

# The Eagle

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY FOR EMPLOYEES  
OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

## MAGAZINE

# Checking All the Boxes

- ✓ The Right **Package Products**
- ✓ The Right **Package Pricing**
- ✓ The Right **Package Network**
- ✓ The Right **Path for Success**





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## *From the Postmaster General*

**As we enter the fifth year of the Delivering for America plan, we are embarking on an exciting era. We are leveraging the efficiencies of our new streamlined processing, transportation and delivery systems to differentiate ourselves from the competition and establish the U.S. Postal Service as America's shipper of choice.**



In this issue's cover article, we detail how the more powerful USPS network allows us to win package business from our rivals. With a suite of new parcel products designed and priced to make customers more competitive, we expect to generate more business from existing and new shippers and support the ultimate goal of making USPS financially sustainable.

Delivering for America also reimagines retail operations at our sorting and delivery centers. As we explore in this issue of *The Eagle*, these spaces will allow us to better connect with communities and introduce a fresh approach to the retail experience.

We also share insight into the powerful work we do preparing for natural disasters. Time and time again, USPS is often the first sign of normalcy after hurricanes, wildfires and more — and we achieve that through the precision of a fine-tuned preparation plan that touches on every aspect of postal operations.

Continuing with the theme of achievement, we look at the success of 2024 Election Mail delivery. We also dip into history to see how language evolved to create the term "post office."

*The Eagle* will continue to capture our progress on these and future topics and provide context for the strategies and initiatives that are guiding us forward.

I hope you find this magazine useful and engaging.

As always, thank you for the great work you do every day.

**Louis DeJoy**

Postmaster General and Chief Executive Officer  
United States Postal Service

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## SPOTLIGHT SEARCH >

*Know a postal employee who is making a difference through volunteer work or community service? Send Spotlight nominations to [The\\_Eagle@usps.gov](mailto:The_Eagle@usps.gov).*



# On the Air to Break the Ice

A USPS employee strengthens her community through radio in the Last Frontier.

In his book “The Tipping Point,” Malcolm Gladwell describes a group he calls “connectors” — folks with expansive personal and professional networks who effortlessly forge links between them.

They’re “people with a special gift for bringing the world together,” in Gladwell’s words.

Frances Reynolds, a USPS retail associate, is one such connector.

She is the friendly face at the Post Office in Talkeetna, AK, helping the many customers who find a reason to visit — including locals, mountain climbers and temps who work in the oilfields.

She is also one of the welcoming voices at radio station KTNA, “88.9 on the FM dial,” as she has gotten in the habit of saying.

Her 20-minute segment on Tuesday mornings is devoted to community news of all sorts. Lost your dog? A husky was spotted at Mile X. Dropped your passport? Contact the station.

The two worlds often meet. She gets a lot of “I heard you on the radio” or “Were you on the radio?” at the Post Office, or someone may ask about a community event and she’ll be able to tell them, “Oh yes, that’s on Saturday.”

Much like the radio station in the 1990s TV show “Northern Exposure,” KTNA can be a lifeline in the town, especially in Alaska’s frigid season.

“I’m one of the folks that does the early commute into Talkeetna, so I inform my listeners about conditions on the spur road, and whether or not I saw a plow truck,” she said.

Weather advisories are a big part of her report. “The storms can be intense.”

The Arizona native understands it’s tempting to hole up and hibernate when temperatures fall below zero and daylight dwindles. Her community-focused segment is more important than ever then, which is why she braves the cold and dark of sub-Arctic winter mornings — “Ugh!” — to deliver it.

She has lived in Alaska since 1984 and has adapted to its dramatic seasons. “As long as I take my vitamins and enjoy the daylight when we do get it, I’m okay,” she said. But she knows people with seasonal affective disorder and realizes that others may need a bit more help: “It’s a big thing.”

Her reports on school concerts, fundraisers and dogsled races hopefully also double as gentle reminders to those struggling with feelings of isolation that there are lights in the frigid darkness if you know where to look.

The reward for braving those winter mornings comes in summer, when Alaska lives up to its nickname, the Land of the Midnight Sun, and tourists flock to the area, bumping up the town’s metabolism and enlivening the scene.

But whatever the season, “radio is the heart of the community,” Reynolds said, and she is happy to do her part to forge connection and keep that heart beating.

“Radio is the heart  
of the community.”

**FRANCES REYNOLDS**

Retail Associate  
Talkeetna, AK







# WE'RE MOD ABOUT YOU

**Retail revamp sends USPS customers a clear message: The future is now, and focused on their convenience.**

**D**iscussions of the Delivering for America strategic plan tend to focus on USPS innovations in processing, operations and logistics — and rightfully so: The ongoing transformations are remarkable.

But another groundbreaking metamorphosis is quietly underway at the Postal Service.

The organization is redesigning its retail footprint to reflect new realities on the ground, as well as the expanded services and enhanced offerings made possible by the organization's evolving network.





***“It’s the new face of the Postal Service as we go forward.”***

— **Elvin Mercado**, chief retail and delivery officer

### **A digital look and feel**

Led by Tracy Raymond, director of retail operations, the modernization team includes Amanda Morrell, delivery operations support manager; project

manager Maylee Kaiyuan; modernization strategist Larissa Valdez; and project coordinator Ashley Tijani.

They proceed in three steps — assessment and preconstruction; construction; and finalization to launch — and get assists along the way from Facilities, Brand Marketing and Field Maintenance Operations, among others.

The first site chosen for modernization was the first S&DC to open: Athens, GA.

As anyone who has lived through a home renovation can tell you, upgrades are disruptive. The modernization team went to great lengths to minimize the chaos and strove for transparency with customers, developing a system to keep things moving as smoothly as possible.

“We have to phase it so we don’t interrupt operations and still have that customer flow,” said Morrell.

“We put signage up everywhere” — those “Pardon our dust, something good is coming” messages that help customers make sense of the disruption — and did regular site visits “for a pulse check on the customers,” Morrell said.

These new retail spaces are rolling out in the sorting and delivery centers (S&DCs) that are the foundation of the organization’s updated network.

While retail modernization was under discussion years before Delivering for America was released in 2021, as S&DCs started to come online in 2022, the retail team saw its opening.

Elvin Mercado, chief retail and delivery officer, noted at the time that the plan mentioned both retail modernization and expanded government services. He remembers thinking: “Why not combine the two?”

Then there were the self-service offerings that have taken off in the past few years — USPS Smart Lockers, Rapid Dropoff Stations and self-service kiosks. They needed a place, too.

The reimagined result is a one-stop postal shop divided into three areas — conventional retail, self-service, and government services — with a clean, updated aesthetic.

“It’s the new face of the Postal Service as we go forward,” Mercado said.



## A Model to Build On

The Delivering for America plan and the creation of sorting and delivery centers provided the retail team an opportunity to address both modernization and the availability of new services. The result is a one-stop postal shop divided into three areas — conventional retail, self-service, and government services — with a clean, updated aesthetic.



Ceilings, floors, walls, lighting, security and furniture were all upgraded, and a digital menu board was installed, making pricing updates seamless.

Postmaster General Louis DeJoy had requested a digital look and feel, so in addition to the menu board, Samsung monitors soundlessly promote products such as USPS Smart Lockers and Ground Advantage in the retail section, and a new feature called a Wayfinder — a digital board not unlike those found in shopping malls — greets customers upon arrival.

“It’s a really digital, lively environment,” Mercado said.

The organization’s expanded self-service options have their own section, with USPS Smart Lockers, Rapid Dropoff Stations and self-service kiosks housed together, and a larger in-wall parcel drop to make it easier for customers to deposit larger postage-paid packages without waiting in line.

As for government services, the new retail sites will include passport services and fingerprinting (the latter a partnership with the FBI), and some locations will include in-person proofing and Personal Identification Verification cards, a form of identification for federal employees, in partnership with the Social Security Administration and General Services Administration, respectively.

As the first S&DC to open, Athens was the clear choice for the prototype. Decisions on which sites would follow were not determined by chronology but by several weighted metrics, including market analysis.

The next revamped retail spaces scheduled to open in 2025 are, in order of expected completion, at the following S&DCs: Fort Lauderdale, FL; Waco, TX;

Lafayette, IN; Hattiesburg, MS; Williamsport, PA; Binghamton, NY; Springfield, MA; Stewart, NY; Hampton, VA; and Oxnard and Chula Vista in California.

Another six are scheduled for 2026: Kilmer, NJ; Hicksville, NY; Everett, WA; Norfolk, VA; Oakland Park, OH; and Palo Alto, CA.

“They are all, for the most part, going to look the same,” Mercado said. “We may have some tweaks here and there, but the footprint should be the same.”

### Keep calm and carry on

As Morrell mentioned, the retail team kept tabs on customer sentiment before, during and after the renovation process in Athens.

“We took it through every phase of construction, and then after construction,” she said. They shared the feedback with the local team, who were buoyed by many of the comments.

Despite the challenges of working through a renovation, “they have such a great attitude,” read one. Another commented about a retail associate, “You still had a smile and kept that calm.”

One figure jumped out from the trends. Before renovation, roughly 83 percent of customers agreed with the statement “I feel like a valued customer.”

While that figure rose and fell during the three stages of renovation, afterward, it landed at a stunning 100 percent.



# DELIVERING A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE



High performance in the 2024 general election ensured USPS once again fulfilled its clearly defined duty to process, transport and deliver the nation's Election Mail safely, securely and on time.

## 99.22 MILLION

ballots processed in general election (beginning Sept. 1)

## 3.37 BILLION

pieces of Political Mail and Election Mail delivered in 2024



Percentage of ballots delivered from voters to election officials

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6	DAY 7
97.73% WITHIN 3 DAYS			99.64% WITHIN 5 DAYS		99.88% WITHIN A WEEK	

## 1 DAY

average delivery time for ballots from voters to election officials

## LESS THAN 2 DAYS

on average to deliver ballots from election officials to voters



The totals above reflect volume identifiable as Ballot Mail by the Postal Service. The total number of delivered ballots in all of 2024, including primaries, may greatly exceed 222.39 million.

Performance data for outbound Ballot Mail (sent from local boards of elections to voters) includes only those ballots that were properly identified as ballots and consistent with service performance measurement rules.

Performance data for inbound Ballot Mail (sent from voters to local boards of elections) includes both those ballots that were properly identified as ballots and consistent with service performance measurement rules as well as the volume identified by a survey for which data is available from Oct. 21 to Nov. 13, 2024.



# Checking All the Boxes







fter decades of maintaining its status quo in the package delivery market, the U.S. Postal Service has undergone an amazing transformation. Over the past two years, it has steadily grown its share of the nation's package deliveries,

lowered the relative cost of making each delivery and generated more revenue per delivery. USPS now has a strong growth trajectory based on a more efficient and lower-cost network, a realigned product portfolio and pricing strategies that position the organization for profitability.

Package growth is a pillar of the Delivering for America plan and crucial to financial sustainability. This growth is made possible by the ongoing modernization of the Postal Service's processing, transportation and delivery network. As package strategy implementation continues, including network and product changes, the organization's competitive posture and business prospects will create what is called a virtuous cycle. This refers to a series of events that continually improve each other, resulting in ongoing larger improvements overall. Applied to the package strategy, rising volumes can lower the cost to deliver, while

efficiencies can benefit shippers, generating further growth and competitiveness in the marketplace.

### An optimized network

Before Delivering for America, the Postal Service effectively operated five different networks — with different products and services moving across the country via different processing and transportation methods at different costs.

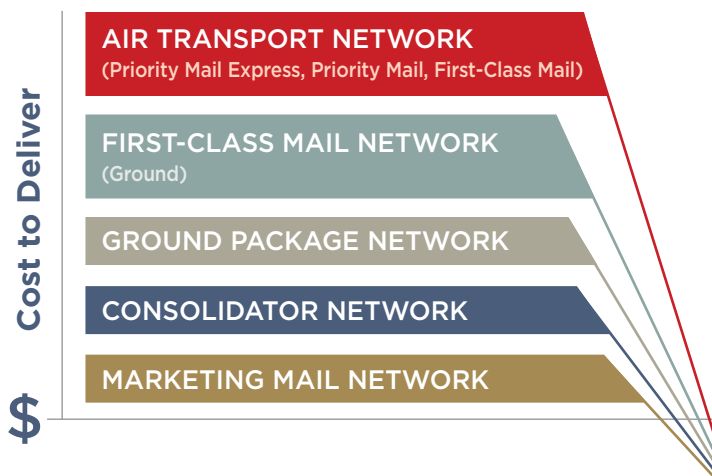
Today, the Postal Service is implementing one fully integrated network, with mail and packages traveling on the same vehicles, being processed in the same facilities and following the same patterns throughout the country. Importantly, this integrated network can operate at a lower cost than any of the previous networks — bringing every product closer to profitability.

Additionally, because of the fixed costs associated with maintaining one integrated network, the cost per package to process and deliver will continue to decrease as volume increases. These efficiencies can help drive profitability and investment in the Postal Service package business, including developing new, more competitive products and services to drive further growth.

## A Lower-cost Mail & Package Network

### Previous Network

The Postal Service operated **five separate processing and transportation networks** to move mail and packages to their destinations, each with different costs to operate.



### Integrated Network

The Postal Service now operates **one integrated processing and transportation network** to support all mail and package products at a significantly lower overall cost.



## A portfolio positioned for the future

Over the past three years, the Postal Service's portfolio of package products has been transformed to align with the redesigned network. Products such as Retail Ground and First-Class Package Service have been retired, and new products have been created, including USPS Connect, USPS Ground Advantage and Priority Next Day, which made its debut this year in March. The new lineup is intended to provide the widest range of solutions and offerings to shippers of all sizes at the best possible value for the sender, with the best possible profit margin for the Postal Service.

The core strategy of this realignment is to match products and pricing to the structure of an integrated postal network. With nearly all products traveling together on the same journey from origin to destination, offerings have become much simpler, with pricing better reflecting delivery time and distance.

Full network products — those traversing regions across the country and using the breadth of the Postal Service network — have become much more competitive. USPS Ground Advantage was launched in summer 2023 and has proved to be a highly successful driver of increased volume.

Thanks to Ground Advantage, the Postal Service is winning a larger share of the nation's lightweight package

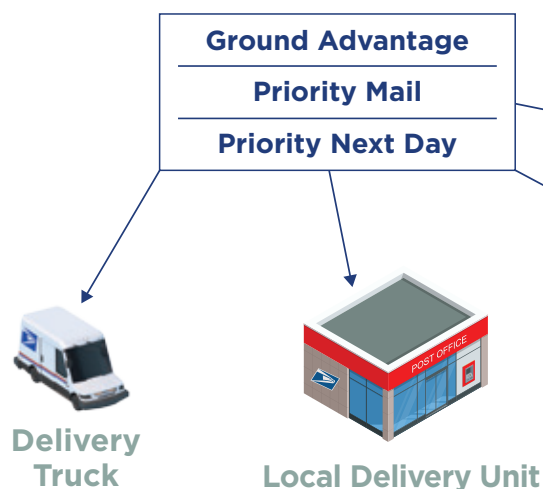
**"USPS has reached a pivotal stage in our transformation. ... Our package strategy is a core part of our journey to success."**

— **Steven Monteith**, chief customer and marketing officer

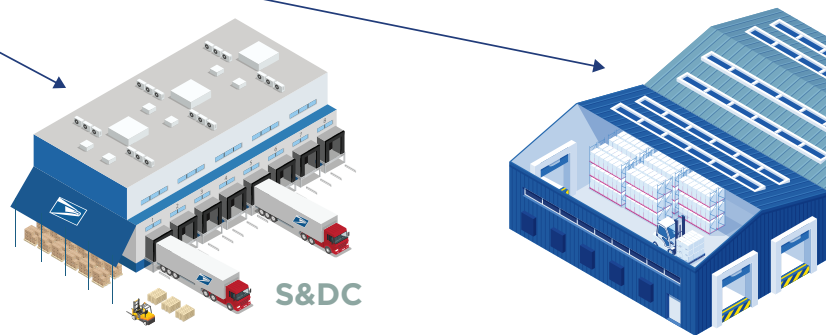
business (5 pounds or less) and is well positioned to win more package volume at higher weights (20 pounds or less) in the coming years.

For shippers who would use less of the postal network because they are shipping regionally or locally — usually for a same-day or next-day delivery — products such as USPS Connect and Parcel Select provide competitive pricing, reflecting that their volume is entered locally and stays at local or regional levels for sorting and delivery. These packages are typically dropped close to their destination, require less processing and transportation, and have excellent next-day or same-day delivery reach. For example, dropping at a regional processing and distribution center can reach up to 25 million delivery points the next day, and dropping at a sorting and delivery center (S&DC) can reach up to 400,000 people the next day.

## Full Network Products



## USPS Integrated Network



## Origin Entry

Originating package volume for full network products flows from entry points toward RPDCs. Ground Advantage provides efficient 2-5-day service via ground transportation in the contiguous United States. Priority Next Day provides expedited service via air transport.

The logical sequencing of package processing and transportation between sorting and distribution centers (S&DCs), local processing centers (LPCs) and regional processing and distribution centers (RPDCs) is the most efficient part of the postal network.



“USPS has reached a pivotal stage in our transformation. A critical mass of new facilities and automation, improved operational efficiencies and new, affordable products allows us to increase our focus on growing revenues, reducing costs and giving customers a better experience,” said Chief Customer and Marketing Officer Steven Monteith. “Our package strategy is a core part of our journey to success.”

### A closer relationship with customers

For nearly two decades, the Postal Service encouraged aggregators of package volume to enter at destination delivery units and provided very favorable pricing. As a result of the network modernization under Delivering for America, USPS is now encouraging more upstream entry of packages to better leverage regional transportation networks.

Over the past year, the Postal Service renegotiated these last-mile entry aggregator agreements to be more favorable — essentially eliminating discounted rates through negotiated service agreements. Instead, USPS is developing agreements that encourage aggregators to enter package volume at the new, modern S&DCs. These facilities are highly automated and designed for a quicker, freer-flowing movement of packages, with the latest

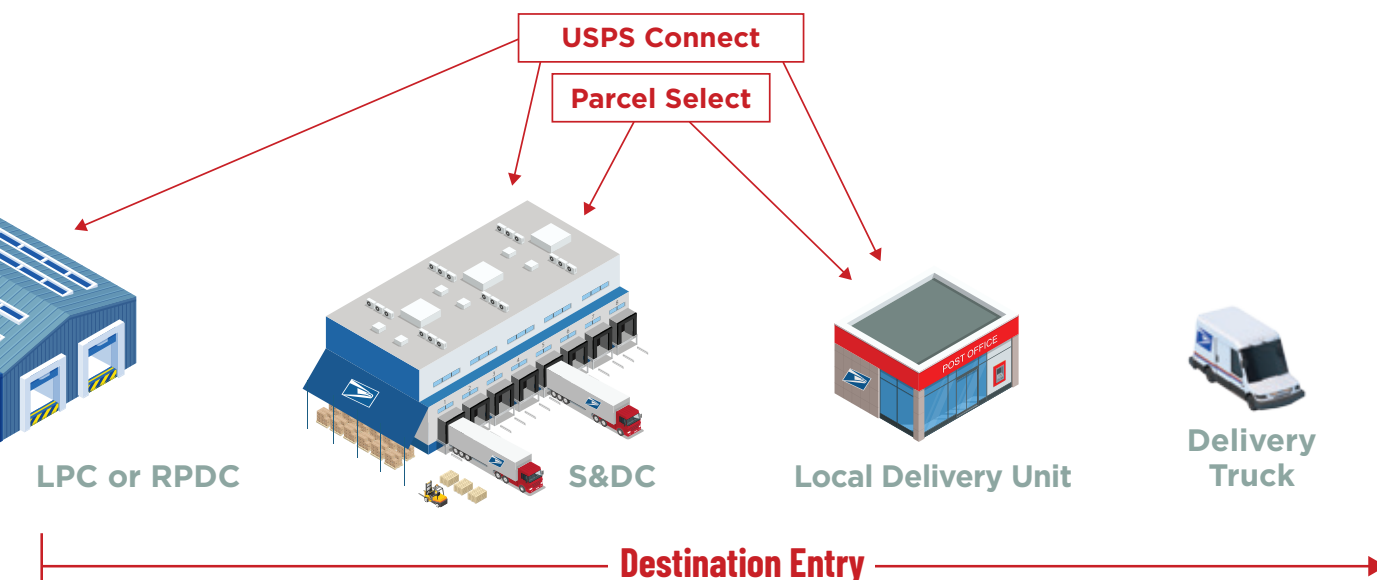
tracking technology ensuring that every package’s journey is visible in real time from the moment it enters the mailstream.

Additionally, because discounts are no longer being offered, many shippers are evaluating whether to rely on intermediary aggregators for their shipping needs versus establishing their own agreements directly with USPS. The Postal Service is now providing alternative solutions, particularly Ground Advantage, in a more transparent sales environment where customers can easily see the competitive advantages of working directly with the organization.

### Momentum in the marketplace

Rising volumes and revenue and delivering at an increasingly lower cost per delivery reflect the trajectory for the Postal Service package business. By broadening its customer base and winning more volume per customer, USPS is increasingly becoming the shipper of choice for more of America’s homes and businesses. This is a Postal Service realizing the full vision of the Delivering for America plan: checking all the boxes with the best package products, service and value, and competing successfully in the shipping marketplace.

## Regional & Local Network Products



As a result, through pricing and product design, the Postal Service drives traffic through these facilities to provide the best overall value to customers.

Destination entry is priced for partial use of the postal network. USPS Connect entry can occur at the closest RPDC, S&DC or local delivery unit. Parcel Select is for large volume aggregators who wish to drop at S&DCs or local delivery units for same-day or next-day service.

# PACKAGE POWER

JUAN NADAL



BILL FRAINE





**Bill Fraine**, senior vice president of national sales, and **Juan Nadal**, vice president of strategic accounts and service initiatives, discuss USPS efforts to increase revenue by delivering more of America's packages.

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**The Postal Service has been winning a growing share of the nation's package business over the past couple of years. You are both on the front lines, selling to our shipping customers. Why are they choosing USPS over competitors?**

**Fraine:** It's a combination of our business strategy, our operational execution and our sales approach. We have a new package lineup that gives customers better options to meet their shipping needs. They are seeing our modernization efforts bearing fruit and a more assertive selling approach. Customers have said they see us showing up with a lot of confidence and swagger now, which is great to hear. It's because we have great offerings and we are on quite a winning streak.

**Nadal:** One of the biggest changes we have made is to sign more direct shipping contracts. These agreements establish a meaningful long-term relationship in which we play a more consultative role in the customer's shipping business. Thanks to the Delivering for America plan, we have a wider range of solutions and excellent value to provide, and we are working with customers in more engaging ways as more of a strategic partner. That unlocks growth.

**How are customers and competitors adjusting to the Postal Service's strategic changes? What is the impact of USPS on the marketplace?**

**Fraine:** The good news is we really aren't seeing a lot of adjustment from our main competitors. We haven't seen much change in product offerings, pricing or transparency, which we thought might happen. For example, the Postal Service has very transparent pricing. As a customer, you always know what you are going to pay, which is important when volumes are high. Our competitors aren't as transparent. In fact, there has been

an explosion in surcharges in the marketplace. So, a big pitch to our customers is "Check your bill." Compare what you pay with a competitor with what you thought you would pay, then compare that with the Postal Service.

**Nadal:** Our competitors are facing pressures to raise prices — which they often do through surcharges — and that is creating opportunities for us. For example, USPS doesn't have a large portion of the shipping volume from midsize companies. We are now starting to win more of that business partly because of our pricing transparency. Shippers prize certainty in pricing and performance. They want time-definite delivery and no surprises on their bills.

**How does the Postal Service sustain its package growth momentum? What does the future look like?**

**Nadal:** Our customers see us closing gaps in our package offerings, especially with USPS Ground Advantage. Our product design, reach, price, direct contracts, and account management and support have sparked growth. We should continue to be successful, simply because we are closing these competitive gaps. However, the biggest driver of our future growth relates to improving service performance, scanning and on-time delivery. As we continue to improve in these areas while more of our network modernization is implemented, we will have strong package growth for many years to come.

**Fraine:** My view is that our shipping customers look at the whole equation of what USPS brings to the table, from the person negotiating the contract to the letter carrier delivering their packages and everything in between. It takes a holistic organizational effort to win and grow new business, and that's why I have such a deep appreciation for the men and women throughout the Postal Service who make our selling job easier.



A satellite photograph of a tropical storm, likely a typhoon, over the western Pacific Ocean. The storm features a well-defined eye and a dense, swirling cloud structure. The surrounding ocean is a deep blue-green, and the landmasses of the Philippines and parts of Southeast Asia are visible in shades of green and brown. The title text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

# *Calm* Before *the* Storm





## The Postal Service's strength in disaster recovery draws on a meticulous preparation process involving every operational function.

Natural disasters are a fact of life for USPS. From hurricanes to wildfires to earthquakes, the organization responds quickly, often bringing battered communities their first sense of normalcy and routine after a devastating ordeal. The Postal Service achieves this by dedicating resources, talent and strategies to help local, regional and national managers and staff properly secure facilities and infrastructure and ready them for a quick return to service — all while putting employee safety first.

Disaster preparedness includes every function of USPS. Coordinated through retail and delivery operations, it draws on the expertise and resources of processing and distribution, logistics, maintenance, the Postal Inspection Service, facilities, human resources, communications, marketing, IT, finance, supply management and the law department. This is supported by the USPS National Preparedness Program as well as the Office of Continuity Policy and Planning, which works closely with the more than 230 emergency management teams strategically placed throughout postal operations to support the organization-wide disaster preparation plan.

“Our primary goals in a natural disaster are to keep our employees and customers safe, protect our property, and return to operations and serve distressed communities as quickly as possible,” said Postmaster General Louis DeJoy. “We are incredibly effective at doing this time and again,

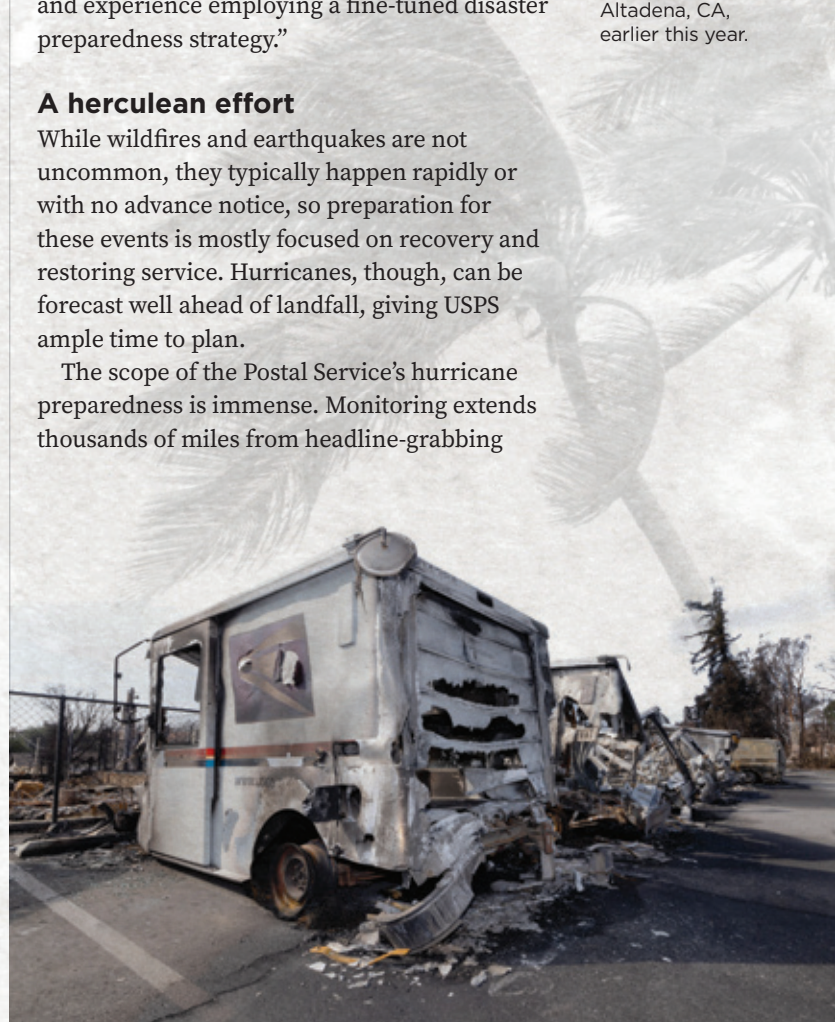
often in the face of horrendous destruction. We have the right people with singular skills and experience employing a fine-tuned disaster preparedness strategy.”

### A herculean effort

While wildfires and earthquakes are not uncommon, they typically happen rapidly or with no advance notice, so preparation for these events is mostly focused on recovery and restoring service. Hurricanes, though, can be forecast well ahead of landfall, giving USPS ample time to plan.

The scope of the Postal Service's hurricane preparedness is immense. Monitoring extends thousands of miles from headline-grabbing

Above and below:  
The wildfire aftermath in Altadena, CA, earlier this year.





Atlantic storms to the Pacific, where hurricanes can affect operations in Hawaii and U.S. territories. The timeline is long, too, lasting more than six months during hurricane season from mid-May through November. Before the season begins, USPS has already invested months preparing staff at all functional levels with a comprehensive checklist.

### Step by step

Once hurricane season arrives, USPS enacts a precise process developed over many decades. Most of it happens behind the scenes — monitoring and evaluating massive amounts of data — but when a tropical system develops, the action begins.

Hurricane mapping identifies facilities that could be affected. This forecast makes its way to local decision makers as well as to the emergency management teams, who then distribute a series of storm preparation checklists to those facilities. At the same time, activity at the retail and delivery operations high-tech command center typically heightens.

### The countdown begins

At 120 hours before landfall, USPS conducts a readiness check. A communications plan is implemented to keep postal employees informed, and union and management association representatives are integrated into the preparation process.

At 96 hours before landfall, another checklist determines if support infrastructure such as generators and mobile units is ready to deploy. Twenty-four hours later, another checklist kick-starts several key actions, including

Postal employees moved quickly to restore service following Hurricane Irma in 2017, at right, and the Southern California wildfires in 2025, opposite page.



Asheville, NC, was among many communities devastated by Hurricane Helene in 2024.

readying the National Employee Emergency Hotline and formulating content for service and industry alerts.

Things progress quickly at the 48-hour mark, with mail and packages secured within facilities and paychecks distributed if it is a pay week.







## MAKING BETTER CHOICES

Thanks to the prioritization of employee safety and well-being in the Delivering for America plan, processing facility shutdowns are now an integral part of disaster planning. In the critical hours before a hurricane, processing operations focus on moving originating mail and packages out of the facility and into the mailstream or another processing plant that will not be affected. Shippers are informed when products will not be inducted into the system and postal trucks are redirected to designated facilities or staging areas until the facility reopens. Designated mail and packages, meanwhile, are secured and made ready to move into the postal network once the processing facility is back online.

“This approach has been extremely effective,” said Isaac Cronkhite, chief processing and distribution officer. “With an emphasis on employee safety, coordination with other operating units and improved communication with our customers, we have created a disaster preparedness process that is better for our employees, better for our customers and better for our network. It’s simply a better way of doing business.”

If a mandatory evacuation has been ordered, extra measures, including vehicle relocation, are initiated. A continuity of operations plan, or COOP, is also activated to ensure a smooth transition of operations to backup facilities should a retail or other facility temporarily close in emergency conditions.

### The final hours

From here, the checklist cadence quickens to 12 hours. At 36 hours, the focus shifts to securing operations. Carriers must be off the streets; collection boxes secured; portable equipment, movable items and stamp stock elevated and covered; mail dispatched; and a hard copy of employee emergency contacts in a facility manager’s possession. If employees have been evacuated, management ensures they, or postal inspectors, can check on each one.

A final checklist at 24 hours is primarily concerned with employee safety. The National Employee Emergency Hotline — a vital line of communication — is reviewed for accuracy, and human resources is informed if automated calls are needed instructing employees to check in post-storm.



For facilities not under mandatory evacuation, the emphasis shifts to service restoration, with managers instructed to prioritize cleanup and post-storm staffing.

“Disaster preparedness from start to finish is the Postal Service working at its very best,” DeJoy said. “This process is a marvel to witness, and it works every single time, even when, as in 2024, we had to overcome the destructive force of back-to-back hurricanes in Florida, the Carolinas and Georgia. We were able to ensure those who chose to use the mail to vote were provided the same level of service as all American mail-in voters.”

“This continued success in the face of disaster instills in me the confidence that USPS can become the competitive, successful and self-sufficient world-leading operation I believe it can become,” he added.

## HERE FOR YOU

If a natural disaster is expected near you, call the toll-free USPS National Employee Emergency Hotline for reporting time updates. Hearing-impaired callers should use their state’s telecommunications relay services number. The numbers can be found on the back of most USPS employee badges.

For tips on personal preparedness for disasters, visit [ready.gov](https://www.usps.com/ready).



*We Go Everywhere!*

# ZIP Code™

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# 66952

**In the geographical  
midpoint of the Lower 48,  
the center is holding.**

## Lebanon, KS

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The tiny Kansas hamlet of Lebanon (population 182) exemplifies the term “Middle America.”

“Everybody’s friendly, everybody knows each other, everybody helps everybody out,” said Tara Nichols, a retail associate at the Lebanon Post Office on — yep — Main Street.

It is Middle America in a more specific way, too: Lebanon is four miles from a site popularly known as the geographic center of the United States, a location determined by the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey in 1891.

A stone-and-mortar plinth with a brass plaque was erected at the site in 1940 by the Lebanon Hub Club, a civic group formed to make hay of the geological distinction in the hopes of luring tourists and businesses to town.

The Hub Club remained nimble to historic developments, adjusting





the town's claim to fame after the entry of Alaska and Hawaii to the union moved the geographical center of the 50 states to Belle Fourche, SD. Lebanon is now known as the center of the contiguous United States.

One of the club's promotional brochures from the 1950s touted Lebanon's "progressive, growing, friendly community" in an area it dubbed "Home on the Range" country.

It's also "Friday Night Lights" country. Nearby Smith Center — where most children in the area attend school — was the focus of the 2009 New York Times bestseller "Our Boys." The Smith Center High School football team holds the nation's longest winning streak at 79 games, from 2004 to 2009.

"Homecoming weekend there's a free meal for everyone," Nichols said, and around the same time at the end of September, there's an Old Settlers' Day parade in Smith Center.

Lebanon's first postmaster was appointed in 1876. The USPS facility there was converted to a remotely managed Post Office in 2014. Two rural routes operate out of it, and it's open four hours a day.

A few doors from the Post Office is a visitor center created out of a restored former Standard Oil service station — complete with refurbished vintage fuel pump — and a historical



city jail that is a popular site for snapshots.

These restorations were projects of the U.S. Center Foundation, which formed in 2007 and has taken over many of the recently disbanded Hub Club's civic booster activities.

The Lebanon Bash, a celebration that began in the 1800s, is held every year on the second Saturday in September. Pickleball tournaments, tractor pulls and a kids' "pool of corn" are just a few recent highlights. The very early days featured the barbecue of an ox.

Then there is the 24/7 U.S. Center Chapel, which sits on the grounds of the park created around the center-point monument. The chapel served as the backdrop of a Super Bowl LV Jeep commercial that drew national attention when it aired in February

2021 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and in the wake of the fractious 2020 election.

"There's a chapel in Kansas standing on the exact center of the Lower 48. It never closes. All are more than welcome to come meet here, in the middle," Bruce Springsteen raspy narrates in the two-minute mood piece.

"It's no secret the middle has been a hard place to get to lately," he continues. "We just have to remember the very soil we stand on is common ground."





# What's in a Name?

**The origins of the words “Post” and “Office” reveal a storied past for these ubiquitous buildings.**

**M**ore than 31,000 Post Offices across America play a critical role in ensuring the Postal Service serves communities with quick and reliable delivery six and seven days a week. While the familiar local Post Office conjures a sense of permanence — USPS, after all, was known as the Post Office Department for nearly two centuries — a quick look at the origins of the words “post” and “office” unveils a long and evolving postal history that has shaped nations and framed the way the modern world communicates.

“Post” comes from the Latin word meaning “to put or place” and referred to riders and horses placed at intervals along a road. Its mail-related meaning began in 16th-century Europe. During the Renaissance, Europe was

transforming from a patchwork of small, fractured fiefdoms into a powerful empire led by Austria’s Habsburg monarchy.

As the empire grew to encompass most of what is the modern-day European Union, control of these sprawling domains required a robust communications network. The Habsburg Empire’s Imperial Post emerged as the dominant postal system and the model most widely adopted.

A critical differentiator for the Imperial Post was the use of fixed relay locations dotted across Europe. This relay system proved exceptionally efficient at transporting mail, and Europe’s sovereignties quickly adopted the concept. In Italian these relay stations were called “posto,” in French “poste” and in English “posts.”

This was a period of change for the English language, a time when the printing press, the Enlightenment, growing literacy rates and a shift in vowel pronunciation created the early form of Modern English. New words were added to the vernacular and existing words were given new meaning.

“Office” was one word that grew in scope, with its original meaning of “duty,” “service” or “place of official duties” — drawn from its Latin root “officium” — evolving to also mean “place where business is transacted.”

The words “post” and “office” were natural partners, but it would take more than a century for Britain’s Royal Mail, itself created in 1516, to bring the modern “Post Office” into the English vocabulary. Since then, “Post Office” has evolved to become a ubiquitous term that represents service, stability, security and connection for communities around the world.

noun

An office or station of a government postal system at which mail is received and sorted, from which it is dispatched and distributed, and at which stamps are sold or other services rendered.







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