

POSTAL NEWS

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Sunday, Jun 21, 2009

1. Now, banks face threat from Postal Dept ATMs

K. Ram Kumar

Mumbai, June 20 Banks had better be prepared for some serious competition from a formidable 'non-bank' rival. The good old Department of Posts, also called India Post, which has an on-the-ground presence at 1,55,000 locations across the country, is taking baby steps to invade their turf by establishing ATMs. To begin with, the Department plans to provide the convenience of on-site ATMs to its savings bank (SB) account holders at select Head Post Offices across various States. This move will save post office (PO) SB account holders, including pensioners, the bother of standing in long queues for withdrawing/ depositing money, making routine enquiries regarding outstanding balance, request for a cheque-book, transfer money to another PO SB account, etc. Further, once the Department completes its ambitious networking exercise, SB account holders could walk into any ATM attached to a PO to access their accounts. At a later stage, the Department may also consider linking up its ATMs with the National Financial Switch to which all banks' ATMs are hooked up.

Major step

While ATMs may be passé in the case of banks, for the 150-year old Department of Posts, which embarked on computerisation not too long ago, it is a giant leap in providing value addition to its customers. Clearly, the Department has woken up to the fact that the only way to retain its existing customers and attract new ones is to embrace the information technology paradigm of the 21st century. As on March-end 2009, the Department of Posts had 22.89 crore savings bank accounts and the aggregate outstanding amount in these accounts was Rs 22,217 crore.

A PO SB account (individual/joint and group) currently earns 3.5 per cent interest. The minimum balance to be maintained in an SB account is Rs 50 for a non-cheque

account and Rs 500 for a cheque account. The maximum balance in the case of an individual account is Rs 1 lakh and Rs 2 lakh for joint account. There is no limit on group/institutional or official capacity accounts. Interest earned is completely tax free under section 10 of Income Tax Act.

“As part of the information technology revamp of our department, we will be gradually moving the operations of our extensive network of post offices on to a core banking platform. With the Post Office emerging as a focal point for the delivery of all social security schemes such as National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and Old Age Pension, establishing ATMs at select head post offices will follow as a natural corollary,” said Mr M.S. Bali, Chief Postmaster General (Maharashtra & Goa).

Besides providing a comprehensive gamut of financial services including postal savings, sourcing small loans for banks, selling insurance products, etc, Mr Bali said his Department can help other financial services providers sell their products and services through the vast postal network.

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2. Postal Service

June 17, 2009 02:36 PM EDT (Updated: June 17, 2009 02:44 PM EDT)

I know some of us depend on the postal service to be around forever delivering mail on time and to the correct house. It certainly is one area that I wish was done better; specially, when my regular postman goes on vacation. I get mail from all over the place. One future problem may hit my city soon.

This city has a processing and distribution facility that may shut down soon. It would mean that mail would take a lot longer for this area and many people would lose their jobs. I know some of you are wondering how this affects you now. This isn't the only place that is being considered for closure, as others are on the list. We were on the list before and removed when other areas were closed. There were more than 130 on the list in 2006.

The post office says less people are mailing first class letters this year. They stated there was a "14.7% drop from same time last year." I know that I'm no longer mailing bills, as the post office is not dependable, as don't like late charges when the check didn't arrive on time.

The quote is from my local newspaper Ventura County Star.

Does your area have a processing and distribution facility? Are you mailing less first class letters?

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3. Treasure Coast Goin' Postal stores will replace faded American flags for free

By staff report

Friday, June 19, 2009

The more than 300 family-owned stores in the Goin' Postal packing and shipping chain will be banding together to offer free replacement flags to anyone who brings in a tattered, torn or faded American flag during July.

There is a limit of one per family per address (no P.O. Boxes) while supplies last.

To find Goin' Postal stores visit goinpostal.com, click on "locations", and type in your zip code or click on your state.

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4. MACTEC Issued \$9.5 M Contract For U.S. Postal Service Projects

June 18, 2009

Alpharetta, GA - MACTEC has been awarded a \$9.5M task order contract to provide environmental engineering services in Pennsylvania for the United States Postal Service (USPS). The award is one of several contracts that MACTEC performs for USPS throughout the U.S. Allen Kibler, President of MACTEC Engineering and Consulting, Inc., made the announcement.

According to MACTEC Project Manager Daniel Guest, P.E., the initial contract is for one year with four one-year extensions.

"We have assembled an experienced team of engineers, geologists and scientists along with subcontractors and suppliers and will be able to provide a complete package to USPS that will function as an extension of USPS staff during project execution," said Guest.

MACTEC is also assisting the USPS with permitting services and recently determined that 108 of 334 USPS vehicle maintenance facilities nationwide were exempt from permitting. USPS estimates this will result in up to \$880,000 in long-term savings. MACTEC is also performing audits of USPS facilities in support of sustainability and energy conservation measures.

SOURCE: MACTEC

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Thursday June 18, 2009

5. Postal Service considers cutting Saturday delivery, closing offices

by George Hohmann

Daily Mail Business Editor

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- The U.S. Postal Service is looking at scaling back.

"Faced with wide losses and a long slide in mail volume, the agency is considering eliminating Saturday deliveries and closing more post offices," according to a story published Monday in The Wall Street Journal.

The Postal Service lost \$2.8 billion last year as the economy slowed and the volume of mail declined. It lost \$1.9 billion in the three months ended March 31.

Some of the decline in postal business isn't expected to return when the economy improves. That's because some behavior has permanently changed - such as the decision by some consumers to pay bills online rather than by mail.

Postal Service spokeswoman Cathy Yarosky said about 30 percent of postal revenue now comes from "alternative access points," such as the agency's Web site, www.usps.com, where many tasks can be performed. Examples: Customers can look up a zip code, schedule a package pickup, purchase stamps and print out shipping labels. "You can do a lot of things from your home computer that you once had to visit a post office for," she said.

Also, the post office has installed "Automated Postal Centers" in many post offices - including the main office in downtown Charleston - where customers can do many things they traditionally had to do at the retail window, Yarosky said.

You can even buy stamps from your mail carrier.

"We are being challenged on all fronts," Yarosky said. "As a result, we are looking at everything. Everything is on the table. Like every other business and organization, we have to look at ways to reduce costs."

According to the Journal, the postal service is again considering cutting out Saturday home delivery. It also is reviewing 3,100 post offices and retail outlets nationwide, out of 36,700, to possibly close or consolidate. The agency expects to make decisions by Oct. 1.

Yarosky would neither disclose the list of post offices that might close nor say whether any of them are in West Virginia. She did say that the Hacker Valley post office is slated to close on June 30 because the postal service's lease has expired.

"We have quite an extensive retail network that has been pretty much left untouched," she said. "We have already responded to the decrease in mail volume. We are considering 5-day delivery. In addition, adjusting carrier routes and consolidating some of our mail-processing operations are among the things we are looking at to reduce costs while maintaining a high level of service to our customers."

The postal service's Appalachian District has 889 post offices, 46 stations-branches, 51 contract stations, 20 retail stores, and 5 processing and distribution centers. The district is comprised of 51 counties in West Virginia and 31 counties in Virginia.

As of Dec. 31, 2008, the service had 4,554 career employees and 1,763 temporary employees in the district and an annual payroll of more than \$177 million.

The postal service made news here in April when it announced that the Charleston Remote Encoding Center at 1002 Lee St. E. will close in October as part of a nationwide consolidation plan. That closure will affect 82 career employees and 252 temporary workers.

According to a history by Delf Norona, Congress established the first postal route in what is now West Virginia in 1792. It included Martinsburg and Shepherdstown.

Adapting to change is not new for the postal service. Mail delivery evolved from foot to horseback, stagecoach, steamboat, railroad, automobile and airplane, with intermediate and overlapping use of balloons, helicopters and pneumatic tubes.

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6. Firm ready to deliver on day of postal strike

11:13am Thursday 18th June 2009

A BOLTON-based online delivery company is reaping extra business because of a planned postal strike in London.

Parcel2Go.com is anticipating a sales increase of £50,000 in just one day as Londoners seek alternative methods of parcel delivery ahead of tomorrow's Royal Mail strike.

More than 300,000 businesses and 8.5 million residents across London will be affected by the strike and Parcel2Go is reaping the rewards with a 72 per cent increase in online enquiries from in and around London.

Fil Adams-Mercer, managing director of Parcel2go, said: "Businesses have no right to hold their customers to ransom. But if they choose to do this, we will be waiting to provide them with the service they need.

"There has been an incredible response to this proposed strike. Both businesses and residents have made sure they are not inconvenienced and have made other arrangements.

“This is not a short-term win for us either. We have statistics to show that once people have used Parcel2go they become repeat customers.”

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