

# POSTAL NEWS

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July 22, 2009, 5:20 pm

## **1. Postal Service Unveils Large ‘Green’ Roof**

By Jennifer 8. Lee

One of the largest “green” roofs in New York City was unveiled Wednesday by the United States Postal Service at its Morgan Processing and Distribution Center on Ninth Avenue, between 29th and 30th Streets.

The seventh-floor rooftop of the 1930s building has been transformed from a tar- and stone-covered no-man’s land into a 2.5-acre parklike recreational space for its employees, with benches, billowing grasses and a view of the skyline that includes the Empire State Building. The project was part of the Postal Service’s broader environmental initiative, which includes hybrid vehicles, recycling efforts and architecture initiatives.

New York, in part because of high labor and transportation costs, has been slower than other cities, like Seattle and Chicago, to install green roofs. A tax-abatement plan was passed by the Legislature last year to encourage developers and building owners; however, the roof plans for the postal facility, one of the largest in the country, date back to 2006 and took two years for the approval.

The new roof is expected to last 50 years, and it will provide better insulation, cutting heating and cooling costs by about \$30,000 a year. In addition, the landscaping on the roof is expected to help reduce storm-water runoff into the sewage system by as much as 75 percent in the summer and 40 percent in the winter.

But the high upfront costs of green roofs have put some people off from the installation. In particular, the soil for the plants, which is engineered to be lightweight and absorbent, is extremely expensive. While a cubic foot of normal soil might be \$2 or \$3, the cost of the engineered soil and its installation is about \$120 per square foot, said Elizabeth Kennedy, the landscape architect who designed the postal roof’s landscaping.

However, Michael DiMezza, who built the landscaping, said that while the soil was pricey, it would cost more for many buildings to re-enforce the roof to be able to support the normal topsoil.

The post office building, built in 1933 and declared a landmark in 1986, was constructed to support additional stories, and copper column tips still poke out from the roof. Depression-era government buildings are particularly well-suited to being adapted for green roofs, because they can support the additional weight, said Angie Durham of Tecta America, the company that designed the roof. By contrast, buildings from the 1970s and 1980s are not as architecturally well-suited for retrofitting, she said.

The plants were selected to be low maintenance, with an emphasis on native vegetation. Species include ones known as coral carpet, John Creech, Weihenstephaner, Immergrunchen, Fudaglut and red carpet. And the 14 benches on the roof are made of a long-lasting Brazilian hardwood that is similar to that used for wharfs and docks. That type of wood was chosen, Ms. Kennedy said, because it is very resistant to scratchitti.

As one of the largest green roofs in the area, the Postal Service design will serve as an example. "The green roof on this building is not just a green roof on this building," said Majora Carter, the founder of Sustainable South Bronx, who spoke at the ceremony. "This is going to be the type of education center that teaches people from around the country."

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## **2. Technological change, economic slump squeeze Postal Service**

By Bill Glauber of the Journal Sentinel

Posted: July 20, 2009

Scott Van Derven is proud to be a letter carrier.

For 26 years, he has delivered mail in Milwaukee, walked thousands of miles, avoided dogs, prevented little kids from tumbling down steps, shut off garden hoses and served as a neighborhood's extra pair of eyes and ears.

You don't have to tell him the economy is tough. He can feel it in the weight of mail he lugs in his cloth carrier bag. These days, he's traveling very light.

"The volumes are down," Van Derven says.

Just like other businesses, the U.S. Postal Service is facing tough times in a tough economy.

Mail volume has sunk, off by billions of individual pieces. More consumers are migrating from first-class mail to the Internet, paying bills electronically. Mail-order merchants and direct marketers have cut back.

"There's a good chance our business will be a mirror of what the economy is looking like," Van Derven says.

Postmasters across America are looking to consolidate and save money any way they can as the Postal Service tries to rebound from a \$1.9 billion loss recorded for the second quarter, which ended March 31.

Around 3,100 post offices and retail offices nationally may be under consideration for closure or consolidation, according to news reports.

The Postal Service is also drafting a plan to switch to five-day mail delivery. The idea was first broached in January by Postmaster General/CEO John E. Potter. Congress, which requires the Postal Service to deliver mail six days a week, would have to sign off on the plan.

"We come to this decision with some reluctance," says Gerry McKiernan, a Postal Service spokesman.

McKiernan says Postal Service representatives are discussing the plan "with members of Congress, customers and unions."

Eliminating Saturday mail delivery, McKiernan said, "could save us as much as \$3.3 billion a year."

In Wisconsin, the postal belt-tightening has already begun.

"What we've done is dramatically reduce overtime," says David Martin, head of the Lakeland District, a sprawling postal area that covers most of Wisconsin, with the exception of La Crosse and Eau Claire, and 90% of the Upper Peninsula.

The Lakeland District features 678 stations, branches and post offices; six processing and distribution plants; and around 12,500 employees. It is, in every sense, a big business, the No. 1 revenue-generating district in the nation. The district serves a number of major direct mailers and magazine printers.

"We already stopped hiring two years ago," Martin says. "We're eliminating our temporary workers in the plants."

Martin says "there are no plans to close any post offices. I don't know what will happen in the future."

Postal Service construction nationwide has been frozen. That means construction plans for a new mail-processing and distribution center in Oak Creek "have been put on hold indefinitely," Martin says.

Charles Miller, the Milwaukee postmaster who oversees the city's main post office, 20 stations and branches and around 1,500 employees, says, "What we're doing is gathering information and data to see what is feasible and what is not," for any possible closures or consolidations.

"It's just not a clear-cut, close this facility or that," he says. Miller adds that it would be difficult to consolidate facilities in Milwaukee since most were built in the 1950s and 1960s and have little room for expansion.

Letter-carrier routes in the city may also be adjusted as officials try to streamline delivery.

In Milwaukee, labor and management appear to be on the same side in a bid to help the Postal Service endure the economic crisis.

"I think everyone working for the post office realizes things aren't what they used to be," says Paul McKenna, a local president of the American Postal Workers Union.

In the old days, McKenna says, the union might fight with management about overtime and work-rule issues. Now, they're arguing over the number of jobs to be cut.

McKenna says that when the economy turns, mail volume will increase.

"Do I think we're in a fight for our lives?" he says. "I don't know if we're to that point. If the post office doesn't survive, we don't survive. As a company and a union, we're hurting, no doubt about it. It's starting to hit home now. You go into any station, the lines (of consumers) aren't there."

The economic times may be tough, but the mail has to be delivered. A letter carrier like Van Derven remains vital. He calls on 500 households a day in northwest Milwaukee, delivering bills, letters and ad mail, delivering good news and bad.

"We do our business at the most sacred place there is - people's homes," he says. "You become part of the family."

And now, the family is hurting. Van Derven travels light. He could use some more mail. And, so, too, could the rest of us.

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### **3. 7 Minn. post offices to close; others to trim services**

by Tim Nelson, Minnesota Public Radio  
July 21, 2009

St. Paul, Minn. — The United States Postal Service is preparing to close seven post offices across Minnesota in the first wave of what may be historic change for the mail service.

Storefront post offices are slated to close in Duluth, International Falls, North Mankato, Minneapolis and St. Paul (map). As many as 17 others could also close.

To most people, the storefront at Fourth Ave. and Third St. in downtown Minneapolis is just a post office.

But to Inger Millard, it's her post office. When she dropped by to pick up a package recently, the clerk already knew she was going on vacation soon.

"I do know them by name, and they know me by name, also," Millard said. "So that's pretty nice. When I go there and I don't even know that I have mail in, and they do, and they say, 'Hey, I got something for you.'"

But that soon may change. Millard's post office, the Commerce Station, is one of seven on a list of likely closures in Minnesota, and a list sent to postal employees includes 17 others. Postal officials say dozens more are under review. Nationwide, another 3,100 could close or be consolidated.

That's a problem for Millard, who said she can't get mail at her home in North Minneapolis.

"I set up a P.O. box a few years ago," she said. "I had some mail stolen from my home, and I decided that would be a more secure place."

The Commerce Station and others, like those in West Duluth and the East Side in St. Paul, may be just the start of a historic retrenchment for the U.S. Postal Service.

The mail itself is already changing. After historic highs just a few years ago, mail volume has been plummeting, from 212 billion pieces in 2007 to an expected 180 billion this year. That's a 15 percent decline.

Online commerce has been a boon for goods sold over the Internet and shipped from seller to buyer, but the check is no longer in the mail.

"The Internet giveth, and the Internet taketh away."

- Pete Nowacki, Postal Service spokesman

"How many things do you do electronically? How many bills do you pay electronically? Do you file your taxes electronically? Each one of those is a stamp that we used to sell to you, and those are going away," Nowacki said. "And we're seeing a generational disconnect or something."

That's a big problem for the Postal Service; as much as a \$6.5 billion problem this year.

Recently, postal authorities reorganized delivery routes to save money. You may have already noticed that your carrier has changed, or is coming later in the day.

The U.S. Postal Service has trimmed its workforce by 25,000 this year alone. They're also phasing out stamp vending machines, and removing thousands of blue post boxes

to trim collection routes. Six weeks ago, postal officials renewed a formal request to cut back to five-day delivery.

Now, the Postal Service is turning the budget knife to its retail outlets.

The seven slated for closure in Minnesota are all what are known as "finance stations," because they're a budget-line for a larger post office nearby. They typically have a counter and P.O. boxes, but no carriers.

Supporters say neighborhood stations like the Seeger Square storefront on Arcade St. provide irreplaceable service to neighborhoods like St. Paul's East Side, where many people speak limited English or don't have easy access to a computer.

Lyle Puppe is a former postmaster in Cottage Grove, and he lives near the Seeger Square post office.

"Folks that live in this particular area come from the poorest part of St. Paul. Some of them don't have transportation," Puppe said. "If they did, in fact, close Seeger Square, we've got people that would have to take buses, and do transfers of buses, to get packages mailed."

Postal workers say such closings will only make matters worse.

Tom Edwards is president of the American Postal Workers Union in St. Paul, which represents post office clerks. His members' jobs are guaranteed through November 2010, but he's worried that the closures will drive more customers away.

"Maybe they'll go to buy stamps online, they'll go to UPS, maybe they'll go to FedEx," Edwards said. "So it is a case of -- the cure is worse than the disease."

But spokesman Pete Nowacki said the Postal Service needs radical change.

"As far as it being unprecedented, absolutely," Nowacki said. "But then, we've been used to a situation, where, as the population grows, as our delivery network grows, so has our revenue.

"There's a new house that's being built, another family is in there. That's another 15, 20, 30 whatever letters that [are] being mailed each month. That's kind of changed."

Postal officials haven't set a date for the handful of closures they're now planning in Minnesota, but they could close as early as this fall.

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#### **4. Airport postal station stops Sunday service**

Less volume, budget cuts prompt move. Web site, automated centers among alternatives.

By Lindsay Ruebens

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Posted: Tuesday, Jul. 21, 2009

Customers who rely on the only Charlotte post office open Sundays will need to find another option.

The Airport station, which was open Sundays, ended the service this weekend.

“It's part of a movement nationwide that we are seeing a lot of cuts, although we've continually been reassessing our hours to reflect customer usage,” said Monica Robbs, district communications coordinator for the U.S. Postal Service.

The Airport post office, at 4800 Express Drive near Charlotte/Douglas International, will remain open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Eleven of the 66 post offices within a 20-mile radius of Charlotte are closed on Saturdays and Sundays. The others have Saturday hours.

Bertram Barco, 39, said he used the Sunday services about three times a month. He said he usually doesn't have time during the week to send packages and often works Saturdays.

“When I moved to Charlotte, I found out about it. It was a gold stone and I told everyone about it because it was such a great thing,” Barco said. “I've got friends who will drive 30 minutes out of the way to drop something off on a Sunday.”

Robbs said the Sunday closing is a result of a decline in mail volume. A major contributing factor includes problems in the financial sector and credit companies, which used to send mail in high volumes.

“We've been monitoring traffic patterns, but at the same time making sure we don't do anything to detract from the services we provide our customers,” she said.

Alternatives for Sunday customers include using online services from [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com), purchasing stamps at grocery stores and using Automated Postal Centers. The automated centers offer postal services 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and customers can complete transactions with debit or credit cards. There are nine automated centers in the Charlotte area.

“I think change is always difficult, but with alternate access locations, customers will find somewhere else that will be beneficial for suiting their needs,” Robbs said.

Barco said he hasn't figured out what he will do yet without the post office open on Sundays.

“I've got to try and do something on a half-hour lunch break, which is next to impossible,” he said. “Some things are just going to be late.”

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## **5. NZ Google Apps to be deployed at Postal Services Group**

News : SaaS, posted 21-JUL-2009 13:26

Postal Services Group – a business within New Zealand Post Group – will further enhance productivity by moving to Google Apps, according to Postal Services chief executive officer Peter Fenton.

Postal Services Group has signed a three-year agreement with Fronde, a Google enterprise partner in New Zealand, which will see Google Apps rolled out to 2,100 Postal Services Group workers.

Google Apps – including mail, calendar, chat, video, docs and sites – will be rolled out to 2,100 Postal Services staff and a small number of staff within the wider New Zealand Post Group. Postini will be deployed to provide secure mail archiving for 10 years and spam protection.

The application will be progressively rolled out to Postal Services with assistance from Google, Fronde, Cloudbreak and Datacom Systems Ltd.

Mr Fenton said Postal Services wanted to give its people productivity tools that supported a high performance business culture and made it easier for people to work more creatively, collaboratively and flexibly.

“With Google Apps, there will be a dramatic increase mail box capacity, from 50Mb to 25Gb, boosting productivity by freeing employees from having to constantly manage email back ups.”

“Google Apps simplifies document sharing within a secure environment, either internally or to people working remotely. This will increase our ability to work collaboratively,” Mr Fenton said.

Moving to web-based tools means people could work securely from anywhere at anytime using any web-based device, Mr Fenton said.

Web-based tools such as Gmail were increasingly popular and many people, especially students, would expect to access the same tools at work, Mr Fenton said.

“Google Apps will help us retain our people and attract the next generation of talented graduates,” Mr Fenton said.

The agreement means Postal Services Group will move to a variable cost model so that IT costs could be more closely linked to business activity.

Head of enterprise for Google Southeast Asia Richard Suhr said that Postal Services Group was clearly committed to transforming the way they do business.

“Today’s announcement is further proof of the cloud computing revolution - mature technology delivered the right way by a fast moving and important local channel partner,” Mr Suhr said.

“This move positions Postal Services Group, an organisation that provides critical services to New Zealanders, as an innovation leader in the Asia Pacific region,” Mr Suhr said.

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Posted on: Monday, July 20, 2009

## **6. Hawaii postal service cuts being considered**

Service may close branches in response to mounting losses

By Curtis Lum  
Advertiser Staff Writer

The U.S. Postal Service in Hawai'i has undertaken a study to determine whether to close any of its 104 post offices, stations and branches as part of a national effort to stanch billion-dollar losses stemming from the rise of text messaging, e-mail and other forms of electronic communication.

The result has been a dramatic decline in mail volume, demand for USPS retail service and revenue that drove the Postal Service to a \$2.8 billion loss last year.

And that amount was nearly matched in the first half of this year.

To cut spending, the Postal Service announced this month that it will consider closing or reducing service at 3,200 of the nation's 27,200 postal stations and branches and will evaluate another 1,600 offices for possible action depending on the outcome of the initial closures.

The Postal Service does not receive a taxpayer subsidy.

In Hawai'i, spokesman Duke Gonzales said the Postal Service does not release budget or revenue figures, but he did say that mail volume passing through the Honolulu district is down more than 12 percent over the same period last year.

To mitigate the "severe effects of lower mail volume and revenue," he said, the Postal Service here has already implemented changes, such as realigning mail carrier routes, shifting employees or rescheduling their hours and reducing energy use.

So far, no Postal Service employee here has been laid off to make up for the revenue drop, he said. There are nearly 2,600 postal employees in Hawai'i.

Officials here have yet to decide which, if any, branches may be closed, Gonzales said.

"We're still studying it," Gonzales said. "We're at the point where we're still narrowing down which ones we want to study. We're looking at all options, but one thing that I can say is the preliminary list is pretty small to begin with."

He said once that list is completed, further studies will be made to decide what action will be taken. Gonzales declined to reveal the branches that are being considered, but said the list could be out by early August.

"I wouldn't want to say at this point because if you start talking numbers and you start identifying places, you get a lot of people talking," he said. "We don't want to really prompt unnecessary anxiety by our customers or by our employees either."  
consolidation review

As part of the consolidation review process, Gonzales said, officials will consider the impact a closure will have on employees, service standards, cost savings, customer access, environmental impact, real estate values and long-term postal needs.

He said the review criteria also will include examining larger leased and owned stations and branches in urban areas that are close to other postal facilities. Any changes, he said, will not be implemented before Oct. 2.

The USPS system consists of 80 districts nationally, and Gonzales said each district will determine the number of offices to consolidate. The Honolulu district includes Hawai'i, plus Pacific Island areas, such as Samoa and Guam.

"It's really a localized decision," Gonzales said. "It's not like headquarters has given us a number and said, 'Everyone must cut this amount of money or this amount of offices' or something like that."

The consolidation plan will not affect contract stations, such as the one at Manoa Marketplace, which are operated by private vendors, he said.

Nationally, the Postal Service has submitted a branch optimization and consolidation plan to the Postal Regulatory Commission for review. The commission, which also determines postal rates, will decide whether the changes are consistent with the Postal Service's obligation to provide prompt, reliable and efficient services to customers in all areas.

But in its submittal to the commission, the Postal Service acknowledged that it cannot maintain a "business as usual" attitude.

"Postal retail stations and branches are not intended to operate as monuments to a bygone era of postal customer interaction," the Postal Service wrote in its request.  
effect of internet

The Postal Service said it plans to "realign the postal retail network with current and future postal customer service needs to reduce inefficiency and redundancy and to

capture the resulting cost savings." The commission has scheduled a prehearing conference for July 30 in Washington, D.C.

The USPS also acknowledged that its use of the Internet and other technologies to serve customers has hurt the once-popular post offices. These alternatives, the Postal Service said, account for more than 30 percent of its retail revenue and this figure continues to rise.

"Their convenience, combined with increased use of electronic media for messages and commerce, have contributed to the decline in customer visits to postal retail locations and to mail volume declines," the Postal Service said.

In an attempt to cut costs, the USPS nationally has proposed reducing mail delivery from six to five days a week, offered early retirement to workers, realigned carrier routes, halted construction of new facilities and froze executive salaries at 2008 levels. The Postal Service also has been removing underused blue mail collection boxes from public places to save on costs.

In Hawai'i, "we're looking at everything," Gonzales said. "It's a constant effort and it's an ongoing, simultaneous project to identify areas that we can possibly minimize work hours."

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