

POSTAL NEWS

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1. FedEx launches FedEx International Economy Service in India

India Infoline News Service / Mumbai Apr 06, 2009 10:13

The new service effectively addresses the needs of customers who look for reliability and cost efficiency as a top priority in shipping

FedEx Express, a subsidiary of FedEx Corp. and the world's largest express transportation company, today announced the expansion of its customer portfolio of services with the launch of FedEx International Economy service in India. FedEx International Economy is an economical, day-definite, customs-cleared, door-to-door service that features a transit time typically two business days longer than premium FedEx International Priority service, which is designed for more time-sensitive shipments.

The new service effectively addresses the needs of customers who look for reliability and cost efficiency as a top priority in shipping. FedEx International Economy is specially designed for customers with less urgent shipments of individual packages under 68 kg, but who require the reliability they have come to expect with FedEx. Offered on competitive list rates and backed by a money-back guarantee, FedEx International Economy typically delivers packages within four to six business days for U.S. Europe, Middle East or Asian markets .

As with the FedEx International Priority service, customers can use fedex.com for online tracking with proactive e-mail notification. "We believe there is a clear demand for a service that lies between our premium International Priority express service and air cargo," said Jacques Creeten, vice president India, FedEx Express.

"Our International Economy service meets that need for customers, and at the same time broadens the portfolio of shipping options that FedEx offers."

Small- to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are among those that will benefit from FedEx International Economy service, as they require express solutions that are both cost-efficient and reliable. The role of SMEs has magnified gradually at the global level with SME exports contributing around 33% of India's total exports. With FedEx International Economy service, these SMEs can now enjoy the convenience of

door-to-door pick-up and delivery, including customs clearance at an economical price. FedEx International Economy service is now available across India.

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2. Scottish Eagle Couriers Opens New HQ

06 April 2009 by Sarah Sharpe - © Hellmail.co.uk

Scotland's leading independent courier firm has carried out a major expansion into West Lothian after opening a new operational headquarters.

Eagle Couriers has relocated its head office to new premises in Bathgate as part of a move to maximise and expand its deliveries across Scotland and the rest of the UK.

The move means that around 30 permanent staff from Eagle Couriers will now be based at the new HQ at the Easter Inch industrial park in Bathgate.

However, the firm will still be operating its existing depots in Edinburgh and Glasgow, in order to ensure there is no disruption to the long-standing contracts it holds with blue-chip companies in the two cities.

The relocation of the firm's HQ follows a number of high-profile contract wins for Eagle Couriers with clients such as the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service and the Agency for the Legal Deposit Libraries.

Under the expansion plans, Eagle Couriers has also moved its Glasgow depot to a new modern facility at Oakbank, which will provide easier access to the city centre and is equipped the latest security equipment.

Jerry Stewart, one of Eagle Couriers directors, said: "This is a very exciting move for us as it will enable us to expand our business even further across Scotland. By having a central delivery hub, it will mean we can easily dispatch couriers across the whole of Scotland and allow our business to grow.

"Of course, we will also be keeping our bases in Edinburgh and Glasgow. We have many important contracts in these two cities and we need to maintain our presence there in order to continue providing the best possible service for these clients.

"We're even moving our depot in Glasgow in order to be closer to the city centre and to ensure that we have a more modern base with the latest security systems. It will provide an even better service for our clients in the city.

"With the increased floor space of our new Bathgate headquarters, we are now looking forward to strengthening our position as Scotland's leading independent courier firm."

The expansion plan is the latest in a line of successes for the company, which has more than 20 years experience in the Scottish courier industry.

Last year, the firm took over one of its oldest Edinburgh rivals QED Couriers in a deal designed to bring an extra £500,000 of business per year. The company has previously led successful takeovers of other competitors, including Glasgow courier firms Road Runner and Arrow Express.

In the past 12 months, Eagle Couriers has also secured a £1.5 million contract with communications giant BT and a similar deal with NHS Scotland that will see the firm deliver documents and medical equipment to hospitals and medical facilities across the country until 2011.

The company also earned security clearance to make deliveries for the Government and other public bodies across Scotland. The firm now has backing from two organisations - the Government Car and Despatch Agency (GCDA) and Scotland Excel – which both aim to improve efficiency and delivery of important public documents, files and information.

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3. Postal union leaders propose solutions to save service, jobs

Tuesday 7th April 2009 03:43 AM

WASHINGTON-The nation's two biggest postal unions urged lawmakers to help the U.S. Postal Service back to a sound financial footing, through a technical legal fix involving present funding for future retirees' health care, rather than let the service cut post offices, fire workers and drop one day of mail service.

"We cannot use cost-cutting measures alone to restore our financial health," Letter Carriers President William Young told the House Postal Service subcommittee on March 25. "Given the scale of the crisis before us, we need Congress to act as well."

Postmaster General John Potter testified the agency lost \$2.8 billion last year, due to declines in mail volume unseen since the Great Depression, as the economy crashed. He said volume from several key customers plunged. One was the financial sector, as banks and securities houses merged, collapsed or were taken over.

But Young and Postal Workers President William Burrus both said the real culprit for the agency's financial crisis was not just the decline in volume or competition from the Internet -- which Young said his union has worked on for years with USPS -- but the health care pre-financing requirement. That's virtually unknown in any other agency or private company. But the heavy burden threatens USPS' existence, he warned.

"At this moment, the survival of the Postal Service – a venerable institution that is literally older than our country – hangs in the balance," Young said. "The Great Recession we face today threatens to destroy the most trusted and universal connection most Americans have with their national government."

“In the short-term,” Young urged lawmakers to “take the common-sense step of passing a bipartisan bill that...will save the USPS billions of dollars over several years by letting it pay current retiree health benefits out of its now-restricted retiree health fund.” Long-term, lawmakers must make other changes in financing USPS health care.

Right now, USPS has to fund those benefits out of current revenues. The legislation would let the agency stretch out the funding over a longer time, and carry forward some of the obligations after the year 2016.

“NALC strongly supports the policy of pre-funding future retiree health benefits. Those benefits are our benefits. They are benefits Letter Carriers and other postal employees are relying on to be there in the future – they are benefits that we have all worked very hard to earn. But we are seeking to adopt a more reasonable and affordable schedule of pre-funding,” Young added.

“Indeed, even with HR 22 (the bipartisan bill), the Postal Service will still be pre-funding at a far greater rate – some \$2 billion per year – than virtually any other company. In fact, no other company is required by law or corporate accounting standards to pre-fund retiree health benefits – and not surprisingly, very few do.”

Young emphasized that unlike the banks, USPS and its workers are “not looking for a bailout. No taxpayer funds will be required by the bill. The USPS is seeking to use its own money to survive a cash crunch resulting from the economic crisis” that the bank collapse caused for the entire country.

Burrus agreed. Like Young, he cited past decisions by the GOP Bush government and the USPS board -- named by Bush -- that put the Postal Service in the red. And Burrus specifically said, again, that USPS board and management is too cozy with the big mailers, who practically wrote postal rates in the last round of revisions.

“No business can exist for long with a strategy based on cost reduction alone. Eventually it will become impossible to maintain an acceptable level of service, and there will be nothing left to cut,” Burrus said.

“However, there are steps postal management can initiate to address the issue of financial stability. They could begin with a fundamental shift in the relationship between the Postal Service and commercial mailers. I quote an observation by Joy Leong, a contributor to the newsletter Mailing Systems Technology: “Mailers are customers of the Postal Service, not shareholders. Printers, mail fulfillment services and other vendors are contractors of the Postal Service, not shareholders,” Burrus said.

“In recent years these lines have been blurred, and major mailers have assumed the role of shareholders. They have formed organizations that have been granted unfettered access to the inter-working of the Postal Service and to the decision-making process. One umbrella organization has even been afforded office space in postal headquarters. This cozy relationship between postal executives and major business mailers is unhealthy and counterproductive.

“One of the byproducts of this relationship is the preservation of discounts that benefit the mailers at the expense of Postal Service stability...The law specifically requires universal service at uniform rates, yet the standard has been nullified with the growth of discounts that were intended to be temporary. Over time, discounts have morphed into a disgraceful policy that rewards large mailers with rate reductions so extreme as to be absurd,” Burrus added.

Lawmakers back HR 22 and dislike Potter’s proposed service cuts and layoffs. Plans to cut staff and “offer voluntary early retirement opportunities to nearly 150,000 employees” plus “the Postal Service’s dire financial condition are of concern to me and the American public,” said subcommittee chairman Stephen Lynch, D-MASS.

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4. Small post offices: A dying breed?

If they vanished, they'd take a piece of their towns' hearts

By Jeremiah Horrigan

Times Herald-Record

Posted: April 06, 2009 - 2:00 AM

RIFTON — William Dodd's storefront U.S. post office on Main Street here is as popular and as welcoming as the candy store it used to be.

Dodd knows his customers by name and they know his. Over in the corner, the names and respective heights of his youngest customers from over the years are inscribed on a door frame.

But times are tough. The home office is in dire straits; just last week, it reported projected losses of \$6 billion for 2010.

Dodd's customers know this and all of them are hoping that tough economic times and changing social patterns don't combine to kill the Rifton post office or others among the 165 offices in the three-county mid-Hudson region.

A spokesman for the U.S. Postal Service said last week that no post offices, however small, are scheduled to be closed. But, spokesman Tom Gaynor said, neither are any cost-saving measures "off the table," including consolidation and closings.

Small as it is, Rifton's isn't the smallest in the region. That honor belongs to other, even more remote communities like Forestburgh in Sullivan County, whose "contract" post office is located in the Forestburgh General Store. You can buy a fried egg sandwich and a roll of stamps at double-duty post offices like Forestburgh's.

But, should closings come to pass, customers at rural offices like Rifton and Forestburgh fear theirs would be the first to go, victims not only of a struggling economy but of a growing reliance on electronic mail. (The Postal Service expects mail volume to plunge to 180 billion pieces by year's end, compared to 2006's all-time high of 213 billion.)

If the Rifton office goes, the heart of a vanishing downtown will go with it. It's the last place here people can gather and trade stories, not to mention mailing or picking up a letter.

To Missy Harjes, a single word sums up her feelings about the Rifton post office: "Wonderful."

Leslie Abdalla loves bringing her 5-year-old daughter to the Rifton post office.

"This place is so great; there's never any waiting and Bill (Dodd) is so efficient, so friendly," Abdalla said.

"It's more than just a post office," said James Mayo. "It's a community post office, part of the social culture of the community."

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