and more.

Perfect for jet-setters, road-warriors and people who live in the NYC boroughs but want the status of an impressive Manhattan address, Earth Class Mail is a convenient and completely secure and confidential way to receive postal mail remotely.

Customers that sign up for Earth Class Mail can choose 228 Park Avenue S as their new mailing address and have their postal mail redirected to the new store location. The exterior of each piece of mail received is scanned, and the envelope images are then uploaded to the customer's secure, private online inbox and also sent as an email message. From there, the customer can decide to have the envelope's contents securely opened and scanned to be read online, recycled, shredded, archived, or forwarded to any location - all with just a few mouse clicks. In addition, customers who live in or frequently travel to New York City can have their packages shipped to the Park Avenue location and securely held for them to pick up later, a service that will especially benefit apartment- and condo-dwellers in the metro area who don't have a safe place for packages to be delivered while they're away.

"It's no surprise that 228 Park Avenue is already far and away our most popular premium street address with our global customer base," said Earth Class Mail CEO Ron Wiener. "We give people who need a business presence in Manhattan all the

benefits of a Park Avenue address, but without the high cost of an executive suite or office space; plus, they get the convenience of receiving their postal mail over the web anywhere they go. Our Park Avenue address is ideal for all sorts of New York City residents - traveling executives, business owners, Broadway actors, those with second homes outside the city, really anyone who's away from their mailbox for any length of time - and it's tailor-made for those both in the U.S. and abroad who need an address that says they're a major player in their respective industry or field of endeavor. And, if your business or personal interests are on the West Coast instead, our newly opened Los Angeles (8605 Santa Monica Blvd) and San Francisco (548 Market Street) retail locations offer similar benefits."

In addition to providing will-call package pickup services to Earth Class Mail customers who sign up for the address, the new Manhattan location will also serve as a FedEx Authorized Ship Center where both regular subscribers and neighborhood customers will enjoy the convenience of shipment preparation and regularly scheduled pickup by FedEx of their outgoing parcels. New Earth Class Mail customers can receive personal assistance with the account sign-up process as well as advice and training on how to get the most out of the service. And, in the spirit of the company's commitment to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of its customers' mail, the Park Avenue storefront will offer free, unlimited shredding of patrons' sensitive documents.

To mark the grand opening, Earth Class Mail has invited business representatives and residents from the area to drop by the store between noon and 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 17, for refreshments as well as a chance to meet Earth Class Mail executives and learn more about online postal mail.

About Earth Class Mail

Earth Class Mail(TM) provides the only online postal-mail service designed for individuals, small businesses, enterprises, government agencies, the military, and national posts. Customers in more than 175 countries now receive their postal mail at one of 23 U.S. addresses -- from New York to Los Angeles -- and access it online, 24x7. This user-directed service offers remote-access and delivery options unavailable with traditional PO boxes, private mailbox services or executive suites. For the enterprise and government, Earth Class Mail digitizes paper mail at its entry point, injecting it directly into an organization's electronic workflow and saving 75% of typical document lifecycle costs. The environmental benefits associated with Earth Class Mail's solution include reductions in carbon emissions and a 400% increase in recycling compared to the national average. Internationally, the company licenses its technology platform to mail and document outsourcing partners, as well as national postal operators throughout the world.

SOURCE: Earth Class Mail

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4. Postal rivals

Terry Macalister

The Guardian, Wednesday 17 December 2008

Article history

If ever a company had an appropriate acronym, it would be TNT, which blasted its way into the minds of the trade union movement, when its lorries drove through printer picket lines outside the Wapping headquarters of News International

TNT helped revolutionise the newspaper sector and is well on its way to doing the same thing to the postal business, having opened talks with the government about taking a stake in the state-owned Royal Mail

Privately owned, TNT started life as Thomas Nationwide Transport in Australia. But having moved into parcel and then letter delivery, it was bought by the Dutch postal operator, TPG

Householders in Liverpool have already become used to seeing postmen and women in bright orange uniforms delivering their morning letters, under trials being undertaken by TNT Mail.

The business has also organised similar low-key exercises in Glasgow and Manchester, as a prelude to launching a full-scale assault on the traditional role of Royal Mail.

TNT has partly been trying to convince itself it could make money out of a nationwide door-to-door operation, but also bolster its claims to be the biggest rival to the state-owned incumbent.

The Dutch will want to use the company's growing commercial muscle to convince business secretary, Peter Mandelson that they, rather than any of their competitors, should be given the opportunity to buy into Royal Mail.

Nick Wells, the UK boss of TNT, was refusing to make any comments on what his company's future plans will be. "I can't comment on anything like this," he insisted, as he confirmed trials were still ongoing in Merseyside.

TNT is not the only one licking its lips at the thought of taking a bite out of Royal Mail. DHL, an arm of Germany's Deutsche Post, and the UK company Business Post are also keen to expand their British businesses.

Up to 20 of these private postal firms have registered with the regulator, Postcomm, allowing them to become involved in the delivery of letters around the UK. They are mainly taking advantage of a system under which they collect and sort the mail before handing it to Royal Mail for the final delivery, rather than undertake the kind of activities being trialled by TNT.

All the private operators are targeting the lucrative corporate customer, such as banks or television companies, which have mass "mailouts" to areas of dense population. Royal Mail argues this is predatory, "creaming off" the best customers and leaving the firm lumbered with loss-making deliveries to remoter parts of Britain.

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5. Postal privatisation may cost 50,000 jobs in UK: Report

16 Dec 2008, 2121 hrs IST, PTI

LONDON: As many as 50,000 people may lose their jobs in the country due to a partial

privatisation of the state-owned postal service Royal Mail, says a media report.

"Up to 50,000 jobs could be lost in a partial privatisation of the Royal Mail that would break up the business and offer parts to rivals," The Times has reported today.

The daily said that a report to ministers is believed to recommend opening up to half of the state-owned group to private business and closing half of its 71 mail centres.

"The business would be divided into different units, such as collection and sorting, with rival operators allowed to buy stakes. The 'last mile' delivery is likely to remain with Royal Mail as a natural monopoly," The Times noted.

Meanwhile, unions, which are against the deal, have warned "that 40,000 to 50,000 jobs from a total workforce of almost 1,70,000 could go..." the daily pointed out.

According to the newspaper, the report by Richard Hooper, the former deputy chairman of UK media watchdog Ofcom, would be discussed by the Cabinet today.

"If the Government backs the changes, as seems likely, it will inflame the postal unions and Labour backbenchers who both want a fully publicly owned Royal Mail," the daily said and added that the entity is struggling to keep pace with rival operators in a declining market.

Further, Royal Mail is buckling under the pressure of a pension deficit that is set to double to seven billion pounds when it is next reviewed in the spring.

"The Government is considering whether to take on the liability to bolster Royal Mails balance sheet and make it more attractive to commercial investors. Ministers will make clear, however, that the Government will remain the majority shareholder in any future deal," The Times said.

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PRESS RELEASE

6. U.S. Postal Service Beefs Up RIBBS Website

Last update: 12:01 a.m. EST Dec. 16, 2008

WASHINGTON, Dec 16, 2008 /PRNewswire-USNewswire via COMTEX/ --

Resource for Business Mailers Offers Addressing Solutions From A to Z

Helping business mailers improve their address quality so that they can reach their valued customers is nothing new for the Postal Service. The agency has been doing that for years with its RIBBS website: ribbs.usps.gov.

Finding the information business mailers need just got easier.

The enhanced site now has site indexes that are searchable from A to Z or by topic.

Improved print capabilities and drop-down menu navigation also provide easy access to the Postal Service's many products and services that can help business mailers standardize, validate and update their address data.

For example, the site offers information about CASS Certified(TM) software, which can help mailers standardize their addresses with correct abbreviations and spellings.

This allows each element of the address to be matched against the Postal Service ZIP+4(R) database, enabling assignment of a ZIP+4 code, a prerequisite for barcoding and receiving cost-saving automation discounts.

The site also offers mailers several solutions to validate that their addresses are actual delivery points and other solutions to ensure that addresses are updated when people move.

Links to Intelligent Mail(R) services and the Flat Sequencing Strategy are also available on RIBBS.

"Cost-effective and timely delivery of every mailpiece depends on valid addresses that contain complete and accurate address elements," said Alice VanGorder, manager of Address Management. "And the Postal Service is here to help."

To learn more about the Postal Service's suite of address cleansing products, visit ribbs.usps.gov or call the National Customer Support Center at 800-238-3150.

Please Note: For broadcast quality video and audio, photo stills and other media resources, visit the USPS Newsroom at www.usps.com/communications/newsroom/welcome.htm.

An independent federal agency, the U.S. Postal Service is the only delivery service that reaches every address in the nation, 146 million homes and businesses, six days a week. It has 37,000 retail locations and relies on the sale of postage, products and services, not tax dollars, to pay for operating expenses. The Postal Service has annual revenue of \$75 billion and delivers nearly half the world's mail.

SOURCE U.S. Postal Service

<http://ribbs.usps.gov/>

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