

POSTAL NEWS

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1. Mainland, Taiwan to start two-way postal remittance services

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BEIJING, Feb. 11 (Xinhua) -- The Chinese mainland and Taiwan will start two-way postal remittance services for the first time in 60 years, a mainland official said here Wednesday.

Fan Liqing, a spokeswoman of China's State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, didn't give an exact start date for the services, but Taiwan's Chunghwa Post Co. reported earlier that two-way services would begin mid-February.

"Post offices on the mainland and Taiwan are conducting technical tests and the service will start soon after the tests are done," said Fan.

Currently, due to technical reasons, Taiwan's post offices can provide services for money transfers bound for the mainland, but do not accept inward remittances from the mainland.

By early February, Taiwan's post offices had almost completed upgrades for the two-way transfer service, Fan said.

According to Taiwan media, all remittance transactions will be made in American dollars, with each transfer limited to 30,000 U.S. dollars. Citibank New York will serve as the intermediary bank at the present stage.

Fan said after the start of two-way postal remittance services, the two sides will discuss the possibility of cross-strait mail orders and online order services.

The mainland and Taiwan signed a series of landmark agreements on direct air, sea and postal services last November in Taipei. Such direct links formally started on Dec. 15, last year.

Editor: Sun Yunlong

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Tuesday, February 10, 2009

2. UPS and U.S. Postal Service launch pilot returns service

In a test of a new returns service announced today, the U.S. Postal Service will pick up packages at consumers' homes or from drop boxes and transfer them to UPS for final delivery back to retailers.

The pilot program, UPS Returns Flexible Access, started this week and is expected to run for about five months before a decision is made whether to make it permanent, the companies say. It covers domestic shipments in the continental U.S.

Terry Rowinski, vice president of operations at online retailer BuySeasons Inc., one of several retailers participating in the test, said during an online presentation with UPS and the U.S.P.S. today that he sees the returns program as a way to enhance his company's product offerings and improve customer service. BuySeasons operates the costumes and party supplies retail site BuyCostumes.com.

To use the service, customers of participating retailers will affix to their packages return shipping labels received with every order. Packages affixed with the labels, which display bar codes for both UPS and the U.S.P.S., can be left in a home mail box, in a UPS or U.S.P.S. drop box, or taken to any UPS or U.S.P.S. facility. UPS then will pick up the package and return it directly to the retailer, eliminating the need to transfer the package to multiple U.S.P.S. mail-handling facilities.

The companies say they will develop a fee structure for the service after evaluating different rate schemes during the pilot.

The Postal Service also provides a returns service in conjunction with Newgistics Inc., which picks up packages at consumers' addresses and takes them to a U.S.P.S. mail facility for delivery to retailers. That service will continue separately from the UPS program, the Postal Service says.

In announcing the new UPS Returns Flexible Access program, UPS and the Postal Service also released results of a consumer survey conducted for UPS by Forrester Research Inc. Among the survey's results:

Difficulty in returning items and related fees were cited by 55.2% of consumers as a problem with online shopping; the only problem cited by a higher percentage (79.8%) was the cost of shipping when making a purchase.

22% of consumers said they were shopping online less frequently than in the past because of the hassle of returning purchased items.

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3. Zumbox creates an all-digital alternative to the U.S. Postal Service

Dean Takahashi | February 10th, 2009

The U.S. Postal Service is about to get some competition in the digital world. Zumbox is launching the public beta test today for its all-digital alternative to the paper postal service.

Wait a minute, you're thinking. Isn't that email? Nope. Westlake Village, Calif.-based Zumbox lets you send or receive scanned, physical representations of letters, bills or other things you might normally send via paper mail. You can log into your mailbox at the Zumbox site and then receive digital delivery of your mail.

And you don't have to put a stamp on anything. For now, it's free for everyone except advertisers and marketers, who can pay for premium service. Consumers can now view online the mail they wish to receive and the service allows them to access it from anywhere at anytime via the Internet. Glen Ward, president, said that Zumbox can deliver mail instantly seven days a week.

Zumbox has created a digital mailbox for every street address in the U.S. So companies can send bills via Zumbox. You open them and they look like scanned versions of the real paper bills. The Zumbox site will let you look at a variety of media in the form of HTML, Flash, audio, and video. Nonprofits, businesses, government entities and consumers can use it for free.

Zumbox mailboxes are secure since the company uses a closed system with security measures that meet the toughest regulations, such as the medical-record HIPAA law. Users get a secure PIN number which they receive from Zumbox via paper mail, just to make sure that scammers don't hijack your mail. The benefit of the closed system is there's no junk mail. Consumers can still order and use a variety of electronic payment systems. They can also browse through the catalogs they want to see and order goods.

Zumbox will charge advertisers and marketers because it gives them real-time campaign measurement tools that are unavailable through traditional mail. Marketers and advertisers can also send mail to a single address, a mailing list, or a specific geographic region such as all of the homes in a specific zip code.

The company was founded in 2007. It has 33 employees and has raised \$4 million from private investors. The company's founder, Maury Friedman, is a successful entrepreneur who has sold a number of companies.

Rivals include Earth Class Mail, another provider of alternative mail services. Zumbox currently has only a few thousand users, but the company will now open up the service to all comers.

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Tuesday, February 10, 2009

4. Zumbox Takes On Postal Mail

Westlake Village-based Zumbox, a new startup, said today it has launched a service which the firm said will deliver regular mail to users via an online system. Zumbox-- which is headed by Maury Friedman, who has been involved with such firms as RiverOne and Academy123--said it will allow business, governments, and non-profits to send content to street addresses, online. The firm said it has created a "digital mailbox" for every street address online, where people can send electronic versions of financial statements, bills, direct mail, catalogs, and other correspondence. The service relies on recipients at a postal address to actually sign in and create an account to read their mail, and will charge advertisers and marketers to use the service.
posted on Tuesday, February 10, 2009

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5. Business down for U.S. Postal service

Postal service lost nearly \$3 billion last year

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Written by: Mylous Hairston Posted by: Emily Lenihan

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) - The money meltdown may force the U.S. Postal Service to deliver bad news.

With more people using the internet to pay bills and stay in touch, mail volume is way down.

That caused the postal service to lose nearly \$3 billion last year.

Money saving considerations include mail delivery just five days a week, possible job cuts, and a reduction in blue collection boxes.

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6. Editors' Roundtable: 5-day postal delivery

The Register-Mail

Posted Feb 07, 2009 @ 07:12 PM

Should Congress lift the restriction that the U.S. Postal Service must deliver six days per week?

Five-day delivery should be an option

This is a little tricky because cutting mail delivery on Saturday would significantly hurt daily newspapers. Many, including The Register-Mail, use the U.S. Postal Service for a portion of its delivery. The newspaper industry has enough problems already.

But, just as newspapers need to consider all options in stemming red ink, so too should the postal service be allowed to look at cutting one day of delivery per week. That doesn't mean I support a five-day delivery schedule, but the option to do so must be on the table.

The postal service has significant competition for package delivery, and ending delivery on Saturday, for instance, could force people to take their business elsewhere.

The numbers show that fewer people are using the mail. Last year the postal service handled 9 billion fewer items, the single largest drop in history. That led to a \$2.8 billion dollar deficit in 2008, and Postmaster General John E. Potter predicts red ink to increase to as much as \$6 billion this year.

Clearly, cuts are needed. And all options should be made available. — Tom Martin, editor

Only alternative is to raise rates

Magazine publishers, newspapers, mail-order businesses that rely on old-fashioned snail mail are in a dither over the proposal to drop a delivery day. But what is the alternative?

Well, the only way to regain revenue lost due to increasing operational costs combined with lower volume would be to raise postal rates. There is a groundswell of grumbling every time first-class stamps go up a penny. Who's going to support the kind of increase needed to overcome a deficit of several billion dollars?

So here's the alternative to dropping a delivery day: Raise the rates only for those bulk mailers who feel they so need the service to remain six days a week. Let those who are burdening the system with unwanted mail sent at discounted bulk rates pay for the level of service they desire.

That's not going to happen, so give the postal service a break; let 'em drop a day. — Rob Buck, local news editor

6-day delivery not really a necessity

Dropping a delivery day makes sense, and a low-volume, mid-week day would be better than cutting Saturday so that we wouldn't be without mail delivery two days in a row.

How many people still use the mail to keep in touch? For most, the postal service primarily has become a vehicle for the delivery of coupons and credit card offers — our tax dollars at work for junk mail. Most are not communicating with friends and family via snail mail anymore. Bank statements and bills can arrive in their inboxes, not their mailboxes. Why waste the paper, the fuel and the energy for print copies when it's cheaper, greener and faster to access things online?

For those who need to make sure a package is delivered on a certain day, there are other options for shipping items that are not subsidized by your tax dollars. It would be an adjustment and perhaps an inconvenience for some to cut back to five days, but the potential savings of billions of dollars would be worth it. — Jane Carlson, features editor

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7. Postal Department joins global money transferring

Shirley Wijesinghe (Feb 9, 2009).

The Government has no intention to privatise the Postal Department but to improve its services through value addition, Posts and Telecommunication Minister Mahinda Wijesekera said.

Minister Wijesekera said the Postal Department draws Rs. 3,000 million annually from the Treasury for its functioning.

The changes are vital for earning profit.

He was speaking at the inaugural ceremony held recently to introduce Western Union Money Transfer Service at 637 post offices in Sri Lanka.

"We are extremely proud to join hands with Western Union, a global leader in money transferring services making a successful blend of values and ethics with modern infrastructure facilities," the Minister said.

Minister said the people working abroad could easily remit money to their families in Sri Lanka.

It is a great value addition which will empower us to cater to our huge customer network providing fast and reliable access in the money transferring network. Remittances from Sri Lankans working abroad continue to play a supporting role in

strengthening Sri Lanka's economy and is a major source of foreign resources for the country.

According to the World Bank sources, Sri Lanka received US\$ 2.7 billion in 2007 making it the fourth largest remittance receiving country in South Asia, the Minister said.

He said the Sri Lanka Postal Service provides value added services such as communication services, bulk mail , dial services, fax , internet and E-mail and other utility services. The customer coverage of the Department is around 18 million.

There are 613 post offices, 3,440 sub post offices and over 500 agency post officers throughout the country.

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