

# POSTAL NEWS

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## **1. 80% of post offices losing money**

By SEAN REILLY | Last Updated: October 10, 2010

One reason the U.S. Postal Service is teetering on financial ruin: four in five post offices lose money. And shutting any of the 32,662 outlets down is nearly impossible.

As mail volume plummeted 12 percent from 1999 to 2009, the number of post offices, stations, branches and carrier annexes shrank only 3 percent.

More than half of those outlets generate less revenue than the average self-service mail kiosk, Postmaster General John Potter said at a news conference this month.

"We need to rationalize our postal-owned locations," Potter said.

It may need to, but it can't. The agency has been stymied by procedural hurdles, opposition from lawmakers and unions, and the public's emotional bond to an institution that it uses less and less.

"I've heard postal officials say that it's almost more work to get [a post office] closed than it costs to keep it open," said Michael Murphy, past chairman of the Mailing & Fulfillment Service Association, a mailing industry trade group that supports more consolidation.

In July 2009, for example, the Postal Service began studying almost 3,200 stations and branches — which sell stamps and mailing services, but don't have a postmaster — for possible closing. Since then, the list has dwindled to 162. Only two of those facilities have actually closed, although another 25 closings are in the works and more could follow, USPS spokesman Greg Frey said last week.

"There was just a lot of push-back," said Don Soifer, a postal expert at the Lexington Institute think tank, when asked why so many facilities were dropped from the list.

Frey disputed that characterization, but acknowledged that "different groups have different perspectives."

The Postal Service anticipates a \$6 billion loss for fiscal 2010, Potter said. Mail volume fell to about 170 billion pieces, a 20 percent drop in four years as Americans increasingly turn to the Internet for bill-paying and other transactions that once needed a stamp. The Postal Service, which already owes about \$12 billion to the federal Treasury, expects to burn through its final \$3 billion in borrowing authority this fiscal year.

As mail volumes fall, the Postal Service "does not have sufficient revenues to cover the growing costs of providing service to new residences and businesses while also maintaining its large network of retail and processing facilities," Phillip Herr, director of physical infrastructure issues for the Government Accountability Office, told a congressional subcommittee last year. An added concern is that the Postal Service can't afford to maintain its deteriorating buildings; an earlier GAO report includes photos of deteriorating facilities, including one Pennsylvania station that suffered a partial roof collapse.

But while USPS is supposed to be self-supporting, it's also bound by federal law to provide "prompt, reliable and efficient" services nationwide. In its official "discontinuance guide," the legal and administrative requirements for closing a post office take up more than 50 pages.

One important rule in that guide: The agency is barred from closing post offices solely to save money.

Before closing a post office, officials must consider the impact on the community, on employees, and whether the proposed closing is consistent with government policy. If the Postal Service proceeds, it must provide 60 days' public notice; any customer can appeal the decision to the Postal Regulatory Commission, a five-member oversight panel.

The Postal Service's purpose "is to bind the nation together," William Burrus, president of the American Postal Workers Union, said in an interview. "I don't think you meet that obligation if you render entire communities without postal service."

Under its contract with the American Postal Workers Union, the Postal Service has committed to keeping all existing retail operations where they are. Although the precise interpretation of that language is in dispute, Burrus says it limits the Postal Service from closing postal outlets. He intends to keep it in the new contract now being negotiated.

The agency's problems are illustrated by its efforts to close a dilapidated post office in the east Oklahoma town of Rentiesville, home to roughly 100 residents. When open, the

office provided part-time window service to an average of two customers a day, according to records included in an appeal recently filed by the mayor.

The Postal Service first sought to close the facility in 1998 when the postmaster retired, then suspended operations in 2004 because the building's wiring system was not up to code. In its last full year of operation, 2003, receipts totaled only \$2,252, roughly one-tenth of operating costs.

And although the post office is no longer in use, it is still not officially closed. The Postal Service is trying to change that. "For whatever reason, they're saying we need to do our paperwork and actually close it," Postal Regulatory Commission spokesman Norman Scherstrom said.

Despite the lack of business, Rentiesville residents are dismayed at the prospect of losing what some describe as a community center.

"We are at a pivotal time, perched on the edge of growth," some wrote in identical 1998 letters included in more than 200 pages of documents in the appeal file. "Without a ZIP code of our own, we are no longer included on state maps."

Angered by the abrupt closure of a postal station in his district, Rep. Albio Sires, D-N.J., last year introduced legislation aimed at making the Postal Service follow the same procedures for closing branches and stations as it does for shutting down main post offices.

"The discontinuation or relocation of postal services creates a hardship for residents and creates outrage when they have no say in the process," Sires said in testimony last year. "This dual system is confusing and frustrating and leaves communities without a proper voice."

Although the bill has yet to advance beyond a House committee, it has 102 co-sponsors.  
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## **2. Govt fully cognizant of modernizing postal networks: President**

ISLAMABAD, Oct 9 (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari emphasizing the importance of postal system in connecting the people worldwide has stated the government is fully cognizant of modernizing Pakistan's postal networks to meet its social and economic development objectives including the Millennium Development Goals. "Connectivity among peoples of different geographical locations, cultural backgrounds and level of development is a key to fostering understanding among them and thereby contribute to peace to development". "Over the decades the postman has been silently working to

connect people across distances and cultures. Even today, in the age of electronic communications, the post has been making laudable contributions towards this end”, the President said in his message on the occasion of World Post Day, observed every year on October 9.

Postal system across the world is the biggest employer providing livelihood to millions, the President said, adding, in several ways it touches the life of everyone in every age, clime, and territory, handling billions of parcels, letters, express items, and money transfers.

He said Pakistan’s unique demographic characteristics make post especially valuable to our people, adding, post remains a key component in our network for universal access to communications.

“A good number of millions of our expatriates rely on post to communicate with their families back home”, the President said and mentioned that Pakistan Post is faced with great challenges to maintain its role in connectivity but it also has great opportunities to keep up its dominant role.

The President said, “the increase in the speed and frequency with which people are communicating within the country and across, the national borders offer great opportunities for Public Private Partnership (PPP) and for adoption of innovative ideas for modernizing postal delivery system to enhance its efficiency and reliability”.

President Zardari, on the occasion of the 137th anniversary of the establishment of the Universal Postal Union (UPU), extended his greetings to the global postal community in general and to the workers of the Pakistan Post in particular for their services in connecting the people worldwide.

He also extended his compliments to the management of the UPU for the role it has played in supporting postal service delivery throughout the world.

“I once again congratulate Universal Postal Union and workers of Pakistan Post on World Postal Day and pray for a glorious future for them”, the President added.

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### **3. U.S. Postal Service fails at delivering good customer service**

October 9, 2010

Recently I stood in line again at the Salem main post office. I was one of 15 or more standing in line who experienced customer service at its worst.

One clerk was at the counter trying to satisfy the needs of her customer while all others waited.

As I stood there, I noticed a new sign on the counter that, basically, stated that in order to retain viability, there is a need for a rate increase. What?

I know this is a quasi-government organization, but that doesn't mean it is exempt from at least good customer service. Any other "viable" business would be concerned enough to quickly fill the front counter with clerks, but not the U.S. Postal Service. There was only one clerk until finally a second one came about 10 minutes later.

This is clearly an indication of a business (quasi-governmental or not) slowly going out of business.

Is the U.S. Postal Service too big to fail? Or maybe it is big enough to get another (yikes!) government bailout.

— Don Poole, Salem

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#### **4. Postal dept to launch website for job seekers**

Sudeshna Chatterjee, TNN, Oct 9, 2010, 06.36am IST

MUMBAI: The chief postmaster-general of Maharashtra and Goa, Faiz -Ur-Rehman, announced on Friday that India Post will launch a job web portal on October 14.

The Indian Postal department, with iCode Management Systems Pvt Ltd, will create profiles of job seekers. Job seekers will have to pay a nominal fee of Rs 300 and will have to purchase an iCode card. These cards will be available at 116 post offices in Maharashtra and Goa. The candidates profile will be available to companies at no extra cost. Companies will also be able to search for suitable candidates at [www.icodecity.com](http://www.icodecity.com), said Rehman on the eve of World Postal Day..

The department will also be able to issue residential proof. Apart from this, payment of electricity bills and processing of pan cards can be done at the office. The department will be celebrating National Postal week from Oct 9 to 15.

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#### **5. Postal Service Focuses on Energy Conservation**

U.S. Postal Service

Postmaster General Outlines Gains and Ways to Conserve

WASHINGTON, Oct. 7 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- As it continues to make progress to achieve aggressive energy reduction goals, the Postal Service today marked National Energy Awareness Month, with postal officials highlighting savings and encouraging employees, suppliers and mail industry partners to conserve even more energy.

"We're proud of our energy record," said Postmaster General John E. Potter. "Between 2003 and 2009, we reduced facility energy consumption by almost 24 percent. However, we have to do even more. We want to exceed our reduction target of 30 percent or better by 2015."

The Postmaster General encouraged the agency's nearly 600,000 employees to observe simple tips — little things that can add up and make a difference:

- \* Properly maintain vehicles, including tire inflation.
- \* Avoid excessive vehicle idling, aggressive driving, rapid acceleration and braking, which all waste gas.
- \* Turn lights off when leaving a room.
- \* Observe proper building temperature — 78 degrees in the summer, 65 degrees in the winter.

With its upgraded heating, cooling and lighting systems, its green roof improvements in New York and other green facility initiatives, the Postal Service continues to reduce energy consumption. Detailed audits to identify energy and water conservation opportunities are ongoing at more than 2,000 of the largest facilities, representing approximately 170 million square feet (about 60 percent of total square footage) and 75 percent of the agency's total energy consumption. The Postal Service's national energy management plan includes reduction goals for both facility energy and fleet fuel use.

"Postal Service facility energy use has been reduced by 10.8 trillion Btus since 2005, we have saved \$400 million in energy costs since 2007, and we're working to reduce vehicle petroleum use by 20 percent in 2015 from a 2005 baseline," said Sam Pulcrano, vice president, Sustainability.

Due to population growth, the Postal Service delivers to more addresses each year, while it continues to make mail delivery more efficient.

"The Postal Service tested the first electric mail delivery vehicle in 1899," added Pulcrano. "And we're currently testing two-ton electric vehicles in New York, and three-wheeled electric vehicles in Arizona, California and Florida, which cost only two cents per mile to operate."

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## **6. Vernon carriers need clear access to deliver, Postal Service says**

Friday, October 8, 2010

Aim Vernon

It takes more than a few leaves to deter letter carriers from safely making their appointed rounds in Vernon.

"But, if slippery autumn leaves are left to accumulate, walking conditions are hazardous and pose a safety concern for delivering mail," said Postmaster Ronald Kajor.

"The Postal Service treats safety and service with equal priority," Kajor said, "That's why we remind you to include that mailbox path in your leave removal routine."

Letter carriers are on the front line of seasonal elements and weather conditions, he explained. "For doorstep deliveries, leaves on painted porches and steps quickly grow slippery."

Residents who receive delivery to roadside mailboxes must also keep the approach to, and exit from, the mailbox clear of accumulated leaves along with vehicles, trash cans or other obstacles.

"The carrier needs to get in, and then out, without leaving the vehicle," explained Kajor "The area near the mailbox should be cleared in a half-moon shape to give the carrier full visibility. You'll make it safer for our carriers as well as pedestrians and drivers on the road as well."

Kajor says that postal carriers are professional drivers who routinely travel over highways and into neighborhoods in various weather conditions. From that experience, he adds a few more tips.

"Watch for slow moving postal vehicles, carriers on foot, and children at play near mailboxes or accumulated leave piles. And don't zip by neighbors who are clearing mailboxes or collecting their mail. Let's all stay safe."

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