

Update Notice

Handbook PO-209, *Handbook for Retail Operations* April 2005

This online version of Handbook PO-209, *Handbook for Retail Operations*, is updated as follows:

This chapter, subchapter, part, or section...	titled...	was revised to...	with an effective date of...
3-4	Name Tags	change the required location of wearing the tags from over the left breast to over the right breast.	August 2005
11-4.3	Unit Reserve	change the time required to maintain stock from 9 weeks to 3 months.	August 2005
18-10.1.2	Position Stamp Stock	correct a minor typing error.	August 2005

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Handbook for Retail Operations

Handbook PO-209

April 2005
Transmittal Letter

- A. Introduction.** One of the key strategies of the Transformation Plan is to improve operational efficiency by utilizing cost management, new technology, and workforce planning to improve operational efficiency. The proper day-to-day management, training, and sales skills are a key part of maintaining costs and improving operational efficiency. Handbook PO 209 serves as a tool for providing postal employees information relating to Retail Operations.
- B. Explanation.** This initial publication of the *Handbook for Retail Operations* provides direction and guidance for postmasters, managers, and supervisors with retail responsibility. It is the cornerstone to understanding the policies and procedures for day-to-day retail management.
- C. Distribution.** This handbook is distributed to all appropriate headquarters, area, district, and local Post Office™ employees.
- 1. Online.** Handbook PO-209 is available on the Postal Service™ Intranet on the PolicyNet Web site at <http://blue.usps.gov/cpim>; click on *HBKs*.
 - 2. Additional Copies.** You may order printed copies from the Material Distribution Center (MDC) using the touch tone order entry (TTOE) system. Call 800-332-0317, option 2.
- Note:** You must be registered to use TTOE. To register, call 800-332-0317, option 1, extension 2925, and follow the prompts to leave a message. Please wait 48 hours after registering before you place your first order.
- D. Rescissions.** Any previous applicable directive that is in conflict with this handbook is rescinded. The previous issue of PO-208 that is online is obsolete.
- E. Comments.** Submit questions and comments about the content of this directive in writing to:
- RETAIL OPERATIONS
US POSTAL SERVICE
475 L'ENFANT PLAZA SW RM 5621
WASHINGTON DC 20260-5621
- F. Effective Date.** This handbook is effective April 2005.


William Galligan
Vice President
Delivery and Retail

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1 Introduction

1-1 General Information

Handbook PO-209, *Retail Operations Handbook*, covers the duties and responsibilities of Post Office™ personnel with retail responsibilities. The information encompasses the following positions: full-time and part-time Sales and Services Associates (SSA), window clerks, Window/Distribution Clerks, Lead Sales and Services Associates (LSSA/T-6) and any other employees who perform duties at the retail counter.

For the purposes of this handbook, all employees who perform duties at the retail counter will be referred to as retail associates. Listed below are the most current descriptions for the SSA and LSSA positions.

1-2 Sales and Services Associate Function

Following are the duties of the SSA:

- Sell products and services using selling techniques to meet customer needs.
- Provide product information with courteous customer service.
- Work and deal cooperatively and positively with customers and coworkers.
- Identify and analyze problems and develop an appropriate course of action to resolve the situation.
- Use technology-based business equipment and basic mathematical computations to process customer transactions and produce accurate reports.
- Follow procedural directions or instructions, either with or without direct supervision, in a safe and timely manner.

1-3 Lead Sales and Services Associate Function

Following are the duties of the LSSA:

- Sell products and services using selling techniques to meet customer needs.
- Provide product information with courteous customer service.
- Work and deal cooperatively and positively with customers and coworkers.
- Identify and analyze problems and develop an appropriate course of action to resolve the situation.
- Use technology-based business equipment and basic mathematical computations to process customer transactions and produce accurate reports.
- Follow procedural directions or instructions, either with or without direct supervision, in a safe and timely manner.
- Provide technical direction to one or more associates assigned to sales activities, and review their work for accuracy.
- Open, run, and close a retail Postal Service™ outlet while planning and organizing the work of a small group of employees to achieve unit goals.

1-4 Basic Retail Responsibilities

1-4.1 **Uniforms**

Maintain a neat, clean, and generally creditable appearance.

1-4.2 **Name Tags**

All employees are required to wear name tags. Name tags must be visible to the customer.

1-4.3 **Promptness/Report as Scheduled**

Employees are required to be regular in attendance and report promptly as scheduled.

1-4.4 **Courtesy (Internal/External)**

Treat both employees and customers with respect. Be courteous and obliging in the performance of duties. Refrain from loud talking and the use of profane language. Do not engage in controversies while on duty.

1-4.5 Safety/Accident Reporting

Conduct your work in a safe manner so as not to endanger yourself or others. Report or correct any unsafe hazards or working conditions observed. Report all accidents to management immediately.

1-4.6 Adherence to Postal Regulations

Be knowledgeable and follow all Postal Service regulations and procedures to protect mail, postal funds, accountable paper, and Postal Service property. Compliance with current Aviation Mail Security instructions is mandatory for all employees.

1-4.7 Vending

Servicing employees (operators) are responsible for performing duties in accordance with Handbook PO-102, *Self Service Vending Operational and Marketing Program*. They must complete accounting and cost/revenue reports and forms using established procedures.

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2 Rules of Conduct

2-1 Following Postal Service Regulations

No employee shall engage in criminal, dishonest, notoriously disgraceful or immoral conduct, or other conduct prejudicial to the Postal Service.

2-2 Misuse of Postal Service Funds

Postal Service funds must be kept safe without loaning, using, depositing in an unauthorized bank, or exchanging for other funds, (e.g., cashing personal checks). Postal Service funds must be kept separate from personal funds.

2-3 Political Activities

Postal Service employees are restricted in their participation in political activity. Employees excluded are those who are employed on an irregular or occasional basis. These employees are restricted only while in an active duty status and only for the entire 24 hours of any day of actual employment.

- Employees may not display a political picture or sticker on property owned or leased by the Postal Service. The employee is not forbidden, however, from displaying a picture, including a personally autographed picture of a political figure in an office or place of work, if it has no language in the nature of political campaigning.
- Employees may not wear a political badge or button while in uniform or while on duty, if that duty requires the employee to deal with the public or be in view of the public.
- Employees may not display a political picture or sticker on a private vehicle while that vehicle is being used for official Postal Service purposes.

2-4 Soliciting/Gambling

No employee while on property owned or leased by the Postal Service, or while on duty, will participate in any gambling activity. This includes operating a gambling device, conducting or acting as an agent for a lottery or a pool,

conducting a game for money or property, or selling or purchasing a numbered slip or ticket.

2-5 Sexual Harassment (Internal/External)

The Postal Service is committed to providing a work environment free of sexual harassment and inappropriate sexual conduct. The Postal Service's workforce must be one in which all employees are treated with dignity and respect by managers, subordinates, and coworkers. There is no place in the Postal Service's workplace for sexually intimidating, embarrassing, or coercive behavior.

Sexual harassment is against the law. Employees will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including removal, for engaging in sexually harassing behavior such as, but not limited to, the following:

- Making or threatening to make employment decisions based on an employee's submission to or rejection of sexual advances or requests for sexual favors.
- Deliberate or repeated unsolicited remarks with a sexual connotation or physical contact of a sexual nature that is unwelcome to the recipient.
- Behavior that creates a sustained hostile or abusive work environment so severe or pervasive that it unreasonably interferes with or changes the conditions of one's employment.

Postal Service employees who believe they are the victims of sexual harassment or inappropriate sexually based conduct or who have witnessed inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature should bring the situation to the attention of a manager, supervisor, union official, an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) counselor, or the manager of Human Resources.

2-6 Report Suspicious Activity

An employee must report any suspicious activity immediately to the following contact:

GENERAL COUNSEL
US POSTAL SERVICE
475 L'ENFANT PLAZA SW 6TH FLOOR
WASHINGTON DC 20260-2100

Suspicious activity is any instance in which a person either within or outside the Postal Service uses or attempts to use bribery, undue influence, or coercion to induce or attempt to induce the employee to act or neglect to act in regard to official responsibilities.

Suspicious activity is also any information that causes the employee to believe that there has been a violation of the federal criminal statute or any law or regulation directly or indirectly related to the responsibilities of the Postal Service. The employee also must report suspicious activity made under this paragraph to the local inspector-in-charge.

2-7 Standards of Ethical Conduct

[Code of Federal Regulations]
[Title 5, Volume 3]
[Revised as of January 1, 2003]
From the U.S. Government Printing Office via GPO Access
[CITE: 5CFR2635.101]

TITLE 5--ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL

CHAPTER XVI--OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT ETHICS

PART 2635--STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Subpart A--General Provisions

Sec. 2635.101 Basic obligation of public service.

(a) Public service is a public trust. Each employee has a responsibility to the United States Government and its citizens to place loyalty to the Constitution, laws, and ethical principles above private gain. To ensure that every citizen can have complete confidence in the integrity of the federal government, each employee shall respect and adhere to the principles of ethical conduct set forth in this section, as well as the implementing standards contained in this part and in supplemental agency regulations.

(b) General principles. The following general principles apply to every employee and may form the basis for the standards contained in this part. Where a situation is not covered by the standards set forth in this part, employees shall apply the principles set forth in this section in determining whether their conduct is proper.

(1) Public service is a public trust, requiring employees to place loyalty to the Constitution, the laws, and ethical principles above private gain.

(2) Employees shall not hold financial interests that conflict with the conscientious performance of duty.

(3) Employees shall not engage in financial transactions using nonpublic government information or allow the improper use of such information to further any private interest.

(4) An employee shall not, except as permitted by subpart B of this part, solicit or accept any gift or other item of monetary value from any person or entity seeking official action from, doing business with, or conducting activities regulated by the employee's agency, or whose interests may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the employee's duties.

(5) Employees shall put forth honest effort in the performance of their duties.

(6) Employees shall not knowingly make unauthorized commitments or promises of any kind purporting to bind the government.

(7) Employees shall not use public office for private gain.

(8) Employees shall act impartially and not give preferential treatment to any private organization or individual.

(9) Employees shall protect and conserve federal property and shall not use it for other than authorized activities.

(10) Employees shall not engage in outside employment or activities, including seeking or negotiating for employment, that conflict with official government duties and responsibilities.

(11) Employees shall disclose waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption to appropriate authorities.

(12) Employees shall satisfy in good faith their obligations as citizens, including all just financial obligations, especially those—such as federal, state, or local taxes—that are imposed by law.

(13) Employees shall adhere to all laws and regulations that provide equal opportunity for all Americans regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or handicap.

(14) Employees shall endeavor to avoid any actions creating the appearance that they are violating the law or the ethical standards set forth in this part. Whether particular circumstances create an appearance that the law or these standards have been violated shall be determined from the perspective of a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts.

2-8 Unofficial Use of Postal Service Property/Supplies

No employee will use, directly or indirectly, or allow the use of the Postal Service or government property or services, including property leased to the Postal Service or a government agency, for other than officially approved activity. Employees have a duty to protect and conserve Postal Service property, equipment, supplies, and other property entrusted or issued to them.

2-9 Public Perception

The Post Office lobby is the principal business office of the Postal Service. For many customers, the lobby is their close-up view of Postal Service operations; therefore, its appearance, convenience, and efficiency directly affect the Postal Service's public image.

The perfect transaction includes clean lobbies that are stocked with forms and supplies and professionally attired, friendly retail professionals who are knowledgeable about the products and services offered by the Postal Service and know how to match these to our customers' needs each and every time. The retail professional must follow the GIST (Greet, Inquire, Suggest, and Thank) model during every retail transaction conducted.

All employees should refrain from loud, excessive talking while on Postal Service premises. Only employees that are serving customers should be in the proximity of the retail counter.

Retail units that play music in the lobby must ensure the music is at a minimum volume and is tasteful and not offensive to customers.

How we answer the telephone and what the customers see and hear from Postal Service employees directly affects their perception of our organization.

Employees answering the phone should identify the office and themselves, and then offer customer assistance.

Postal Service managers must ensure that retail services are available and accessible to customers in a timely, efficient manner and in an orderly, clean, and attractive environment.

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3 Uniforms

3-1 General Information

Supervisors are responsible for observing the uniforms of employees and taking appropriate corrective action, when necessary, to ensure that employees are properly attired. Postal Service employees are responsible for being properly dressed for duty. They are expected to maintain high standards of appearance, presenting to the public the best tradition of service and efficiency while performing their duties. Uniformed employees are responsible for conforming to all uniform regulations and wearing only authorized uniforms and combinations. When scheduled to work the retail counter, all employees who receive uniform allowances should wear complete and proper uniform attire, pants or skirt, skort, shirt and tie (men), neckwear or button cover (ladies). All clothing must be clean, neat, and professional.

Proper footwear is mandatory. Work shoes should be fully enclosed at the heel, toe, and sides and made of leather or a substantial synthetic material (canvas or nylon is not acceptable). For more information on uniforms, see ELM Chapter 9. For more information on shoes, see Handbook EL-814, *Postal Employees Guide to Safety*.

3-2 Retail Employees Who May be Scheduled to Work the Retail Counter

Retail associates who may be needed at the retail counter are expected to maintain high standards of appearance, representing to the public the best tradition of service and efficiency while performing their official duties. If employees are scheduled to work the window, they must wear their uniforms. Jeans, shorts, sleeveless tops, tee shirts, sweats, spandex, etc., are not appropriate attire for employees working at the retail counter. This list is not meant to be exhaustive.

For more information, refer to Chapter 9 of the *Employee Labor and Relations Manual*.

3-3 Uniform Allowance

If you or your employees qualify, but do not already receive uniform allowance, contact the district Human Resources office to request a uniform allowance. If your retail employees do not qualify, district management may provide a uniform for employees to wear when working the window. Employees provided uniforms are required to wear the uniforms as directed by management.

3-4 Name Tags

All employees are required to wear authorized Postal Service name tags. Name tags must be visible to the customer. Sales and Services Associates (SSA) name tags are to be worn over the right breast so that they are visible to the customer. Those employees with ID badges are to wear them at all times; but these badges may be worn out of sight of the customer, either on the waist or as prescribed by the installation head. In addition, at installations where Postal Service police officers are assigned access control functions, all employees are required to display their identification to the officer on entering the facility or grounds. Employees are not required to display their full name to the general public.

4 Duties

4-1 Revenue Protection/Assurance

All Postal Service employees are responsible for stopping the loss of revenue by identifying and collecting short or unpaid postage and fees, uncanceled stamps, and misclassified mail.

Examples of revenue loss include the following:

- Uncanceled stamps.
- Short-paid mail.
- Unbalanced scales.
- Improperly prepared bulk mailings.
- Unapplied surcharges.
- Uncollected Post Office box rent.
- Failure to block out Post Office boxes when fees are past due.
- Failure to close Post Office boxes in a timely manner.
- Assessment of wrong rates.
- Shortcuts.
- Failure to know classes of mail.
- Failure to offer value-added sales.
- Failure to follow procedures.
- Permit imprint mail deposited in collection boxes.
- Failure to inquire about customers' mailing needs.
- Failure to have Postal Service products available.
- Use of out-dated materials (e.g. charts, forms, etc.).

Retail associates must deposit all cash (excluding authorized cash reserve), checks, and cashed items into the official bank account on the same business date that transactions occur. Units should have one deposit per day, unless banking requirements require a separation of cash and checks. In some cases, offices making advance deposits and separating cash and checks may have a maximum of four daily deposits per day.

4-2 Sanctity/Security of the Mail

The Postal Service must preserve and protect the security of mail in its custody from unauthorized opening, inspection, or reading of contents. This also covers tampering, delay, or other unauthorized acts. This is a public trust vested in each Postal Service employee.

Mail that is accepted by any employee must be protected. In cases when an employee having a question about proper mail security procedures cannot consult a manager and when the procedures are not clearly and specifically answered by Postal Service regulations or by written direction of the Postal Inspection Service or General Counsel, the employee must resolve the question by protecting the mail in all respects and moving it, or letting it move, without interruption, to its destination.

Examples of unacceptable conduct relating to security and sanctity of the mail include theft, destruction, damage, or delay of mail.

4-2.1 Theft

Theft is taking something that does not belong to you, such as excess merchandise samples or undeliverable publications for personal use. Theft also includes removing merchandise, money, or coupons from undeliverable bulk business mail for personal use.

4-2.2 Destruction or Damage of Mail

The destruction or damage of mail includes deliberately damaging, losing, discarding, or defacing deliverable mail and allowing the mail to remain unprotected from theft and/or inclement weather.

4-2.3 Delay of Mail

Delaying mail includes improperly detaining mail by failing to deliver in accordance with service standards prescribed for each class of mail.

Failure to uphold the public trust vested in each Postal Service employee may cause removal from the Postal Service as well as criminal prosecution, resulting in fines and/or imprisonment.

4-3 Work Schedules

Employees' adherence to assigned work schedules is considered part of their duties.

Scheduling employees is an operational function that is based on workload projections, service commitments, and budgetary constraints. Retail Analysis Profile (RAP) study results in Money Order Voucher Entry System (MOVES) and the Small Post Office Reporting Tool (SPORT) offices, and POS ONE Window Operations Survey (WOS) reports and WOS Daily Scheduler can be utilized by managers to achieve maximum results for scheduling.

If management initiates a temporary change of schedule to an employee by Wednesday of the preceding service week, even if this change is revised later, the employee's time can be limited to the hours of the revised schedule. Out-of-schedule premium is paid for those hours worked outside of, and instead of, his or her regular schedule.

Eligible employees do not receive an out-of-schedule premium when attending a recognized training session that is a planned, prepared, and coordinated program or course.

4-3.1 **Adherence to FLSA**

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) workweek for all employees is a fixed and regular recurring period of 168 hours — seven consecutive 24-hour periods.

4-3.2 **Full-Time Employees**

For purposes of establishing the FLSA workweek, Saturday is considered to be a service day, even if it is not actually included as a service day in the full-time employee's regular schedule. The FLSA workweek begins 8 hours prior to the time that such employee's regular schedule would begin on Saturday.

4-3.3 **Part-Time Employees**

The FLSA workweek for part-time regular and flexible employees is defined and determined in the same manner as stated above for full-time employees except that the FLSA workweek for part-time employees may not begin prior to 20:00 (8:00 p.m.) Friday.

4-4 **Proper Recording of Time**

Employees must follow guidelines as established in Handbook F-21, *Time and Attendance*.

4-4.1 **LDCs/FONs**

The Labor Distribution Code (LDC) is a two-digit number used to identify the major activity of the employee. This code is used to compile work-hour, labor utilization, and other financial reports for management use. The Functional Operations Number (FON) code is a four-digit number used for the same purposes as the LDC.

4-4.2 **Clock Rings**

Employees are required to input correct transaction codes.

Management is responsible for reviewing the Time and Attendance Control System (TACS) Report and the Clock Ring Error Report and processing any necessary corrections. Management is also responsible for the accuracy of

the entries on time cards, must provide appropriate documents supporting time card entries to the timekeeper, and must ensure that the timekeeper complies with the procedures in Handbook F-21.

4-4.3 **Timecards**

All bargaining unit and casual employees are required to use time clocks (if available) to record clock rings on their time cards.

If time clocks are not available, employees must write in their clock rings each day, in blue or black ink, in the clock ring spaces on the back of the time card.

In certain situations, such as travel or assignment away from the time card location, the employee's supervisor may write in the daily clock rings for the employee. In such cases, the employee must submit a completed PS Form 1234, *Utility Card*, and the data must be verified to ensure compatibility with the previously submitted PS Form 1230 and/or PS Form 1230-C, *Time Card*. PS Form 1234 must be filed with the original.

4-4.4 **Disallowing Time**

In those cases where a full-time regular employee's clock rings exceed 8.08 hours and management knows or has reason to know that the employee was not engaged in work or work-related activities while in the time-over-8 status, management must disallow the time on the clock that was not worked. In such cases, management must insert a written entry on PS Form 1017-A, *Time Disallowance Record*.

4-4.5 **Unauthorized Work Time**

An employee who continues to work contrary to a direct order from his or her manager must be paid for all time worked but may be subject to disciplinary action. In such cases, the manager must insert a written entry on PS Form 1017-B, *Unauthorized Overtime Record*.

4-4.6 **Time Card Entry**

When clock time is disallowed, the employee's manager must enter in the DISALLOWED (REASON) column of the time card the amount of time to be disallowed and an appropriate reason code. In such cases, the manager must prepare a written entry to document the basis for his or her knowledge that the employee was not working during the time disallowed. See Handbook F-21, *Time and Attendance*, for information on PS Forms 1017-A and 1017-B.

4-5 Meeting Dispatch Deadlines

4-5.1 **Lobby Drop Schedules**

Retail associates are responsible for ensuring that all mail collected over the retail counter and all other areas is properly culled and separated to the correct collection receptacles and ready from dispatch.

Retail associates must verify customer notification labels (DDD-1 or DDD-3) are applied to lobby drops and are maintained in a legible fashion. Managers must be advised immediately if labels are missing, damaged, or illegible.

4-5.2 **Collection Boxes**

Collection boxes are located in lobbies and outside the facility. If instructed or assigned, retail associates are responsible for collecting mail from collection boxes in accordance with times posted. Make collections as near as possible to the posted pickup time, but never before posted times. Managers and retail associates must verify customer notification labels (DDD-1) are applied to collection boxes and are maintained in a legible fashion. Managers must immediately have labels replaced that are missing, damaged, or illegible.

4-6 Proper Reporting of Funds/Receipts

It is the responsibility of each retail employee in a POS ONE or IRT office to enter transactions and information as they occur and provide every customer with a system-generated receipt every time a transaction is performed. PS Form 1096, Receipt, is to be used only in cases where the retail equipment is temporarily nonfunctional.

Retail employees must remit all funds received for the sale of stamps and other postal products and services by using PS Form 1412-A, *Daily Financial Report*, supported by required documentation, on a daily basis.

Every unit must transmit a daily financial report. Whether your unit is using the POS ONE or IRT system, or if you are a Postal Service unit that uses MOVES or SPORT and report using the Mobile Data Collection Device (MDCD) scanner, a daily report must be filed to complete each day's business, regardless of the amount of financial activity. This is not optional. MOVES offices report using PS Form 1412-A. SPORT offices report using PS Form 1412-B, *Daily Financial Report*.

Follow the guidelines in the *Standard Accounting for Retail User's Guide*.

4-7 Maintaining Lobby Appearance

To effectively manage Postal Service lobbies, managers are to ensure that retail services are available and accessible to assist customers in a timely, efficient manner and in an orderly, clean, and attractive environment. Attention should be given to ensure the floors have been swept, the office has been dusted, the glass has been cleaned, and the trash has been emptied.

In-store messaging and products must be displayed in accordance with instructions and planograms.

4-8 Maintaining Neat and Safe Work Area

Managers are expected to maintain their facilities in a clean, safe, and healthful condition that is consistent with the conditions set forth in Handbook MS-47, *Housekeeping Postal Facilities*.

The Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) requires employers to provide a safe and healthful workplace free of recognized hazards and to follow OSHA standards.

Safety rules and regulations are found in Handbook EL-814, *Postal Employees Guide to Safety*.

5 Schedules

5-1 Managing Clerk Schedules

5-1.1 **Non-POS ONE/SPORT/MOVES Offices**

Managers should use the results of the Retail Analysis Profile (RAP) study to help determine schedules for retail associates.

5-1.2 **POS ONE Offices**

POS ONE Window Operations Survey (WOS) reports and/or the WOS Daily Scheduler should be used to determine retail associates' schedules. While they do not replace the need for managing the day-to-day operation, each tool can assist with scheduling. Print a series of Monday WOS reports. (*Note:* It is advisable to generate the reports in half-hour increments.) Review each time segment and note the periods when "Earned Work Minutes and Proposed Staff" are higher and lower. Do the same for every day of the work week. Prepare your base window schedule accordingly.

As a greater comfort level in using these reports is achieved, it may be advisable to consider reviewing scheduling on a cyclical basis. For example, days at the first of the month may require a significantly different number of associates than days in the middle of the month. The emphasis should be placed on matching staffing to workload, increasing or decreasing appropriately.

5-1.3 **Non-POS and POS Offices**

Review and adjust scheduling of retail associates' hours to provide optimum staffing during peak periods. Schedule breaks and lunches to coincide with slower periods.

To the greatest extent possible, limit lunches and breaks during peak times as identified by the RAP survey, WOS survey, or POS ONE WOS reports.

Give special attention to Saturdays. Determine if long lines on Saturdays could be reduced by adjusting hours on Saturdays or during the week.

Review retail operations complement to maximize usage of flexibility with part-time flexible (PTF) and part-time regular (PTR) employees.

5-2 Adhering to Postal Service Schedules

5-2.1 Work

Managers are responsible for ensuring that employees are working their assigned schedules. Management must take measures through employee orientation, service talks, schedule postings, etc., to ensure that employees are aware of their work schedules and are familiar with proper clocking procedures.

Employees' adherence to work schedules is considered part of their duties.

5-2.2 Collection

Retail associates are responsible for ensuring that all mail collected over the retail counter and all other areas is properly culled and separated to the correct collection receptacles and ready for dispatch.

5-2.3 Dispatch

Retail associates are to collect lobby drops, inside collection boxes, and outside collection boxes according to the collection times posted. Collection boxes should be checked as close as possible to but *never before* the posted time.

5-3 Office Hours

Lobby and retail services should be scheduled during hours most appropriate to the needs of the majority of customers in the local area. Postal Service units located in a business area normally would be open during hours maintained by that business community.

If the postmaster determines that additional service hours are necessary to meet community needs, he/she must obtain approval from the next higher management level for increasing workhour usage if additional costs are involved.

It is the manager's responsibility to inform customers of service hours, including any changes.

Make sure lobby clocks are synchronized with the POS/IRT units so from the customer's perspective we are opening and closing as scheduled.

Associates must have cash drawer, stamp stock, money orders, etc., available at the retail counter and be prepared for customers at the scheduled opening time.

6 Security/Safety

6-1 Aviation Mail Security

Management must ensure that all employees are trained in, and comply with, all current Postal Service Aviation Mail Security (AvSec) procedures and instructions. Duty-specific procedures can be found in program instructions and are provided in program training. AvSec program compliance is mandatory. Management must perform required official and self audits and conduct spot checks of their facility to ensure continued program compliance. AvSec program instructions and training material are restricted information and may not be distributed outside the Postal Service. For more information, contact your district AvSec coordinator.

6-2 Hazardous Materials

A hazardous material (HAZMAT) is any article or substance designated by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) as being capable of posing an unreasonable risk to health, safety, or property during transportation.

The Postal Service accepts limited amounts of potentially hazardous materials for mailing; however, most HAZMAT is nonmailable. The material allowed is generally other regulated material, consumer commodity (ORM-D) that is in quantities small enough to present little hazard to life, health, or property.

HAZMAT is not acceptable for air transportation if it is not prepared in compliance with the specific applicable requirements. These requirements consider the degree of hazard, quantity of material, method of packaging, required shipping papers, and adequacy of labels and/or markings required for carriage aboard an aircraft.

Particular conditions applicable to mailings of hazardous materials to foreign and APO/FPO addresses are stated in the *International Mail Manual* (IMM).

6-3 Counterline

Only retail associates on duty and other authorized personnel are permitted behind the counterline. Employee purchases of Postal Service products and services are *never* to be conducted behind the counterline.

6-4 Suspicious Money Order Activity

The U.S. Treasury Department has defined money laundering as the attempt to conceal or disguise the nature, location, source, ownership, or control of money derived from illegal activities. This definition covers a wide range of activity and includes any type of money, including postal money orders.

6-4.1 **PS Form 8105-A, *Fund Transaction Report***

The Bank Secrecy Act requires any persons purchasing \$3000 or more (but less than \$10,000) of money orders in any one day to complete a PS Form 8105-A, *Fund Transaction Report*, before purchasing the money orders. If a customer refuses to complete the PS Form 8105-A, the transaction cannot be conducted.

6-4.2 **PS Form 8105-B, *Suspicious Transaction Report***

If a customer refuses to complete the form and acts in a suspicious manner, the retail associate will complete a PS Form 8105-B, *Suspicious Transaction Report*. The retail associate will also complete PS Form 8105-B if a customer is purchasing large quantities of small denominational money orders.

6-5 Stock/Levels of Security

Ensure that these descending levels of security in your installation are followed:

Level 1 — Burglar-resistant chests in fire proof safes or security containers located in walk-in vaults.

Level 2 — Postal Service standard vaults or security containers.

Level 3 — Security chests or burglar-resistant chest portion of fireproof safes.

Level 4 — Fireproof safes or vaults not built to Postal Service standards.

Level 5 — Lockable metal cabinets and file drawers.

6-5.1 **Protecting the Stamp Credit**

Stamp stock should not be left in the open unless shrinkwrapped in a Postal Store setting and stored in a secure location.

Certain items must be given priority of protection over others, and managers are responsible for assuring that protective equipment is on hand for providing maximum security. The following are priorities of protection:

- Postal funds (cash, checks, blank money orders).
- Postage stamps, aerogramme, international reply coupons (IRCs), migratory bird hunting and conservation stamps (bird stamps), and philatelic products.
- Stamped envelopes and postal cards, money order imprinter, nonsaleable stamp stock, and nonpostal items.

6-6 Mail

6-6.1 **Registered, Cash on Delivery, Accountables**

Retail associates are responsible for doing the following:

- Following accountability and security procedures and keeping accurate records.
- Keeping registered articles locked in a drawer or cabinet if there is not a separate registry cage until the Registered Mail™ articles are ready to be dispatched.
- Giving collect on delivery (COD) mail every reasonable safeguard. (Preventing access to the mail by unauthorized persons, keeping such mail in locked cabinets, if available).
- Keeping all accountable mail behind the retail counter and away from the public.

6-6.2 **Mail Sealed Against Inspection**

Mail sealed against inspection includes First-Class Mail® items, Priority Mail® items, Express Mail® items (domestic and international), mailgram messages, and the international letter mail forming part of the letter class (LC) of Postal Union Mail.

No person may open mail sealed against inspection or search, inspect, read, or disclose information obtained from the mail or its contents; or surrender all or any part of such mail, whether or not such is believed to contain criminal or other nonmailable matter.

6-6.3 **Acceptance and Delivery of Mail**

Do not accept and stack mail to be metered later. Suitable identification can be required of the recipient (if not known to the Postal Service employee) before the delivery of a mailpiece.

Items that require a signature for delivery may not be opened or given to the recipient before the recipient signs and legibly prints his/her name on PS 3849, *Delivery Notice/Reminder/Receipt* (and return receipt, if applicable) and returns the receipt(s).

All special services and Express Mail items must be scanned according to existing procedures at acceptance and/or delivery.

6-7 **Locked Pouch**

Registry pouches are the proper container for transporting registered items, and rotary locks are the prescribed method of locking pouches. Rotary lock pouches should always be used in any office or unit in possession of a rotary key. The proper procedure for handling locked pouches can be found on the Delivery and Retail Web site.

6-8 **Funds**

Postal Service funds must be kept safe without loaning, using, depositing in an unauthorized bank, or exchanging for other funds. Postal Service funds must always be kept separate from personal funds. Keep Postal Service funds inaccessible to the public and concealed from view.

Advance/Final Remittance

Retail associates should do the following:

- Make an advance deposit of any excess monies during the day.
- Remove and count funds in a secured area to be remitted from the cash drawer.
- Maintain a checklist in each office. Verify each check against the list, and keep with PS Form 1412 documentation.
- Count the cash in a secure area away from the counter.
- Give the funds to the close-out employee.

Record the funds in the retail system, or on PS Form 1412-A/1412-B, *Daily Financial Report*, for MOVES or SPORT offices.

The designated closeout employee verifies and acknowledges receipt of the funds, signs the acknowledgement receipt, and gives it to the associate.

6-9 Keys

Managers procure all replacement locks and lock assemblies needed at their facilities, including Postal Inspection Service locks.

Personnel are issued only such keys as their duties require.

Managers must keep an accurate inventory of all keys and signed receipts using PS Form 1628, *Individual Key Record*.

Postal Service employees must immediately report any lost or stolen keys to the inspector in charge.

Managers must conduct a semiannual physical survey of all keys.

All employees must follow guidelines in accordance with Chapter 2 of the *Administrative Support Manual*.

6-9.1 Registered

Retail associates must ensure that Registered Mail items are locked at all times in a security container. Employees must sign the key over from one tour or one employee to the next by using PS Form 1625, *Record of Entry — Registry Section*, so that individual responsibility can be assigned at all times.

6-9.2 Building

Building keys should only be issued to employees who are required to open or close the office. All keys issued should be recorded on PS Form 1628 at the time of issuance.

When an employee's duties no longer require the use of an assigned key or the employee leaves the service, the key must be returned immediately. The date the key(s) is returned is entered on PS Form 1628 as the release of accountability. If keys used to operate exterior doors to the facility are not returned, the locks must be replaced or rekeyed.

Standard locks are not authorized on exterior doors or high-level security areas. All exterior doors must be equipped with a deadbolt lock. The deadbolt feature is operated by key from the outside and by turning the lever from the inside.

Only postmasters, installation heads, or their designees may carry a master key. Master keys are issued to maintenance employees only during their tours of duty and may not be carried from the building.

6-9.3 Postal Inspection Service Keys

6-9.3.1 O Keys

In buildings with lookout galleries, one O key is assigned to the postmaster or other official in charge, who must personally safeguard the key at all times. Only the postmaster or a designated supervisor may admit cleaners or other

authorized persons to the galleries, on the first Monday of the month or by obtaining approval in advance from the responsible inspector-in-charge.

All employees needing access to lookout galleries or Postal Inspection Service space must sign for keys in the key log. The log must show requestor's name, date, key-in and key-out time.

Overnight retention of keys is prohibited. Coordinate access for other-than-scheduled cleaning with the inspector-in-charge.

6-9.3.2 **J Keys**

A special J key, which operates inspectors' office locks, is provided for other authorized personnel.

6-9.4 **Cash Drawers**

Place cash/stamp credits in a locked container and store in a security container, safe, or vault following an employee's tour of duty. In POS One offices, POS cash drawers must be used.

Whenever an employee relinquishes control of an assigned stamp credit for any reason, change the locks on the employee's stamp and cash drawers. Do not reuse the old locks.

To safeguard each associate's stamp credit, a manager must make an annual examination of all locks and keys in the unit except for duplicate keys on file on PS Form 3977, *Duplicate Key Inventory*. This ensures that individual associates' keys will not open locked drawers, safe compartments, or stamp cabinets of other employees. The manager will keep a record for financial examination purposes.

Hold duplicate keys to stamp credits in the main safe or vault of the station or branch in a compartment under the exclusive control of the manager or a designated subordinate. Place the combinations for the main safe or vault and the duplicate compartment keys in a sealed PS Form 3977 registered to the safe.

6-10 **PS Form 3977**

PS Form 3977, *Duplicate Key Inventory*, is used to secure employee keys, passwords, and combinations. At least once every 6 months, managers must physically examine each PS Form 3977.

After the employee's keys, passwords, and combinations are enclosed and the flap is sealed, the employee to whom the keys are assigned and the witness must sign across both flaps on the reverse of the envelope. Round date as instructed on the front of the form.

Do not perforate or alter the PS Form 3977 in any way while it is sealed. If evidence of tampering with the envelope is noted or alleged, notify the local inspector-in-charge.

When locks, combinations, and passwords are changed, prepare a new PS Form 3977 and submit it to the custodian of the PS Forms 3977. The manager or designee must dispose of the replaced PS Form 3977.

When it is necessary to open a duplicate key envelope, cut it along one end, leaving the signature and postmarks intact. The employee opening the PS Form 3977 and a witness must sign and date it. Retain the opened envelope as instructed on PS Form 3977.

PS Forms 3977 must be kept in a locked receptacle under the exclusive control of the postmaster or designee.

6-10.1 **Key/Combinations Envelopes**

Ensure that each responsible employee and a witness to the enclosure of the combination or keys sign the envelope. Round date as instructed on the form.

Each time a lock or combination is changed, prepare a new PS Form 3977 and submit it to the custodian of the PS Form 3977 it replaces. The custodian must dispose of the replaced envelope.

Hold duplicate keys to stamp credits in the main safe or vault of the station or branch in a compartment under the exclusive control of the manager or a designated subordinate.

Combinations for the main safe or vault and the duplicate compartment keys should be sealed in a PS Form 3977 envelope. Store these PS Forms 3977 in the most secure place under the exclusive control of the postmaster or designated subordinate.

6-10.2 **Password Envelopes**

Maintain a separate PS Form 3977 for IRT, POS, and credit/debit card passwords for individual associates.

Each system's password must be placed in a separate envelope if the passwords are different.

6-11 **Building**

6-11.1 **Lighting**

Public parking areas and entries must be sufficiently illuminated to be safe and discourage crime. Provide security lighting to assist in maintaining acceptable levels of facility protection. This includes lighting at these locations:

- Entrance gates.
- Employee entrances.
- Vestibule entrances.
- Customer entrances.
- Areas around the building perimeter and perimeter security fencing.

- All areas not open to the general public.

6-11.2 **Parking/Grounds**

Customer, employee, and Postal Service vehicle parking and maneuvering areas must be separate from one another. Parking areas are to be located close to their respective entrances into the building. Postal Service employee vehicles may not be parked with highway contract route (HCR) vehicles, motor vehicle service (MVS), or other commercial vehicles.

Facilities less than 9,000 square feet are exempt from this requirement.

Plants, trees, and shrubs must not provide points of concealment or unauthorized entry to the facility, secure grounds, or Postal Service assets.

6-11.3 **Securing Equipment**

6-11.3.1 **Safes**

Security containers (safes) are used to store all money, stamp stock, Registered Mail items, national security documents, evidence, and other accountable items identified by the Postal Inspection Service. Security containers are required when a vault is not needed to store the office accountable items.

Assure safes and vaults are fully locked at the end of the day. Give the dial at least two complete turns in each direction. During business hours all safes must remain closed and day-locked.

6-11.3.2 **Round Date Stamp**

The all-purpose date stamp is used for stamping the customer copy of receipts for services such as Certified Mail™ service or Delivery Confirmation™ service. This stamp is also used for Registered Mail service, and on the daily bank deposit slip. This stamp should not be used to cancel or postmark mail and is always used with red ink.

This stamp must be safeguarded at all times. Do not leave it out on the counter where unauthorized individuals can handle it. Make sure it is locked up at night with your other accountable items. If this stamp becomes lost or missing, notify the Postal Inspection Service immediately.

6-11.3.3 **Postage Meters (Post Office)**

Meter heads must always be removed and put in a secure place when leaving the office.

Ensure that protective equipment is used for maximum security at all locations.

6-11.3.4 **Money Order Imprinters**

When not in use, keep money order imprinters in a safe, security container, or vault. If space is not available, store under protection of a lock.

Whenever possible, store money order forms and money order imprinters overnight in different security containers if the containers furnish an equal degree of security.

6-11.3.5 **Bait Money Orders**

After the office closes and retail associates have left the area, place the vinyl deposit bag with the three bait money orders on top of the security container, in an unlocked counterline drawer, or on the postmaster's or supervisor's desk.

6-11.3.6 **Cameras/Tapes**

The inspector-in-charge of the division in which the facility is located determines the need for, quantity, type, and location of closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems and cameras.

Retail units use CCTV systems for security. CCTV systems help protect employees, mail, and Postal Service assets as well as deter crime. Closed circuit TVs are strategically placed throughout the retail lobby, recording activities so that if theft is suspected, the tapes can be reviewed for evidence.

Management is responsible for overseeing maintenance and repair of CCTV systems and also for ensuring that information from the CCTV camera is monitored and tapes properly recorded, 24 hours a day.

6-11.3.7 **Doors/Alarms/Proper ID**

6-11.3.7.1 **Securing Doors**

Employees must firmly adhere to the policy of locking doors. It is management's responsibility to ensure compliance to afford maximum protection of Postal Service employees, funds, and property.

Keep all doors and windows of the office locked. In offices where the lobby remains open when no one is on duty, lock all doors, windows, and Dutch doors connecting the lobby with the working portion of the office.

All exterior doors and doors with access to the workroom floor must be equipped with deadbolt locks. Lobbies must be closed when no one is on duty unless the screen line extends to a permanent ceiling and police protection is adequate.

6-11.3.7.2 **Alarms**

The Postal Inspection Service determines the need for an alarm system.

The inspector-in-charge gives the facility head detailed instructions for the alarm system. These instructions are restricted information and are kept in a secure area.

Make sure promotional devices do not block the view of the sensor.

6-11.3.7.3 **Photo Identification/Access Badges**

All Postal Service employees must have a photo identification badge. The badge must be displayed at all times when an individual is in a Postal Service facility. Sales and Services Associates (SSA) name tags are to be worn over the left breast so that they are visible to the customer. Those employees with ID badges are to wear them at all times; but these badges may be worn out of sight of the customer, either on the waist or as prescribed by the installation head. In addition, at installations where Postal Service police officers are assigned access control functions, all employees are required to display their identification to the officer on entering the facility or grounds.

Employees are charged with the responsibility of preventing unauthorized individuals, including off-duty employees, from entering restricted areas. Investigate all individuals on the workroom floor who are not properly identified or escorted.

7 Equipment & Supplies

Work areas must be kept in a safe and healthful condition through proper maintenance of property and equipment.

7-1 IRT/POS

7-1.1 Cleaning

Clean POS/IRT equipment with a damp, clean, lint-free cloth. Do not use any chemical in cleaning this equipment.

7-1.2 Ordering Supplies

POS/IRT supplies must be ordered directly through the Material Distribution Center (MDC). Receipt paper can be ordered through ebuy at <http://ebuy.usps.gov>.

7-1.3 Help Desk Support

The Help Desk is your source for answers to POS ONE hardware/software issues. To reach the POS ONE Help Desk, call 800-USPS-HELP (800-877-7435). To reach the IRT Help Desk, call 800-247-6478.

7-2 PVI

7-2.1 Cleaning

Before changing the labels in the postage validation imprinter (PVI), clean the PVI printer head with an alcohol-based cleaning pen.

7-2.2 Ordering Supplies

PVI labels must be ordered directly through the MDC.

New PVIs and problems with existing PVIs are handled locally through the field maintenance office.

7-3 Postage Meters

No person or entity other than an authorized provider, its authorized agent, the Postal Service, or a licensee may have a postage meter in his/her/its possession. A meter must be immediately surrendered to the provider, the provider's agent, or to the Postal Service upon termination of a lease or rental agreement.

Post Offices that are authorized will use the Postage Meter Resetting System (PMRS). In order to use remote-set meters under PMRS, Post Offices and classified units must obtain the following:

- Written authorization from the manager of Post Office Operations, who will make the determination if the leasing of a remote-set postage meter is cost effective.
- Funding approval by submitting an eBuy form to cover the annual cost of leasing a postage meter from an authorized manufacturer.

The following are authorized meter manufacturers:

- Hasler, Inc.
- Neopost.
- Pitney Bowes.
- Francotyp-Postalia, Inc.

7-4 PC Postage Product Providers

PC Postage products and services are available from commercial providers in cooperation with the Postal Service.

The following are authorized PC Postage Providers:

- PSI Systems Envelope Manager Software.
- Pitney Bowes, Inc.
- Stamps.Com.

7-5 Scales (Systems and Lobbies)

7-5.1 Retail Lobby Scales

Retail scales are used to rate single piece mail. Verify the scale accuracy each day and field calibrate using certified test weights if scale is not accurate. Follow current procedures for verifying and calibrating.

7-5.2 Electronic Scales

Refer to the user operation manual for these units for verification and calibration procedures. The manufacturer or the existing maintenance contractor handles calibration for these units.

7-5.3 Mechanical Scales

Refer to current maintenance management orders or visit <http://www.mtsc.usps.gov> for information on verification and calibration.

7-5.4 Retail Counter Scales

Verify scale accuracy each day (zero balance). If scale is not accurate, calibrate using certified test weights.

7-5.5 IRT

Refer to current maintenance management orders or visit <http://www.mtsc.usps.gov> for information on verification and calibration. Your local field maintenance office handles calibration for these units.

7-5.6 POS ONE

Refer to the POS ONE Web site at <http://retail.usps.gov/posone> or follow the instructions in the POS ONE *Online Procedures Guide* for zeroing and calibrating scales. For technical and service issues, contact the Help Desk at 800-877-7435. Retail unit managers or their designees handle calibration for POS ONE units.

7-5.7 Repaired Scales

Use certified test weights to calibrate scales before placing them into service. Before submitting requisitions for new scales, ensure that locally established coordinating procedures have been followed.

Requirements offices should prepare an eBuy form and forward it to the MDC in Topeka, Kansas.

Users should contact the Help Desk at 800-247-6478 (IRT) or 800-877-7435 (POS ONE) with any questions.

7-6 Scanning Equipment

7-6.1 Mobile Data Collection Devices (MDCD) Scanner

Employees using the handheld scanner will use the procedures from Handbook PO-610, *Signature Capture and Electronic Record Management: Manager's Guide to Standard Operating Procedures*.

For technical or service issues, call the Help Desk at 800-877-7435.

7-6.2 POS ONE Scanners

For technical or service issues call the Help Desk at 800-877-7435

7-7 Money Order Imprinter

Manual issuance of money orders is not permitted. Inoperable imprinters must be replaced or restored to service as quickly as possible. In the event the money order imprinter is deemed inoperable or in need of service, refer to the operator's manual. There is a manufacturer's warranty on the imprinter. While service is disrupted, customers must be advised of the anticipated time that service is to be restored and the location of nearby facilities where service is available.

Order replacement ribbon from the MDC.

7-8 Tranz 380 (Credit/Debit)

When the Tranz 380 is installed in a Post Office, it is encoded with information unique to that Post Office. (e.g., finance number, address, etc.) Do not transfer or loan the Tranz 380 to other offices.

Contact First Data Merchandise Services (FDMS) at 800-994-8777 for technical support and supplies.

7-9 Cash Drawers

Offices on POS ONE must use the POS ONE cash drawers. There are no exceptions to this policy.

Cash drawers are used for storing operating stamps and funds. Replacement cash drawers and locks must be ordered through the MDC using Publication 247, *Supply and Equipment Catalog*. Place stamp credits in a locked container and store in a security container, safe, or vault following an employee's tour of duty.

7-10 Safes

Vaults, security containers of various types, and security cages are installed in Postal Service facilities as needed for protective storage of accountable items. The Postal Inspection Service determines the amount and type of security equipment that is required. Details on the use and care of this equipment may be found in Handbook F-1, *Post Office Accounting Procedures*.

Contact your local administrative services manager or material management specialist to determine the availability of any excess equipment (e.g., safes, inserts, etc.).

If no excess equipment is available, follow the ordering guidelines established in Publication 247.

7-11 Round Date Stamp

The round date stamp (all-purpose date stamp) is used for stamping the customer copy of receipts for services such as Certified Mail service or Delivery Confirmation service. This stamp is also used for Registered Mail, and the daily bank deposit slips. This stamp should not be used to cancel or postmark mail and is always used with red ink.

This stamp must be safeguarded at all times. Do not leave it out on the counter where unauthorized individuals can handle it. Make sure it is locked up at night with your other accountable items. If this stamp becomes lost or missing, notify the Postal Inspection Service immediately.

The round date stamp can be ordered through the MDC.

7-12 Vending Machines

The district marketing office is responsible for ordering and deploying original and replacement self service retail (vending) equipment to the field.

Self service vending equipment must be kept operational for customer use at all times. In the event of a malfunction, Label 6, *Vending Equipment Out of Order*, must be placed on the equipment. Self service vending equipment must be fully operational within 24 hours after the malfunction is reported.

For customer assistance in reporting equipment malfunctions, a local telephone number must be placed on the front of each machine.

In the event of vandalism, theft, fire, or flood, notify local management, the local police department, the local Postal Inspection Service, the manager of Post Office Operations, and the district marketing office.

The servicing technician should contact the Postal Service vending Help Desk at 800-451-4196 for any problems with vending equipment. The Help Desk will make the necessary recommendation to Postal Service management to initiate a replacement machine if necessary.

For more information consult Chapter 4, *Servicing Self Service Vending Equipment*, Handbook P0-102, *Self Service Vending Operational and Marketing Program*, or visit the self service Web site at:
http://blue.usps.gov/delivery/self_service/html/programs/selfservice.html.

7-13 Copy Machines

The Postal Service permits coin-operated photocopying machines for customers to use in the lobby. The machines are owned and maintained by commercial firms, which are selected on a competitive basis.

If a coin-operated copier is not available at a nearby commercial establishment and you have determined through both customer and internal need that it is feasible to maintain coin-operated copier service (at least 500 copies per month are generated), you can enter an agreement with a vendor.

7-14 Building Alarm System

The Postal Inspection Service evaluates the needs for any security-related equipment. Do not purchase alarms or security systems without Postal Inspection Service evaluation. Proposals should be submitted to the Postal Inspection Service with a detailed justification for review and evaluation.

The inspector-in-charge will give the facility head detailed instructions for the alarm system. Keep these in a secure area. If there are any problems with alarm systems, immediately alert the inspector-in-charge.

The contractor provides and installs the burglar alarm system, with direction from the Postal Inspection Service (which provides the panel for the system and programs it after installation).

Make sure promotional devices do not block the view of the sensor.

7-15 Electronic Article Surveillance

The Postal Inspection Service evaluates the needs for any security-related equipment. Do not purchase alarms or security systems without Postal Inspection Service evaluation. Proposals should be submitted to the Postal Inspection Service with a detailed justification for review and evaluation.

An electronic article surveillance (EAS) system is required in facilities with an open merchandise retail operation, or when \$30,000 worth of merchandise is displayed in a limited open merchandise situation. The panels should be placed so as to separate the full self-service lobby and Postal Store from the self-service vending area, letter drops, and Post Office box section.

8 Retail Measurement

8-1 Supervision of Performance

Managers will monitor window operations daily to determine proper window staffing and the need for lobby sweeps.

8-1.1 Measuring Productivity

Proficiency is measured by total walk-in revenue (total revenue includes alternative access channels). An employee's productivity is measured in terms of transactions and revenue per workhour.

Transactions per workhour are a direct measure of the number of customer transactions the retail associate completes in a specific time period. Consider three things when looking at the measurement:

The type of transaction — mailing transactions including Special Services equates to increased earned workhours.

The amount of the sale — increased transactions equates to increased revenue.

Nonrevenue transactions — e.g., mail pickup and Post Office box overflow.

8-1.2 Measuring Proficiencies

Employee proficiencies must also be measured to protect revenue. To determine employee proficiency, look at other areas:

- Clerk accountability/cash credit examinations.
- Error corrects on PS Form 1412-A.
- Reports on POS terminal.
- Scanning errors.
- Customer complaints.

8-2 Mystery Shopper

The Mystery Shopper program's purpose and intent is that it is used as a diagnostic tool to correct conditions that are detrimental to customer satisfaction and may inhibit revenue growth. Mystery shopping gives the Postal Service an objective view of our retail locations. It can be used as a real-time snapshot of a customer interaction.

It is not just about the score. It's even more important that the results drive behavior that will result in improved customer satisfaction and increased retail revenue. The attributes measured in the Mystery Shopper program should become so commonplace to our everyday performance that if the program were to end tomorrow, it would not change the customer's retail experience in any way.

The program uses independent contracted "customers" who visit Post Offices and document their experience by answering a standardized questionnaire. Each "customer" conducts a mailing transaction to test the quality of their experience at a retail unit. Retail associates must ask the required sales skills questions in order for a "perfect" transaction to be conducted. Based on the planned transaction type, the Mystery Shopper report lists the lost revenue when the retail associate does not ask the appropriate questions.

The Mystery Shopper questionnaire is divided into the following weighted categories:

- **Operational efficiency**

This information furnishes the customer with facts on actual waiting times, number of stations/number of stations staffed, and if employees were assisting customers in a lobby. It also includes information on whether or not the vending equipment was operable.

- **Sales skills and product knowledge**

To accomplish GIST (Greet Inquire, Suggest, Thank), the retail associate must greet the customer, inquire when the item needs to arrive, offer a class of mail, and explain features of the selected mail. If the customer selects Express Mail or Priority Mail service, the retail associate must advise the customer of the service standard. The retail associate then offers and explains special services, suggests additional items to purchase, and ends the transaction in a pleasant manner and provides a receipt.

- **HAZMAT**

It is illegal and extremely dangerous to mail restricted or prohibited hazardous materials. Retail associates must ask if the package contains anything fragile, liquid, perishable, or potentially hazardous. Regulations governing mailing of hazardous materials can be found in Notice 107, *Let's Keep the Mail Safe*.

- **Courtesy and professionalism**

The postal unit should be neat, clean, and well maintained. The retail associate must be in complete uniform, greet the customer, and be attentive and pleasant throughout the transaction.

- **Retail products and services**

Customers should be able to locate special service forms, shipping supplies (ex. Express Mail/Priority Mail) and ReadyPost retail packaging supplies.

Displays and signs including posting and lettering should be professional in appearance.

Mystery Shopper evaluations do not, and must not, identify individuals and must not be used as the source of disciplinary action. Management must not review tapes and receipts to identify the retail associate or the shopper in an attempt to discredit the shopper evaluation.

The shops are conducted at offices that generate \$500,000 or more in annual walk-in revenue or are in the top 20 percent of the highest revenue-producing offices within a district. Using this criterion, we shop about 8,200 retail units eight times a year for a total fiscal year count of about 65,000 shops.

Although all retail units do not participate in the Mystery Shopper program, all need to understand and follow these guidelines. For information about Mystery Shop results, contact the local coordinator for a logon ID and visit www.usps-mysteryshop.com.

See pages 40–41 for samples of Mystery Shopper letters.

VICE PRESIDENTS, AREA OPERATIONS
MANAGER, CAPITAL METRO OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Mystery Shopper Evaluations

This is a reminder concerning the proper use of the Mystery Shopper evaluations.

The program's purpose and intent is to be used as a diagnostic tool to correct conditions that are detrimental to customer satisfaction and may inhibit revenue growth. Mystery shopping gives the Postal Service an objective view of our retail locations—a real-time snapshot of a customer interaction.

As you may already know, the Mystery Shopper transaction involves the shopper mailing an item to test the quality of the customer experience at retail units. If the retail associate asks the proper sales skills questions and conducts a perfect transaction, we know the revenue that would be generated. In Quarter 2, our average revenue loss per transaction ranged from a high of \$.32 per item to a low of \$.16. The areas with the lowest revenue loss were also the top scoring areas in terms of sales skills. This shows the positive correlation between high sales skills and revenue generation.

The Mystery Shopper program is not just about the score. It's even more important that the results drive behavior that will result in improved customer satisfaction and increased retail revenue. The attributes measured in the Mystery Shopper program should become so commonplace to our everyday performance that if the program were to end tomorrow, it would not change the customer's retail experience in any way.

Mystery Shopper evaluations do not, and should not, identify individuals and must not be used as the source for disciplinary action. I continually hear of instances where post offices are spending great deals of time reviewing tapes and Point of Sale receipts in an effort to identify the retail associate or the shopper. In many instances, offices try to use this information to discredit the shopper evaluation. This time can be much better spent in trying to drive behavior and ultimately increase customer satisfaction and retail revenue.

While Mystery Shopper evaluations must not be used as the source for disciplinary action, supervisors should be making independent personal observations of retail associate interaction with customers to ensure they are performing all aspects of their duties as instructed. This would include observations that allow them to coach employees to ask questions that will determine customer needs. The Retail Employee Observation form, PS Form 4000-B, should be used for this purpose. At least one observation should be completed every accounting period per retail associate. As with all employee performance observations, however, make sure positive performance as well as less than satisfactory performance is recognized.

I ask all of you to fully support the Mystery Shopper program. We have over seven million opportunities every business day at retail locations to establish the Postal Service as the premier provider of our customers' mailing needs. This program can help us to reap the benefits of increased customer satisfaction and revenue generation, but only if the results are used properly to correct retail performance as appropriate.

Thank you for your continued support.

Patrick R. Donahoe

cc: Ms. Bizzotto
Mr. Rapp
Mr. Pankey
Mr. Wargo

LABOR RELATIONS



September 17, 2003

MANAGERS, LABOR RELATIONS (AREA)

SUBJECT: Mystery Shopper Evaluations

The Mystery Shopper Program was implemented to improve the level of customer service and generate revenue by ensuring customers are aware of the numerous postal services available. The Program consists of lobby evaluations and retail employee observations. As stated in previous correspondence from the Chief Operations Officer, dated April 30, 2003, the Mystery Shopper evaluations are not to be used as a source for disciplinary action.

Several initiatives have arisen throughout the Postal Service that emulate the "Mystery Shopper" program. Once again, discipline should not be the focus of these programs and they should not be used as a method of intimidation. The focus of these local initiatives should concentrate on encouraging positive behaviors. Reviewing scores with employees and explaining why the questions are asked helps employees understand the purpose of the program and their role in improving retail operations. Coaching employees based on observations provides employees a chance to gain additional knowledge that can be applied in the future when performing their duties.

A standardized sales skills process was implemented in FY 2000. This process includes supervisory follow-up through ongoing lobby and employee observations, utilizing the PS Form 4000-A for retail lobby observations and the PS Form 4000-B for retail employee observations (both forms can be found in the Postal website blue page under forms). Supervisors should be making independent personal observations of retail associate interaction with customers to ensure they are performing all aspects of their duties. If deficiencies exist, coaching and discussions relating to the employee's responsibilities are needed. If these coaching sessions and discussions fail to provide the desired behavior change, then discipline may be appropriate. As with all employee performance observations, however, supervisors should ensure positive performance as well as less than satisfactory performance is recognized. Recognizing good performance can motivate employees and encourage others who are not performing as well.

Please share this information with Labor Relations personnel and Retail Operations personnel. Feel free to contact Cindy M. Wheeler at (202) 268-4356 if you have any questions or need additional information.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doug A. Tulino".

Doug A. Tulino
Manager
Labor Relations Policies and Programs

475 L'ENFANT PLAZA SW
WASHINGTON DC 20260-4100
WWW.USPS.COM

8-3 Enterprise Data Warehouse

The Enterprise Data Warehouse (EDW) provides a single repository for managing the Postal Service's corporate data assets. The EDW provides a common source of accurate corporate data across organizations to a wide variety of users. The data can be reported upon and manipulated in a variety of ways both within and across functions for deeper analysis, which can lead to additional revenue, reduced costs, and improved business practices.

EDW was originally created in support of Retail. It now supports additional groups, including Finance, Operations, Marketing, and others who are using EDW for reporting and analysis. For more information concerning EDW, visit <http://edw>.

8-4 Retail Data Mart

The Retail Data Mart (RDM) provides Customer Service Operations with data needed to understand the buying habits and patterns of retail customers.

The POS ONE systems collect the transaction and visit information by retail associate by time of day.

Retail managers must monitor sales by product in order to provide customers with the appropriate service and, at the same time, increase sales.

With the RDM, we can identify what products and services are sold and where we can provide value-added services. Managers are able to run queries in addition to canned reports made available on a routine basis.

8-5 Window Operations Survey

The Postal Service is continually evaluating its network of postal retail facilities to meet current and future customer needs. The Function 4 Window Operations Survey (WOS) is an extensive review of POS ONE and IRT offices, and an integral step in right-sizing the retail counter operation. Conducted onsite by knowledgeable retail personnel, the WOS is a data-driven tool used to determine an office's retail workload. The WOS results package contains staffing and procedure recommendations that, once implemented, lead to increases in retail productivity, revenue and customer satisfaction. A WOS study is performed in conjunction with every Function 4 review, and as a standalone activity for additional purposes as stated in the *National Standardized Function 4 Review Guidelines*.

Workload is determined by the number and types of transactions conducted at the retail counter. The POS ONE system generates a WOS Report that details the number and type of transactions conducted by each retail associate. This report is critical in completing the WOS.

For additional information, visit:

http://blue.usps.gov/delivery/cs_wos_top_page.htm and
<http://blue.usps.gov/fosd/wp/welcome.htm>.

WOS Reports (POS ONE)

The components of the WOS Reports are the same in both the IBM and NCR POS systems. However, their report titles differ. The NCR reports are titled “WOS Daily Staffing Summary” and “WOS Daily Report for All Employees,” while the IBM reports are titled “Window Operations Survey — Minutes per Transaction and Counts per Transaction.”

The two main sections that comprise the WOS Reports are Earned Minutes and Transactions. The Transaction Report shows the number of transactions, by type, occurring in each time segment (half-hour or hour). The Earned Minutes Report reflects the minutes earned, by type, in each time segment. Earned minutes are determined by multiplying the number of transactions by the associated POS factor (standard transaction value). For instance the POS factor for a stamp sale is 47 seconds or 78 hundredths of a minute (.78). If the unit had one stamp transaction in the first half hour of the day, the number one would appear on the Postage Stock Sales row (Account Identifier Code/General Ledger Account — AIC/GLA 0090) for that period on the Transaction Report and .78 on the Earned Minutes Report.

For additional information visit:

http://blue.usps.gov/delivery/cs_wos_top_page.htm and click on *POS ONE WOS Report Standard Operating Procedure*.

8-6 Retail Analysis Profile

The Retail Analysis Profile (RAP), like WOS, is a method for determining the optimal staffing of MOVES and SPORT retail units. It is an operations research and marketing tool that helps local managers make better decisions regarding staffing of postal retail outlets to meet customer needs.

A district team gathers, processes, analyzes, and presents the information to management. Based on the data collected, recommendations are made on scheduling and staffing. RAP surveys may indicate the need for additional personnel, or the need for a reduction in workhours in certain facilities. Local managers must take appropriate action to adhere to the recommendations presented.

8-7 Function 4

Customer service managers are responsible for ensuring accurate daily recording of mail volumes received in a mail distribution unit, and are required to efficiently utilize the clerical workforce to distribute that volume of mail. The Function 4 operation includes supervisory hours in support of customer service activities. Customer service activities are nonsupervisory

hours of employees at Post Offices, stations, and branches involved in automated, mechanized, manual, and Post Office box distribution of mail, Post Office window and vending equipment services, and miscellaneous administrative and Central Forwarding System operations.

Management Instruction PO-610-2002-3, *Function 4 Standardized Customer Service Workload Reporting System*, contains the national policies and procedures for recording and reporting daily customer service workload information within Post Offices and station and branch operations.

For additional information visit:

<http://blue.usps.gov/fosd/wp/welcome.htm> and
http://blue.usps.gov/delivery/cs_function4_top_page.htm.

To maintain your customer service workhour budget, you must monitor clock rings and ensure proper Labor Distribution Code (LDC) usage. Listed below are acceptable duties for LDC 45 and LDC 48. In CAG H-L offices only, all nonsupervisory hours used in customer service activities are reported in LDC 47.

8-7.1 **LDC 45: Window Services**

All nonsupervisory hours of employees serving customers at windows, and other activities in support of window services, include the following:

- Advance deposits.
- Caller mail pickup at window.
- Change orders requested by retail associates.
- CODs: acceptance and delivery.
- Clerk setup: open and close.
- Credit examinations: Associate's cash retained and money orders, stamp stock, unit reserve, cash retained reserve, and fixed credits.
- Information/directions.
- Lobby director.
- Mail pickups at the window.
- Passport application, fees, and transmittal form.
- Passport photos.
- Sales of all postal products and services.
- Service/safety talks at the window.
- Stamp stock: requesting and verification (local PS Form 17, *Stamp Requisition/Stamp Return*).
- Stocking forms, lobby supplies, and point of purchase (POP) materials.
- Temporary Dutch door operation for mail pickup.

Although listed, the Postal Inspection Service views Dutch door operations as a security risk.

8-7.2 LDC 48: Administrative/Miscellaneous Duties

LDC 48 includes nonsupervisory hours of customer service employees assigned to dispatch activities, office work, recordkeeping, and miscellaneous retail activities at stations, branches, and associate offices, including steward's duty time, travel time, and meeting time. It also includes nonsupervisory hours used in support of delivery service, such as working postage due, Insured Mail, COD, customs, business reply mail, carrier cage operation, markup duties (other than CFS sites), and other miscellaneous customer service and clerical activities. It also includes bulk mail acceptance: PS 1412-A, *Daily Financial Form*, consolidation and financial activities in a facility without a specified staff.

Following is a summary of LDC 48 administrative and miscellaneous duties:

- Accountable mail, second notices.
- Bank: to replenish change fund (accountability assigned on PS Form 3369, *Consigned Credit Receipt*).
- BRM/postage due.
- Carrier checkout/clearing.
- Claims and inquiry processing.
- Collections.
- Copy machine administration.
- Customer meter verification.
- Dispatch.
- Dutch door operation.
- Express Mail street delivery by clerks.
- Markup, nixie, and return to sender mail.
- Opening/closing building.
- Phone duties.
- Registry duties.
- Requesting stock (retail SDO/SSC).
- Scanning duties in back office.
- Service/safety talks (away from window).
- Stamps by Mail/Stamps by Fax.
- Supply ordering.
- T-6 administrative duties.
- Timekeeping.
- Trust fund recordkeeping.
- Undeliverable bulk business mail (UBBM) processing.
- Unit closeout, preparation, and verification of deposit.
- RCU backup transmission.
- Unit consolidation: verifying supporting documents and filing of unit reports.
- Stocking vending equipment.
- Depositing funds from vending equipment.

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9 Retail Training

9-1 Retail Training Overview

Retail training is designed for a wide audience. Retail training mainly encompasses all retail associate positions and customer service supervisors, station managers, and postmasters.

Individual courses within these classifications are prescribed by the Postal Employee Development Center (PEDC) and can be found on the blue Web page at: <http://trainingmaterials.usps.gov>.

Employees are provided with both formal and informal learning experiences that contribute to individual growth and improve performance in current or future assignments.

Both formal and informal training and development programs are organized to achieve employee learning objectives in knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Structured classroom sessions and on-the-job training are considered formal training. Additionally, formal training may include Web-based delivery of online programs, computer-based interactive delivery, and satellite transmission.

Informal training methods are delivered through service/stand-up talks such as "Let's Talk Retail," PowerPoint presentations, New Functionality Guides, *Postal Bulletins*, and other published materials.

Retail Operations requires that ongoing training be conducted by station/branch management in order to ensure that associates receive pertinent retail information.

Training and educational programs using specified courses and materials and given by authorized personnel are critical to the overall performance, knowledge, skills, and productivity of employees.

It is the policy of the Postal Service to provide employees with training and development opportunities consistent with operational requirements, duty classification, and skills enhancement. The implementation of these training and educational programs as required helps assure that Postal Service personnel can provide effective and optimal service.

Failure to provide formal, informal, or ongoing training could result in poor employee productivity, higher operational costs, and loss of revenue by the Postal Service.

9-2 Course Materials

It is imperative that with any training, whether it is formal or informal, the proper course materials be presented in the delivery method intended.

For retail courses that require the employee to pass a qualifying exam, course materials can be accessed through the blue Web site at <http://trainingmaterials.usps.gov>.

Facilitators must be Facilitative Instructor Workshop (FIW) certified.

Facilitators must teach with the most current course materials and not deviate from those materials.

The SSA training course number 23501-02 contains an American Postal Workers Union (APWU) module and requires that an APWU official teach or be present when the union module is taught.

All Postal Service employees newly assigned to Sales and Services Associate (SSA) positions must complete the *SSA Training Course 23501-02*, and subsequently pass the qualifying examination.

This test is officially administered at the district PEDCs.

Postal Service employees assigned as Lead Sales and Services Associates (LSSA) must complete the *LSSA Training Course 23501-05*.

The POS ONE deployment courses cannot be used in lieu of these courses.

These jointly developed programs are designed to provide newly assigned SSAs and LSSAs with the knowledge and skills necessary to fulfill their duties.

They are also designed for retail associates in need of refresher training.

These programs include instructions in elements such as interpersonal skills, customer relations, selling techniques, postal products and services, and security of funds.

These courses also help establish and reinforce desirable work habits and a commitment to quality service in the critical early stages of new duty assignments.

Prior to working at the retail counter with customers, handling Postal Service funds and securities, and handling financial closeout duties, the associate *must* complete the necessary training program and pass the qualifying examination.

All employees must be thoroughly trained in Aviation Mail Security procedures and instructions.

9-3 POS ONE

Point of Service (POS) ONE is a key element in providing retail employees with the tools and information needed to provide customers with prompt, accurate, and consistent service. It also plays a major role in reaching Postal Service goals by reducing costs, increasing revenue, improving customer loyalty, increasing operating efficiency, and improving employee satisfaction.

POS ONE plays a major role in reaching Postal Service goals for improving customer service and providing our employees with the tools required to efficiently and easily provide postal services.

POS ONE consists of two system types: NCR and IBM. Both systems record detailed transaction data, provide employee communication, provide sales and services associates with product information, simplify inventory management, and assure pricing regularity.

See below for personnel who must take the training during deployment and the courses they must take:

All employees with a POS ONE ID	Front Office Course 41530-02.
Managers, supervisors, stock custodians, and closeout personnel	Back Office Closeout 41530-04. (Prerequisite: Front Office Course).
Managers, supervisors, and stock custodians	Back Office Administration Course 41530-05. (Prerequisite: Front Office and Back Office Closeout Course).

Bargaining employees who are scheduled to participate in deployment training must have already passed the SSA qualifying exam.

Employees must not be allowed to work on a POS ONE system until they have successfully completed the above prescribed course(s).

Employees requiring POS ONE training during nondeployment are to receive on-the-job training with a certified retail coach using the core lesson plans in either the SSA or LSSA course.

9-4 Other Retail Systems Training

IRT, SPORT, MOVES, and MDCCD (handheld) scanners training is available. For further information, contact your district coordinator.

9-5 Delivery and Retail Web Site

The Delivery and Retail Web site is to provide a corporate overview, functional guidance, develop long-range strategic plans, and champion strategic vision for the field.

The Web site has been developed to provide tools and support, develop, and provide guidelines and policies, solicit input from field organizations, communicate the strategic vision, and provide problem solving for obstacles.

This Web site includes, but is not limited to:

- Phone numbers for everyone who works in Customer Service Operations at Headquarters.
- “Let’s Talk Retail,” an informative weekly column about the latest topics in retail.
- Standard operating procedures (SOPs).
- Retail performance reports.
- Access to Function 4 and WOS training.
- Frequently asked questions.
- Web site feedback.
- Current policy information.

Visit Customer Service Operations at:

http://blue.usps.gov/delivery/cs_operations.html

10 Sales Skills

10-1 Standard Retail Transaction

Retail associates must use the components of GIST — Greet, Inquire, Suggest, Thank — to help customers make educated decisions. They should greet customers and ask about the mailability of the contents and the desired arrival time of the mailpiece, explain the product requested, offer any special services and additional products, and then thank the customers for their patronage.

10-2 PS Forms 4000-A and 4000-B

10-2.1 **PS Form 4000-A, Retail Lobby Observation**

Retail lobby observations must be performed at least once every month. The purpose of a lobby observation is to review the total retail environment. This includes the following:

- Operational efficiency.
- Courtesy and professionalism.
- Retail products and services.
- Facility condition.
- Sales skills/product knowledge.

Management or a designee completes this form and files it at the unit and retains it for 2 years.

10-2.2 **PS Form 4000-B, Retail Employee Observation**

The purpose of an employee observation is to record the level of the employee's sales skills and product knowledge.

Management or a designee must observe each retail associate at least once each month. The observation must include interaction with five consecutive customers.

Note: Units not meeting targets should provide more frequent observations.

Management should review results of the observation with the associate within 24 hours.

Compare the employee's performance with previous observations.

Congratulate the retail associate for a job well done if he/she achieves 100 percent or meets local sales skills goal. Local recognition programs are encouraged.

If goals are not met, coach the employee on ways to improve knowledge and performance.

Assure that the associates follow the hazardous mail acceptance procedures.

File and retain the observation at unit for 2 years.

10-3 Value-Added Sales

Special services are enhancements that, for a fee in addition to postage, provide greater security and accountability for mail, convenience to the sender, or improved handling. Special services are not available with Periodicals items. Not all special services are available for all classes of mail, and only certain services may be combined for the same mailpiece. Bundle services should be promoted to simplify customer transactions. Examples of value-added sales services are the following:

- Certificate of mailing.
- Certified Mail.
- Collect on delivery (COD).
- Delivery Confirmation.
- Express Mail with additional insurance.
- Global Express Guaranteed insurance.
- Insured Mail.
- Recorded delivery for international mail.
- Registered Mail.
- Restricted delivery.
- Return receipt.
- Return receipt for merchandise.
- Signature Confirmation™.
- Special handling.

11 Financial and Item Accountabilities

11-1 General

Management is responsible for compliance with the procedures defined in Handbook F-1, *Post Office Accounting Procedures*, and the *Shared Service/Accounting Postmaster Field Guide*. Key elements of this responsibility include establishing and controlling segments within the unit, monitoring inventory levels, ensuring proper entry of all financial transactions, remitting all funds in excess of authorized reserves, and monitoring of operations including count procedures.

Management is responsible for providing adequate security for all accountable items. Management is also responsible for ensuring that all required counts are performed, including stamp stock credits, cash credits, unit reserve stock, and retail floor stock. This is to ensure compliance with all existing contractual commitments, required time frames for counts, documentation of results, and prompt reporting and resolution of any discrepancies.

11-2 Bait Money Orders

Three bait money orders must be assigned to each retail associate and Self-Service Postal Center (SSPC) technician.

Retail employees must follow security procedures by storing the three bait money orders in the cash compartment of their cash credits with large bills. Paper clips are not to be used on bait money orders.

In order to track bait money order distribution and retention, a serial number control log must be maintained by management and kept current.

11-3 Segmented Inventory Accountability

Segmented inventory accountability (SIA) is a financial concept used at retail units with POS ONE terminals. Each unit must contain and maintain a unit reserve stock that contains a number of different segments. The user's assigned roles in the POS ONE system determine his or her access and

responsibility for the assigned inventory segment(s). All requirements and procedures are contained in Handbook F-1.

Assignments of all individual accountabilities and unit reserve stock are documented by the completion of PS Form 3369, *Consigned Credit Receipt*.

11-3.1 **Vending Segment (Self-Service Credits)**

This stock is for sale through vending equipment. It is assigned to the SSPC technician, or designated employee, who is directly accountable for that inventory. This credit is replenished directly from the unit reserve to the designated employee to whom the credit is assigned, unless this function is supported by the Stamp Distribution Office (SDO) or Stamp Service Center (SSC) as a separate unit ID. Follow procedures in Handbook PO-102, *Self Service Vending Operational and Marketing Program*, Chapter 5, Financial Control.

11-3.2 **Stamps by Mail Segment**

The Stamps by Mail segment is used where volume prohibits associates from getting stamp requisitions filled frequently. The Stamps by Mail segment is accountable to an individual. Its purpose is to provide an inventory for use in filling stamp orders received from customers by mail.

11-3.3 **Mobile Segment**

A mobile segment is for use by associates assigned to operate mobile units and is issued directly from the unit reserve. This segment is accountable to an individual. Mobile units selling money orders cannot use POS equipment.

11-3.4 **Retail Floor Stock Segment**

Employees working in this segment do not have a stamp stock inventory assigned as individual accountability. Instead, they work from a shared retail floor stock.

Although no individual is accountable for this stock, each associate making sales from this credit is responsible for ensuring adequate protection and security of Postal Service resources.

11-3.5 **Philatelic Segment**

Where a dedicated philatelic credit is used, stock is issued directly from the unit reserve and is accountable to an individual.

Note: On occasion, the Postal Service establishes credits associated with special events. Temporary credits can be assigned to one of the accountable segments with stock issued directly from the unit reserve. At the completion of the event, all sales must be posted. A count is conducted and the balance is either returned to the unit reserve, prepared for destruction, or moved to retail floor stock.

11-3.6 **Unit Reserve Segment**

The individual assigned to the unit reserve is referred to as the unit reserve custodian. The unit reserve custodian is directly accountable for the value of all items in the unit reserve stock.

The unit reserve is assigned to a manager. In a finance station that has no domiciled supervisor and has no more than three full-time retail associates assigned to the unit, a finance clerk or LSSA can be assigned the unit reserve.

A finance clerk (lead SSA) may also be assigned a credit from which direct sales to the public are conducted. The unit reserve and the assigned credit from which sales are made are two separate credits and must never be combined.

At other units where no supervisor is domiciled, the unit reserve stock may be assigned to a window service technician (lead SSA). When the unit reserve stock is assigned to a window service technician, that employee may *not* also have accountability for any credit from which sales are made directly to the public.

11-4 **Allowable Percentage of Stock on Hand**

11-4.1 **Accountability**

A retail associate stamp credit should consist of the supply of each stock item necessary to meet normal customer demand. As customer demand is inconsistent with weekly replenishment, some size latitude should be given to the associate's stamp credit. There is a minimum amount of stock that must be consigned to stamp credit regardless of the sales generated.

As a general rule, managers should hold stamp credits to a reasonable multiple of the weekly sales amount, based on the required analysis made during prescribed credit counts. The value of stamp credits should be adjusted consistent with the protection afforded so as to facilitate requisitions for full units of stock.

Local office standard operating procedures will determine the size of stamp credits during Christmas and other high-volume periods.

11-4.2 **Retail Floor Stock**

Retail floor stock is the sum of display stock plus loose stock. It must be limited to a 2-week level as determined by same period last year (SPLY) stamp sales. (Formula: $SPLY = \text{general ledger account (GLA)}/\text{account identifier code (AIC) 852, Total Sales, minus GLA/AIC 096, Vending, plus GLA/AIC 094, Stamps by Mail.}$) The limitations must be enforced to minimize the risk of losses that might be associated with the concept of common accountabilities.

PS Form 17, *Stamp Requisition*, is retained to document shipments of stock from the unit reserve to retail floor stock and from retail floor stock back to the unit reserve. The unit reserve stock custodian signs the PS Form 17 as “shipped” or “received” as appropriate. An associate must independently count all stock moved into and out of the retail floor stock and sign the appropriate PS Form 17 as “witnessed” or “verified by.”

11-4.3 Unit Reserve

Maintain a 3-month stock level, calculated as of the date of the order of any item if vault or safe space is available. Do not at any time exceed the 3-month sales level for your office.

Note: When calculating the stamp stock limits, each item is calculated separately, and the total value of all item numbers is added together to determine the total accountability of a main stock or unit reserve.

Stamp credits, commemorative stamps, migratory bird hunting and conservation stamps, philatelic products, and Christmas stamps should not be considered when calculating the stamp stock limit.

11-5 Cash Reserve

11-5.1 Unit Cash Reserve

A unit cash reserve may be established to provide associates a resource for exchanging large bills for rolled coins and smaller denomination currency. Policies and procedures must be followed as outlined in the latest Shared Services/Accounting Postmaster’s Field Guide. A cash retained/cash reserve notification letter must be completed and a copy kept on file.

To determine how much the office needs, do the following:

- Calculate the previous quarter’s postage sales.
- Divide by the number of business days to get an average daily sales amount. (If a unit has reduced hours on Saturday, count those days as half days).
- Multiply the average daily sales amount by 5 percent.

For offices with cash retained/cash reserve a notification letter must be completed and a copy kept on file. Policy and procedures must be followed as outlined in the latest *Shared Services/ Accounting/Postmasters Field Guide*.

The unit’s cash reserve is assigned to an individual on PS Form 3369-P, *Consigned Credit Receipt*. This individual is directly accountable. The unit cash reserve has no tolerance. These funds must not be mixed with other accountable credits assigned to the employee.

11-5.2 **Associate's Cash Credit**

Associates working from the retail floor stock segment are authorized a cash retained amount of \$100, for which they are individually accountable. The individual associate cash retained amounts must be equal to GLA/AIC 353/753 as reported on the individual PS Form 1412, and cannot exceed the approved amount.

11-6 **Counts/Examinations**

All differences between the "Clerk Balance List" and the unit's PS Form 1412 must be resolved. All pending financial adjustments

(PS Form 1908, *Financial Adjustment Memorandum*) forwarded by the accounting service center that affect the accountability of the segment or credit being counted must be considered. All pending stock transfers must be completed.

For the count of an employee credit, select a quiet area away from the retail operation.

Do not announce stamp credit examinations. Stagger the dates for examinations so that a pattern will not be evident.

For clerks with multiple credits, count all credits at the same time to the maximum extent possible.

For pool and relief associates, credits not used at least once a month must be canceled.

Note: If a nonbargaining employee is not assigned or domiciled at the retail unit, the LSSA (associate with the unit reserve assigned) may conduct the count with the assigned associate. The postmaster, manager, or supervisor responsible for the unit manages and monitors these counts performed by the LSSA. All out-of-tolerance results must be reported the same day they are discovered.

11-6.1 **Frequency of Counts and Examinations**

11-6.1.1 **Retail Associate's Stamp Credit**

Stamp credits maintained by bargaining unit employees must be examined by supervisory personnel no less frequently than once every 4 months.

11-6.1.2 **Segment Counts of All Other Accountability Segments (Vending, Philatelic, Mobile, and Stamps by Mail)**

Other accountability segments are individually accountable stamp stock and cash credits that are assigned. Counts of accountability segments must be in compliance with Handbook F-1.

Counts for bargaining employees must be no less frequent than once every 4 months.

For information on vending segment examinations see Chapter 6, Examining Self Service Vending Credit, Handbook PO-102, *Self Service Vending Operational and Marketing Program*.

11-6.1.3 **Unit Cash Reserve**

The unit's cash reserve is to be counted at the end of each month. Any portions reassigned to bargaining employees on PS Form 3369-P must be counted at least once every 2 weeks in conjunction with the cash credit count. The count is performed by the assignee and a witness, one of whom must be a nonbargaining employee.

There is no tolerance for unit cash reserve accountabilities or the reassigned portions.

At any time the unit cash retained reserve custodian is reassigned, a count must be performed and a new PS Form 3369-P prepared.

11-6.1.4 **Unit Reserve**

Unit reserve stock is counted at least once every 12 months or no less frequently than once every 4 months if assigned to a bargaining employee.

This count is conducted in conjunction with a count of the retail floor stock at least once every 12 months. The unit reserve *must* be counted any time custody of the unit reserve changes, and a new PS Form 3369-P must be prepared. All credits held by the custodian must also be counted when the unit reserve is counted.

Whenever the results of the retail floor stock count exceed the ½ percent threshold (over or short), the unit reserve stock count is performed concurrently.

11-6.1.5 **Cash Credit**

Each associate's (including pool and relief) cash-retained credit is to be counted randomly at least once every 2 weeks (14-day period), or once every 10 scheduled days in that unit. Each associate's domestic, international, and bait money orders must be counted in conjunction with the cash-retained count. Credits not used at least once a month must be cancelled.

If an associate has an assigned portion of the unit cash-retained reserve, it must be counted in conjunction with the associate's cash retained count. The assigned associate and a nonbargaining employee perform the count(s).

11-6.1.6 **Retail Floor Stock (POS units only)**

The frequency of credit examinations is contingent upon maintaining an inventory variance (over or short) ½ percent or less of total sales since last count. Vending and Stamps by Mail sales should be deducted from total sales before computing the inventory variance.

Retail units are required to count each month until they achieve three consecutive counts within the ½ percent threshold. At that time, counts are

required at least once every 3 months as long as the threshold is maintained within the ½ percent limit.

If the counts from the 3 months result in a variance in excess of the ½ percent threshold, the count frequency reverts to the monthly requirement.

When the ½ percent threshold is achieved on 3 consecutive month counts, the office returns to a count cycle of once every 3 months.

11-6.1.7 **Random Operation Count of Cash Credit**

Random operation counts (ROCs) have been implemented in order to help units gain control over revenues and alleviate shortages and/or discrepancies. These counts must be performed randomly on individual retail associates.

The Random Operations Cash (ROC) Count Form should be completed while the retail associate has been in the process of working the window for at least 1 hour. The random count requires approximately 5 minutes to complete, and each retail associate's cash credit should be counted randomly at least once every 2 weeks (see Handbook F-1). Upon completion, the results must be documented on PS Form 3368-P, *Accountability Examination Record*. The ROC and PS Form 3368-P must be maintained on file. The retail associate may return to working at the window as per the discretion of the manager.

11-6.2 **Documenting Count Results**

The employee and the manager must perform separate counts. Independent count results are entered on a separate PS Form 3294, *Cash and Stamp Stock Count and Summary* (Non-POS offices), or PS Form 3294-P, *Cash and Stamp Stock Count and Summary* (POS ONE offices).

The results are compared and any discrepancies resolved.

Both employees who performed the count must sign and initial the count forms. Forms are retained in the office.

PS Form 3294-C, *Cash Credit Count and Summary*, is used for each count of cash retained, with signatures of employees that performed the count.

For IRT, MOVES, and SPORT offices, results of counts must be posted to PS Form 3368, *Stamp Credit Examination Record*. In POS ONE offices, results must be posted to PS Form 3368-P, *Stamp Credit Examination Record*.

11-6.3 **Processing Stock Discrepancies**

11-6.3.1 **PS Form 571**

PS Form 571, *Discrepancy of \$100 or More in Financial Responsibility*, is to be submitted to the inspector-in-charge to report any differences (overages and shortages) of \$100 or more.

This must be submitted at the time of the examination and must be noted on PS Form 3294/3294-C or 3294-P.

11-6.3.2 **Financial Differences Overage/Shortage Including Cash Reserve and Cash Retained**

All shortages or overages that are out of tolerance must be reported in the appropriate AIC/GLA on the day of the count. Any excess funds must be submitted to the bank.

Unresolved cash retained overages are removed automatically from trust and declared as revenue after 90 days.

The unit manager/supervisor will be responsible for pursuing the collection of any shortage and adhering to the National Agreement and Debt Collection Act.

Discrepancies in the Unit Cash Retained Reserve — Overages

Overages are to be placed into AIC 068, Cash Retained Overage, and submitted to the bank. Unresolved cash retained overages are removed from trust and declared as revenue (AIC 123, Lobby Services Revenue) after 90 days.

Cash Retained Credits — Overages

For overages exceeding the \$5 tolerance, reconcile cash credit and record the full amount of overage in AIC 068, Cash Retained Overage, at the time of the count. Cash in excess of the associate's balance listing is deposited to the bank.

Note: Unresolved cash retained overages are removed from trust and declared as revenue (AIC 123, Lobby Services Revenue) after 90 days.

11-6.3.3 **Tolerance**

Tolerance is applied to the unit reserve in offices not required to maintain PS Form 3295, *Daily Record of Stamps, Stamped Paper and Non Postal Stamps on Hand*, and to individual stamp credits. The tolerance is based on the credit amount entered on the employee's PS Form 3369, *Consigned Credit Receipt*, or the highest balance in AIC 853 from PS Form 1412 since the previous examination, whichever is highest.

Tolerance is not applied to the unit reserve stock when the unit reserve is transferred or to a stamp credit when it is canceled.

11-7 Accountable Paper (Order, Transfer, Ship, and Receive)

All procedures listed below are found in Handbook F-1.

11-7.1 **Ordering**

Each unit has a specific ordering cycle. Stamp/money order requisitions are made to the SDO/SSC (Stamp Distribution Office/Stamp Services Center). PS Form 17 is used to requisition stock from the SDO/SSC.

The SDO/SSC will provide a schedule for ordering. Follow the schedule so that all orders can be processed in an organized and timely manner.

Post Offices may request quantity changes to automatic shipments whenever these quantities are consistently more or less than the needs of the Post Office. Request a change in quantities received through the local SDO/SSC.

Submit emergency orders for stamp stock to the SDO/SSC only when absolutely necessary.

In offices not on segmented inventory accountability, replenish stamp credits once a week according to a schedule provided by the unit manager. Stamp credits not used daily need not be so scheduled.

An associate working from the retail floor stock must order stock on PS Form 17 when additional stock is needed.

Emergency requisitions should be submitted only when absolutely necessary.

The stock custodian must sign and date the Shipped line of the original and copy of PS Form 17. Another employee must verify stock quantities to PS Form 17 and sign the Witness line of the original and copy.

11-7.2 **Transferring**

Employees should not trade or purchase from each other. When it is necessary to trade or purchase stock from another retail associate, a PS Form 17 should be completed in duplicate. Enter trade or purchase stock involved, and the names of both employees on PS Form 17. Each employee must keep a copy until the next stamp credit examination.

11-7.3 **Shipping**

Items that need to be shipped back to the Stamp Distribution Office/ Stamp Services Center (SDO/SSC) are unsold bird stamps, international reply coupons (IRCs), and redeemed stock.

11-7.3.1 **Unsold Bird Stamps**

Management is responsible for submitting unsold bird stamps to the SDO/SSC for destruction according to the instructions and schedule listed in the *Postal Bulletin*. Do not commingle bird stamps returned for destruction with return (saleable) stock.

11-7.3.2 **International Reply Coupons**

Management is responsible for returning redeemed IRCs to the SDO/SSC according to instructions published in the *Postal Bulletin*. The notice will include batching instructions.

11-7.3.3 Redeeming Stock

Stock for destruction must be submitted to the Stamp Distribution Office or the SSC via Registered Mail service.

Entries must be made on the date of dispatch to the appropriate AIC/GLA for Stock Returned on the office PS Form 1412.

Saleable stock cannot be commingled with stock returned for destruction.

A certified copy of the destruction receipt will be kept by the SDO/SSC.

11-7.4 Receiving Stock

The segments requiring the receipt of stock from the SDO/SSC/Unit Reserve are retail associates with fixed credits, retail floor stock, and unit reserve.

11-7.4.1 Retail Associates With Fixed Credits

Stamp credits must be replenished once a week according to a schedule provided by the unit manager.

A sufficient supply of each stock item must be maintained to meet normal customer demand. This is usually a 2-week supply of stock. Requisition full panes, boxes, and packaged lots whenever possible.

Following the requisition schedule, a PS Form 17 must be prepared in duplicate and both copies sent to the unit reserve stock or the main stock that consigned the stamp credit.

When the stamp stock arrives, stock counted must be listed on the reverse of the copy of PS Form 17. The amounts on the front must agree. A signature must be obtained on the Received line of the original. Any changes or corrections must be initialed and verified to ensure they are identical on each form. Copies of PS Form 17 must be kept on file until the next stamp credit count.

11-7.4.2 Retail Floor Stock

When additional stock is needed in the retail floor stock, one of the associates working from this segment must prepare a PS Form 17 and submit it to the stock custodian.

PS Form 17 is retained to document shipments of stock from the unit reserve to the retail floor stock and from the retail floor stock to the unit reserve. The unit reserve stock custodian must sign the PS Form 17 as "shipped" or "received" as appropriate. An associate must independently count all stock moved into and out of the retail floor stock and sign the appropriate PS Form 17 as "witnessed" or "verified by."

11-7.4.3 Unit Reserve

Upon receipt, all stock must be opened and verified against the advice of shipment or computer-generated PS Form 17, with a witness. The recipient and the witness must sign the PS Form 17.

For stamps in panes, verify that each unit contains 100 panes of the denomination and type of stock ordered. Follow instructions on the package for making the verification before removing the sealed film wrapper on the individual packages.

For booklets and coils, verify that each package contains the quantity of booklets or coils in the denomination and type described on the unit package. Do this before breaking the package seal.

Report any discrepancies immediately to the SDO/SSC. If a discrepancy is found in sealed packages, submit PS Form 8144, *Stamp Discrepancy Report*, to the Headquarters, Manager, Stamp Acquisitions.

The full Advice of Shipment value of the stock received must be entered to stock records. At the end of each month, original PS Forms 8144 must be consolidated and used as documentation for filing PS Form 2130, *Claim for Loss*.

All instructions for handling shortages and/or discrepancies can be found in Handbook F-1 and the *Shared Service/Accounting Postmaster Field Guide*.

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12 Postal Stores

12-1 Introduction

Postal Stores are designed to serve customers with quick transactions, such as purchasing stamps and retail products with little assistance from the retail associate. They have both traditional retail window operations and open merchandise.

12-2 Components

12-2.1 Open Merchandise

The Open Merchandise area has Postal Service products, including shrinkwrapped stamps, on display for the customer to select. The customer selects the stamps from those on display and takes the purchase to the cash wrap counter or to the full-service window.

12-2.2 Limited Merchandise

This area, because of limited space and other considerations, displays no shrinkwrapped stamps and only a select variety of products for customer self-selection.

12-3 Merchandising

Merchandising attracts the customer's eye to what the Postal Service has to offer. It means presenting the right quantity of the right product in the right place at the right time. When possible, correct location for the open or limited merchandise section is on the right side of the service lobby.

This location serves many purposes such as the following:

- Places the customer in the closest possible proximity to the merchandise and the cash wrap.
- Reinforces the natural tendency of people to go to their right and shop the merchandise area with their eyes.

- Allows the cash wrap clerk easy access to the customer to provide assistance.

12-4 Placement of High Value Items

Loss prevention awareness should dictate higher ticket item placement; for example, coils and books are always housed behind the cash wrap in their own slatwall dispenser or in one of the locked drawers.

12-5 Storage of Retail Floor Stock (shrinkwrap)

It is the responsibility of all employees to ensure the security of all postage stock, funds, equipment, and facilities. Shrinkwrapped stamps should not be stored in the drawers located at the bottom of the slatwall units. These products should be kept in the walk-in vault or safe.

12-6 Cash Wrap Counter

The cash wrap counter is a sales counter in the open merchandise area. The area is designed to serve customers with quick transactions, such as purchasing stamps and retail products. Customers enjoy the expanded opportunities to select merchandise with little assistance and have separate cashiers to speed their simple transactions. This counter is not designed to provide full-service transactions that are time consuming nor to accept and secure mail or packages.

12-6.1 Staffing

When staffing a Post Office with a Postal Store format, the first position should be at the full-service counters, the second at the cash wrap. Additional staffing would go to the traditional window unit or performing lobby director duties.

Staffing the cash wrap counter not only serves customers more quickly, but also discourages theft. The policy for staffing the cash wrap is to ensure the cash wrap is staffed during the peak hours of customer traffic. For some locations, it may be a matter of 4 or 5 hours a day. For others it may be the entire time the retail unit is open.

12-6.2 Lobby Director

When not waiting on customers, the retail associate located at the cash wrap counter should also act as a lobby director and assist customers in the full-service line to complete forms and stock and organize the Postal Store area.

When time permits, the associate will also help customers with stamp vending and weighing equipment, thus reducing service time for customers at the full-service counter and saving hours at the window.

12-6.3 **Unauthorized Equipment**

The cash wrap counter area should only have a POS ONE system. The use of scales and PVIs is prohibited at this counter. The cash wrap counter is for quick, easy-to-handle transactions. All other transactions should be handled at the full-service counter.

12-6.4 **Folding Grille Gates**

Postal Stores must be able to be fully closed off with a folding grille to accommodate daytime versus nighttime operational needs. The layout of the Postal Store's cases and display units must provide retail associates at both the cash wrap and POS ONE counters with clear visibility of the products on display. The gate must remain open and operational during retail business hours. Refer to Handbook AS-503, *Standard Design Criteria*, for further information.

12-7 **Slatwalls**

12-7.1 **Displaying Merchandise on Slatwalls**

Keeping retail merchandise adequately stocked and removing bent or damaged items can make a big difference in the revenue generated in Postal Stores.

These guidelines should be followed when setting up a slatwall.

- Keep slatwalls fully stocked with products.
- Reorder retail merchandise in a timely manner to avoid out-of-stock merchandise.
- Keep slatwalls and floor fixtures neatly stocked.
- Don't stack retail merchandise on the platform under the slatwalls or on top of any floor fixtures.

12-7.2 **Quantity of Stock Allowed**

Keep only a day's worth of sales for each product on the slatwall. We must do everything we can to prevent theft of these products.

12-8 **Electronic Article Surveillance Equipment**

Postal Stores use a checkpoint security system to control losses from shoplifting. The system works to deter shoplifters who see it and recognize it. It also helps detect shoplifters who are trying to remove products.

Merchandise is tagged with a plain white sticker about 1-1/2 inches square. The back of the tag has a coil that the Electronic Article Surveillance (EAS) antennas can detect. When the merchandise is purchased, the retail associate deactivates the tag. If the merchandise is removed from the store before the retail associate properly deactivates the tag, an alarm sounds.

Most shrinkwrapped products are “source-tagged,” which means they are tagged by the manufacturer.

Some products, such as special promotions, are not tagged. In order to reduce tagging costs, the Postal Service has moved to “fractional tagging,” which means that a percentage of lower-cost items will be randomly tagged, based on the dollar value. You should treat all products as if they were source tagged; do not apply local tags.

12-9 Electronic Article Surveillance Log

When EAS equipment is installed, an alarm log is provided to record each time the alarm has been activated and what caused the activation. When used properly, the log will provide the date and time of the alarm, allowing inspectors to locate the section on the video when the alarm was activated. It can help you identify problems and their frequency.

Record each alarm on the log so that you have an accurate record of system activity.

Submit copies of the alarm log with your claim for loss whenever you have an inventory that results in a loss of any amount.

12-10 Point of Purchase Displays

Point of purchase (POP) displays are visual promotional materials received approximately every 10 weeks from the Postal Service Retail Merchandising Center. They include promotional materials and signage that communicate product and service information and promotional messages to the customer. Using visual merchandising effectively can raise revenue and increase customer satisfaction.

When used properly, visual merchandising is our single most effective way to raise revenue in our Postal Store.

The three primary purposes of POP displays are to do the following:

- Influence customer purchasing decisions.
- Increase comprehension of Postal Service products and services.
- Make the Post Office easier for customers to use.

There are two primary types of message content that are supported by POP displays: continuity messages and promotional messages. Each type has its own specific communication goals and placement requirements.

12-10.1 **Promotional Messages**

Promotional messages, which are short-term, stay up usually for only a single promotional period, or “Drive Period.” They create awareness and excitement by communicating themed promotional offers relevant to the particular drive period. Because promotional messages are time related, you must adhere to the put-up and take-down dates. Putting them up too late means missing potential sales opportunities and leaving them up after the conclusion of a promotion can create confusion.

The primary retail drive periods that the Postal Service creates promotions for are the following:

- Holiday (October to end of December/Residential focus).
- New Years (end of December to March/Small Business focus).
- Spring (April to the end of June/Residential focus).
- Summer/Fall (July to September/Small Business focus).

12-10.2 **Continuity Messages**

Continuity messages identify core products and services (e.g., Express Mail, Global Priority Mail, Priority Mail, and Delivery Confirmation services). The information they contain is long term in nature (1–2 years). Research indicates we have only seconds to communicate with our customers as they move through our locations. Continuity signage provides functional, necessary information in familiar places to increase customers’ comfort levels.

Continuity messages stay up year round, providing consistent communication that customers can rely on to help them complete their transactions more easily. Visually, these elements tend to have a dominant blue/white color scheme.

Placing the POP materials in the locations given on the Planogram included in each POP kit places the right message in the right place at the right time. Research tells us that customers can only take in four to five messages per visit to the Post Office. As customers move through the store, they are getting information in a timely and relevant way to help them make their purchasing decisions.

Additional or replacement POP materials can be ordered from the Postal Service Retail Merchandise and POP Center in three ways:

- By phone: 1-800-711-0428, press 4 and follow the prompts.
- By fax: 1-888-558-4329.
- By e-mail: *RMC@available.com*.

Additional information on POP materials is located on the Postal Service Web site at <http://blue/usps.gov/headquarters/retail/visual>.

12-10.3 **Retail Marketing Intranet Web Site**

Visit the Retail Marketing Web site at <http://retail.usps.gov>.

The Retail Marketing Web site supports field retail managers and retail associates with comprehensive information on the basics of marketing, merchandising, products, services, and alternate access.

The Web site provides tools to learn how to set up instore signage, display mailing supplies, and get started offering new services such as the following:

- Passport application acceptance.
- Expanded access through contract postal units.

Support for the following is also included:

- Visual merchandising.
- ReadyPost.
- Official licensed retail products (OLRP).
- Passport application acceptance.
- Contracted Postal Service access channel.

13 Lobby/Retail Counter

13-1 Image

Retail lobby standards are as important as retail maintenance standards. For the Postal Service to project a professional business image to Postal Service customers and employees, we must focus on our retail lobbies and other customer service areas. Every lobby must be safe, well organized, well maintained, neat, and clean. The Post Office lobby is one of the most visible images customers have of the Postal Service.

The Post Office lobby is the principal business office of the Postal Service. For many customers, the lobby is their only close-up view of Postal Service operations; therefore, its appearance, convenience, and efficiency directly affect the Postal Service's public image. Consequently, to enhance corporate identity and continue the standardization process, lobbies must be maintained according to established Postal Service guidelines (e.g., painting, redecorating, etc.).

13-2 Safety/Cleanliness

13-2.1 Personal and Environment

It is everyone's responsibility to ensure that we provide a clean and safe environment for our customers and employees.

Business and/or personal flyers are not permitted in the lobby or at the retail counter.

All lobby furniture and equipment must be properly secured to the floor to prevent them from tipping over. Children must not climb onto or be placed on tables or the counterline at any time.

Maintain a professional work environment at each workstation. Personal belongings including purses, backpacks, and top coats do not belong at the retail counter.

Retail units that play music in the lobby must ensure the music is at a minimum volume and it is tasteful and not offensive to customers.

13-2.2 **Food**

Food and drinks do not belong at, below, or behind the retail counter.

13-2.3 **Professional Appearance/Hygiene**

Postal Service employees are responsible for being properly dressed for their duty. They are expected to maintain high standards of professional appearance, representing to the public the best tradition of service and efficiency while performing their official duties.

13-3 **Service in 5 Minutes or Less**

It is not economical to provide instantaneous service to each customer entering the lobby. Instead, our goal is to provide a level of service that produces a waiting time of less than 5 minutes.

This goal is achieved by the following:

- Providing proper training and staff scheduling.
- Using the Lobby Director Program.
- Encouraging proper placement and maintenance of self-service vending equipment.
- Utilizing equipment to expedite transactions (IRT, POS ONE).
- Using the Window Operation Survey (WOS) and Retail Analysis Profile (RAP) to identify proper staffing.

13-4 **Lobby Sweeps**

Lobby sweeps should be conducted when lines are long due to retail associates conducting lengthy transactions. A supervisor, postmaster, or retail associate can conduct a lobby sweep for customers who are conducting nonrevenue transactions such as picking up mail.

13-5 **Lobby Director**

The objective of the Lobby Director Program is to reduce the average waiting time by helping customers before they reach the retail service counter. It also aims to reduce the customer's perceived waiting time by demonstrating that we provide prompt, efficient, and courteous service.

13-6 Signage

13-6.1 Mandatory Postings

Poster 7	Rules and Regulations Governing Conduct on Postal Property
Poster 76	Some Things Were Never Meant To Be Mailed
Notice 107	Let's Keep the Mail Safe
Poster 158	Possession of Firearms and Other Dangerous Weapons on Postal Property Is Prohibited by Law
Poster 296	Notice of Reward

Mandatory posters, notices, and signs must be available in Post Offices for customer access.

FBI Most Wanted Poster	Kept in binder behind counter
Notice 123	Ratefold
Notice 4314-C	We Want to Know
Poster SSS46	Selective Service Poster
Pub 65	National Five-Digit ZIP Code and Post Office Directory
Pub 66	ZIP+4 State Directory
Pub 201	Consumer's Guide to Postal Services and Products
Sign 145	Payment Policies
Signs	Manager's phone number Hours of operation Time when all First-Class Post Office box mail is normally distributed Letter drops and dispatch times

13-6.2 POP Signage

Point of purchase (POP) signage is visual promotional material received approximately every 12 weeks from the Postal Service Retail Merchandising Center. It contains promotional materials and signage that communicate product and service information and promotional messages to the customer.

Hang POP signage according to the most current drive period retail planogram using the materials provided in the POP kit. The primary retail drive periods the Postal Service creates promotions for are the following:

- Holiday (October to end of December/Residential focus).
- New Years (December to March/Small Business focus).
- Spring (April to end of June/Residential focus).
- Summer/Fall (July to September/Small Business focus).

Some do's and don'ts are the following:

- Don't use tape to hang signage.
- Don't use handwritten or computer-generated signage.
- Do use approved POP hardware to display menu boards and posters.
- Do adhere to put-up and take-down dates printed on POP elements and listed in POP planograms.
- Do remove outdated/seasonal POP displays.
- Do order additional signage and hardware by calling the Retail Merchandise and Point of Purchase Center (RMPC) at 800-71-0428.

13-6.3 **Planograms**

A planogram is a schematic drawing that shows the proper placement of POP elements and retail merchandise in Postal Service retail lobbies. Planograms are included in POP kits and accompany retail product shipments. They should be used as guides when changing retail drive period signage and organizing merchandise on slatwalls or similar merchandisers.

13-6.4 **Interior/Exterior**

When signage is properly placed to deliver the right message in the right place at the right time, it has the most impact. To ensure we are communicating information in the most effective way, we have identified a system of zones within the Postal Service location.

Each zone has a specific communication goal. The time spent in each area, as well as the amount of customer traffic, helps determine what communication goes where to have the most impact.

Listed below are the different zones. The focus may change depending on the drive period.

Exterior Zone

Promotional offers, general information, welcome customers.

Entrance Lobby Zone

Support promotional messages.

Queue Line (in Full Service Lobby)

Promotional messages, Priority Mail, Express Mail.

Clerk Counter Zone

Price point information, product and service information.

Open Merchandise Zone

Merchandise.

Writing Table Zone

Priority Mail, Express Mail, extra services.

Self Service Zone

Price point information, product and service information.

Box Lobby Zone

Directional signage to vending machines, public awareness signage.

13-6.5 Handwritten and Homemade Signs

Except for official Postal Service and other approved governmental notices and announcements, no handbills, flyers, pamphlets, signs, posters, placards, or other literature may be deposited on the grounds, walks, driveways, parking and maneuvering areas; exteriors of buildings and other structures; or on the floors, walks, stairs, racks, counters, desks, writing tables, window ledges, or furnishings in interior public areas on Postal Service premises.

To implement an effective communication system of signs and displays, handwritten or homemade signs cannot be posted in the lobby.

Avoid the following:

- Too many displays.
- Clutter on bulletin boards in lobby.
- Solicitation brochures.
- Outdated displays.
- Taped signs.

13-7 Animals

Dogs and other animals, except those used to assist persons with disabilities (service animals), may not be brought on Postal Service property for other than official reasons. A service animal may be any species, breed, or size and may or may not be licensed, certified, or marked as a service animal. Service animals can assist persons with a wide range of disabilities, whether a disability is visible or not, including physical and mental disorders.

13-8 Retail Products and Services

In an effort to increase revenue, Post Offices are now selling a variety of mailing products and stamp-related retail merchandise. Products are shipped from a central fulfillment center, and charged to each office's FED Strip number. Offices must follow the proper approval process prior to placing orders for merchandise.

13-8.1 Forms/Labels

Customers can fill out forms and address labels while they are waiting to be served. To facilitate this, ensure that the following forms and labels are always available for customers:

- Express Mail envelopes.
- Priority Mail envelopes.

- International Express Mail envelopes.
- Global Priority Mail envelopes.
- Notice 4314-C, *We Want To Know*.
- Notice 107, *Let's Keep the Mail Safe*.
- PS 5445, *Stamp Vending Machine Refund Request*.
- PS 2865, *Return Receipt for International Mail*.
- PS 3813, *Receipt for Domestic Insured Parcel*.
- PS 3813-P *Insured Mail Receipt*.
- PS 3804, *Return Receipt for Merchandise*.
- LAB 11-B, *Express Mail Mailing Label — Post Office to Addressee*.
- PS 3800, *Certified Mail Receipt*.
- PS 3811, *Domestic Return Receipt*.
- PS 3806, *Receipt for Registered Mail*.
- PS 3227, 3227S, 3227G, 3227O, *Stamps by Mail*.
- PUB 75, *Mover's Guide Booklet*.
- SSS Form 1M (UPO), *Selective Service Form*.
- PS 2976, 2976-A, and 2976-E, Customs Declarations and Dispatch forms and envelopes.
- PS 152, *Delivery Confirmation Label*.
- PS 153, *Signature Confirmation*.

13-8.2 **Stock/Professionally Displayed**

Provide attractive, adjustable form holders that clearly display the forms to customers. Forms holders are designed to accommodate a variety of form sizes. Keep them well stocked, neatly maintained, clearly labeled, and in a good location for employees and customers.

Use any POP materials provided — their purpose is to call attention to the product and the merchandiser.

Stock the display according to the planogram.

Stock the display before opening or after closing hours. If items become empty during hours of operation, restock accordingly.

Keep the display neat and clean.

Fill “holes” by spreading product out until additional stock arrives.

Prevent product overlap.

Avoid overstocking a peg. Pegs should have 1 inch of open space at the end. Add an additional facing, or keep additional stock in a secure area instead.

Replace damaged or dog-eared items.

Use a “small-to-large progression.” Smaller/lighter items should be placed higher on the merchandiser. Heavier and larger should be placed lower on the merchandiser. This is not only safer, it is more visually appealing.

Arrange like items, such as stamps, on a fixture with the lightest colors at the top and the darkest at the bottom.

Keep the display physically balanced. If you have both small and large items sharing the same peg slot, consider spreading the large/heavier items to the outside of the merchandiser and placing the small/lighter items between. This will help avoid a lopsided appearance.

13-8.3 **Limited Open Merchandising/Open Merchandising**

13-8.3.1 **Limited**

Limited merchandising displays a limited amount of self-select items. It is generally used in traditional Post Offices or in an office that has space and staffing restrictions or is located in a high crime area. Select those products that will increase revenue. Impulse items should be displayed at the counter if a counter display is provided.

13-8.3.2 **Open**

Open merchandising displays Postal Service products, including shrinkwrapped stamps, for customers to self-select and take to a cash wrap, where a clerk completes the sale. It is used in Postal Stores.

13-9 **Retail Merchandise**

13-9.1 **Acrylic Displays (Phone Cards)**

A FIRSTCLASS PHONECARD[®] merchandiser is to be used to display phone cards. Display one merchandiser for every two windows. In addition to counter displays, each available type of phonecard should be prominently displayed on the slatwall to promote customer awareness of various minutes and price increments.

13-9.2 **Officially Licensed Retail Products**

Officially-licensed retail products (OLRP) is merchandise that displays Postal Service trademarks, stamps, and/or images with the Postal Service's granted permission for reproduction. Such merchandise or its packaging carries a hang-tag or label or otherwise states that the item is under license from the Postal Service.

When purchasing merchandise displaying a trademark, stamp design, or other pictorial or graphic image owned or used by the Postal Service, employees must ensure the merchandise is officially licensed by the Postal Service.

13-9.3 Shipping Supplies

All shipping supplies are ordered from a single vendor, Hallmark Cards, Inc. The result is a standardized selection of packaging and mailing supplies, all imprinted with the Postal Service and ReadyPost logos. These shipping supplies are available to view online at <http://retail.usps.gov/readypost/readypost.html>.

13-9.4 Packaging

Priority Mail and Express Mail packaging supplies — boxes, envelopes, forms, and more — are all available at no cost for customers to order online at www.usps.com, or by calling the toll-free number 800-222-1811.

13-10 Vending

Vending equipment may be installed in Postal Service facilities or at nonpostal locations. The configurations range from a single small stamp vending machine to large self-service postal centers.

See Handbook PO-102, *Self Service Vending Operational and Marketing Program*, for specific details regarding self service vending, or visit the self service vending Web site at http://blue.usps.gov/delivery/self_service/html/programs/selfservice.html.

Self service vending equipment, when installed in Postal Service facilities, must be kept operable and available to customers during all business and box lobby hours. Each manager in whose Postal Service facility a self service unit is located is responsible for ensuring the operability of the equipment.

13-11 Public Services

13-11.1 Passport Application Acceptance

The Postal Service, in agreement with the Department of State, Passport Services, assists field passport agency offices by accepting passport applications, where operationally feasible, given overall customer service and revenue generation considerations.

The Postal Service retains a fee for executing the application. Execution fees are recorded in AIC 264. Fees collected for the Department of State are accepted in the form of personal checks or money orders made out to the Department of State and attached to the passport application.

Training for employees offering passport application acceptance service is through a computer-based training (CBT) web-based tool. The training may be taken on any computer connected to the Postal Service network in 3 hours or less. Additional training and ongoing support is provided by customer service representatives located in regional offices of the Department of State.

Passport photo services may be offered. Passport cameras and related equipment can be purchased through the Material Distribution Center (MDC) in Topeka, Kansas. Fees collected for passport photos are recorded in AIC 241.

13-11.2 **Selective Service**

In the interagency agreement with the Selective Service System (SSS), the Postal Service agrees to stock, provide, and display selective service registration forms and materials in lobbies of classified Post Offices, stations, and branches. Contract postal units are not involved.

The following is a list of the required registration materials that can be obtained through the MDC and should always be available in the lobby.

- SSS 1M, *Registration Form*.
- SSS Form 2, *Change Of Information*.
- SSS Lobby Poster 46, *Read It. Fill It. Mail It*.
- SSS Display Box 45, Plastic Display Box.

Check stock several times a week to make sure adequate supplies of the SSS 1M are on display at the service table areas or behind the counter.

Guidelines are found in section 172 of the *Postal Operations Manual*.

13-11.3 **Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps**

Federal law requires persons ages 16 and older who hunt migratory birds (ducks and geese, for example) to obtain Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation stamps, commonly known as “bird stamps.” These stamps may not be used for postage.

Post Offices act as agents of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) by selling these stamps. Migratory Bird stamps are non redeemable and all sales are final.

More information on Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation stamps can be found in the *Administrative Support Manual* and Handbook F-1, *Post Office Accounting Procedures*.

13-11.4 **Burial Flags**

Postmasters at CAG A-J offices and at CAG K offices at county seats must cooperate with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) when requested to act as depositories for burial flags. On the death of a veteran and in compliance with rules and regulations issued by the VA, a depository must issue a flag to drape the casket.

VA supplies burial flags, application forms, and the rules and regulations governing flag issue. Postmasters must address all correspondence about the supply and issuance of the flags to the VA regional offices that use their office as a depository.

Regulations governing burial flags can be found in the *Administrative Support Manual*.

13-12 Flags

13-12.1 American Flag

The flag of the United States must be displayed on stationary flagstuffs at all Post Offices, branches, stations, terminals, garages, and Postal Service facilities, including leased and rented premises. If the Post Office unit is located in a facility operated by the General Services Administration, that agency's regulations on the display of the flag govern. If the Post Office unit is located on a military base, the display of the flag is governed by the military installation.

When employees are on duty in a Postal Service facility, the flag must be displayed except in severe weather. It is raised as soon after sunrise as practical and lowered at the time of closing or no later than sunset.

Other flags are flown below the U.S. flag if displayed on the same flagstaff and at the same level or lower if displayed on a separate flagstaff. When the U.S. flag is flown at half-staff, all other flags are to be at half-staff also.

When the flag is being displayed, it must be flown at half-staff on the following dates.

May 15	Peace Officers Memorial Day
Last Monday in May	Memorial Day Observed (see note below)
July 27	National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day
December 7	National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day

Lighting

Though it is customary to fly the flag from sunrise to sunset, the U.S. Code says that "when a patriotic effect is desired," you can display the flag around the clock, however, it should be illuminated.

Requisitions for new flags must be submitted by field officials to the General Services Administration (GSA).

13-12.2 Prisoners of War/Missing in Action (POW-MIA) Flag

The Defense Authorization Act, Public Law 105-85, section 1082, requires that Postal Service facilities display the POW-MIA flag on 6 specified days each year.

Armed Forces Day	Third Saturday in May
Memorial Day	Last Monday in May
Flag Day	June 14
Independence Day	July 4
National POW-MIA Recognition Day	Third Friday in September
Veterans Day	November 11

If any of these days fall on a nonbusiness day, Postal Service facilities are required to display the POW-MIA flag on the last business day before the designated day.

13-13 Collection

Label 55

Label 55-B, *Deposit Next Day Express Mail Only*, should be used in the lobby collection slots. Label 55-A, *U.S. Mail Emblem*, should be used for outside collection boxes.

Customer Notification Labels

Label DDD-1, *Aviation Security Label*, should be posted on all outside and inside collection boxes as well as on all inside lobby drops.

Label DDD-3 may be used at lobby drops until on-hand stock of this label has been depleted.

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14 End of Day Requirements

14-1 Remit Funds

All funds must be removed from the cash drawer and remitted daily.

Cash must be counted in a secure area away from the counterline.

A checklist must be maintained in each office. Verify each check against the list. Associates will verify checks against the list printed from the retail equipment (i.e., POS ONE, IRT, and calculator).

Remittances must be submitted to the designated closeout person.

The receipt of the funds must be verified and acknowledged by the designated closeout employee.

If the designated closeout employee leaves prior to the unit closeout, any funds accepted earlier from remittances must be transferred to the final closeout employee. The closeout employee will verify and acknowledge receipt of funds by signing the transfer acknowledgement receipt. This becomes documentation for the final unit PS Form 1412, *Daily Financial Report*.

Units should have one deposit per day unless banking requirements require a separation of cash and checks. In some cases, offices making advance deposits and separating cash and checks may have a maximum of four daily deposits per day.

For offices with cash retained/cash reserve a notification letter must be completed and a copy kept on file. Policy and procedures must be followed as outlined in the latest *Shared Services/Accounting Postmasters Field Guide*.

14-2 Retail Associate Closeout

14-2.1 **MOVES and SPORT Offices**

Adding machine tapes must be prepared for all supporting documentation.

Manual AIC entries on PS Form 1412-A/B must be based on supporting documentation.

Retail associates must not exceed their maximum authorized cash portion, which includes both cash and coins and is listed on their PS Form 3369, *Consigned Credit Receipt*.

14-2.2 **Offices with Retail Equipment**

Necessary reports must be printed.

All entries on the printed preliminary PS Form 1412 must be verified for accuracy. Ensure that all AIC/GLA entries have supporting documentation if required. (AICs/GLAs associated with stamp and retail sales will not have supporting documentation).

Corrections must be made if necessary.

All funds must be remitted as specified by the retail equipment.

A final unit PS Form 1412 is required with documentation to support all entries.

14-3 **Unit Closeout**

All retail associates who have worked the window must complete a POS/IRT system-generated final PS Form 1412. MOVES and SPORT sites must complete a manual PS Form 1412.

Deposits must be verified in the presence of each individual.

Funds counted must match deposit total on associate's individual final PS Form 1412.

Remitted funds must be consolidated with a witness, for deposit to the bank. If no witness is available, the deposit slip must be endorsed with "No witness available (NWA)".

All funds remitted must be dispatched daily via Registered Mail service. Total remittance must match the deposit slip.

A unit preliminary/trial PS Form 1412 and any required reports must be printed.

IRT offices must consolidate each clerk disk onto the supervisor disk before printing any final reports.

Amounts on unit lists and adding machine tapes must agree with the corresponding AICs on the Unit PS Form 1412.

Supporting documentation must be verified to the preliminary PS Form 1412.

Adjustments must be made, if necessary. Any overages/shortages must be entered into appropriate AICs/GLAs.

The final PS Form 1412 must be printed and filed with supporting documentation.

14-4 Transmission

All offices are required to check daily for successful transmission. If not successful, you will be contacted by the accounting service center.

14-4.1 **MOVES and SPORT Offices**

All MOVES offices are required to complete a PS Form 1412-A and all SPORT offices are required to complete PS Form 1412-B to support daily transmission activity.

14-4.2 **IRT Offices**

IRT offices must ensure that data has been transferred to the retail consolidation unit (RCU) disk and system left powered on for transmission.

14-4.3 **POS ONE Offices**

POS ONE offices must ensure that the unit is closed and that the terminals are left powered on for transmission.

14-5 Deposit

Make deposits when Postal Service funds in excess of the authorized cash reserve reach the following amounts:

CAG A-J offices — Daily, regardless of amount.

CAG K offices — \$100.00.

CAG L offices — \$100.00.

14-6 Securing Cash Drawer, Stock, and ReadyPost Products

14-6.1 **Cash Drawers**

Cash drawers must be locked for security during temporary retail associate absences from the retail service counter and must be removed from their cabinets for overnight storage in a vault or security container. Retail employees must *never* have access to one another's cash drawers.

14-6.2 **Stamp Stock/Money Orders**

Stamps, postal stationery, blank money orders, and other accountable items must be protected at all times. They may be stored in a locked drawer or cabinet for short periods during the duty day. At other times they must be stored in the main vault or security container that affords the best available

protection. Detailed instructions for safeguarding accountable items are contained in Handbook F-1, *Post Office Accounting Procedures*.

14-6.3 **Unit Reserve Stamp Stock/Money Orders**

The unit reserve must never be accessible to more than one person at a time. The stock custodian is solely responsible for ensuring proper security of the unit reserve at all times.

14-6.4 **ReadyPost Products**

ReadyPost products must be provided security according to their value (cost). The security level must be no less than that for controlling office supplies.

14-7 **Securing Round Date Stamp**

This stamp must be safeguarded at all times. Do not leave it out on the counter where unauthorized individuals can handle it. Make sure it is locked up at night with your other accountable items. If this stamp becomes lost or missing, notify the Postal Inspection Service immediately.

14-8 **Collection/Dispatch of Mail**

Retail associates are responsible for ensuring that all mail collected over the retail counter and all other areas is properly culled and separated to the correct collection receptacles and ready from dispatch. If instructed or assigned, retail associates will collect all lobby drops and outside collection boxes according to the collection times posted. The mail must be collected as close as possible to, but no sooner than, the times posted.

All labels and tags must be removed from incoming mail trays and other equipment. Correct tags, placards, and identifiers must be inserted or attached before any outgoing mail is dispatched.

There must *never* be commingling of different classes of mail.

14-9 **Flag**

No later than sunset the flag must be lowered ceremoniously and not allowed to touch the ground. It must be folded or rolled carefully and stored where it will not be soiled or otherwise damaged. If the flag is wet when taken down, it must be carefully spread out and allowed to dry thoroughly before being stored.

Lighting

Though it is customary to fly the flag from sunrise to sunset, the U.S. Code says that "when a patriotic effect is desired," you can display the flag around the clock; however, it should be illuminated.

14-10 Dispatch of Mail

Prepare mail according to the local dispatch standard operating procedure (SOP). Conduct a final walk-through of the building to ensure that all mail has been collected and culled prior to final dispatch. Complete dispatch log if required.

Retail associates are responsible for ensuring that all mail collected over the retail counter and all other areas is properly culled and separated to the correct collection receptacles and ready from dispatch.

14-11 Scanner

All signed PS Forms 3849 must be dispatched according to current policy. Ensure that mobile data collection device scanners (MDCDs) are properly placed in the cradle for download transmission.

14-12 Secure Building/Alarm/Lights

- Assure that the office has been swept for all outgoing mail and all mail has been dispatched.
- Verify that all counterline drawers containing postal stationery are locked and bait money orders are in place.
- Verify that all cash drawers have been properly stored in the safe or vault.
- Secure money order imprinter.
- Ensure that all safes and vaults are locked.
- Verify that all doors and windows are closed and locked.
- Ensure that all appliances have been turned off in the break rooms.
- Turn off required lights.
- Set alarm.
- Exit building.
- Secure parking lot if necessary.

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15 Alternative Access Channels

15-1 Vending

The self service vending program provides alternative service to existing facilities and extends most postal services for the convenience of the public. Major benefits to our customers include the availability of postal services outside of regular window hours, reduction of congestion at Post Office windows, and the capability of completing postal transactions without assistance.

Major ways to support the use of vending equipment include the following:

- Educate customers and employees.
- Locally advertise the use of self service equipment. Be sure to place equipment in non-Postal Service locations.
- Redeploy equipment that is nonproductive.

15-2 Automated Postal Centers

Automated Postal Centers (APCs) are self service mailing kiosks which are designed to process 80 percent of the transactions normally handled by a retail employee at the window. APCs handle noncash transactions, accepting major credit and debit cards. The APC will perform the following services:

- Dispense First-Class Mail, Priority Mail, Parcel Post[®], Express Mail, and IBI postage in any denomination.
- Dispense First-Class Mail stamp sheetlets.
- Provide Postal Service and mailing information, including ZIP Code lookup.
- Weigh and rate envelopes, flats, and parcels up to 70 pounds.
- Prepare Express Mail forms and Certified Mail return receipts.
- Offer Delivery Confirmation service.
- Provide a system-generated receipt for payment.

APCs are located in Postal Service lobbies, the majority in areas open 24 hours a day/7 days a week. Future plans include locating these kiosks in non-postal locations such as airports, grocery stores, malls, etc.

APCs move simple transactions away from the retail operation. They allow retail professionals to use their skills to assist customers with more complicated mailing needs. APCs are expected to do the following:

- Increase revenue at deployment sites.
- Reduce the cost of selling products and services.
- Improve operational performance.
- Reduce wait time in line.
- Improve employee and customer satisfaction.

15-3 Automated Teller Machines

Customers may use bank automated teller machines (ATMs) to purchase stamps. The bank may receive stamps through a Stamps on Consignment contract or purchase them outright from a Post Office. Stamps are sold at face value but the banks are allowed to charge a transaction fee. The district retail office is responsible for this program.

15-4 Stamps by Mail

Stamps by Mail service allows Postal Service customers in city delivery areas to purchase postal products by ordering them through the mail. The Postal Service order forms are incorporated in self-addressed, postage-paid envelopes. Customers obtain order envelopes (PS Form 3227, *Stamps by Mail*) from letter carriers, in Post Office lobbies, or by telephoning the local delivery unit to request their delivery.

After completing an order form and enclosing a check or money order, the customer drops the sealed envelope in a collection box or his or her mailbox. Mail orders are returned to the customer within 3 to 5 business days.

Postmasters must requisition PS Forms 3227 and maintain a supply for use in filling customers' telephone requests for the form, for customer use in the Post Office lobby, and for city delivery carriers to use as required. Forms must be overprinted with the local address and barcode before distributing. Hand stamping on this form is not acceptable.

15-5 Stamps by Rural/HCR Carrier

Stamp purchase orders allow Postal Service customers in rural delivery areas to purchase all Postal Service products directly from the rural carrier or by using PS Form 3227-R, *Stamp Purchase Order*. Customers obtain PS Form 3227-R from the rural carrier or by telephoning the local delivery unit to request its delivery.

After completing an order form and enclosing cash, check, or money order, the customer places the sealed envelope in his or her mailbox with the flag

up. Stamp orders are generally filled and returned to the customer either at the time of mail delivery by the rural carrier or within 1 business day.

Postmasters must requisition PS Forms 3227-R and maintain a supply for use in filling customer telephone requests for the form or for rural delivery carriers to use as required.

15-6 Stamps on Consignment

Under the Stamps on Consignment (SOC) program, the Postal Service distributes First-Class Mail, Express Mail, and Priority Mail postage stamps to retailers for resale to the general public. Stamps are not to be sold above face value.

In consigned stocks, if the vendor chooses to sell at below face value, the retailer still must pay the Postal Service the full value. The retailer pays for the stamps 30 or 45 days after receipt (depending on the number of sales outlets).

The objective of the SOC program is to provide a convenient method of purchasing stamps for household customers who prefer to combine their stamp purchases with other shopping.

To meet this objective, retail specialists solicit local retail chains or a Postal Service contractor to provide the service.

A stamp consignment agreement must be entered into by the Postal Service and the retail business. The agreements are signed jointly by the Postal Service and the stamp consignee. Only a designated Postal Service contracting officer may sign this agreement, unless it is established through the designated contractor.

15-7 Stamps by Phone

By calling 800-STAMP-24 (800-782-6724), customers may order stamps and make purchases with Visa, MasterCard, or Discover credit cards. This toll-free number is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. There is a service charge, and stamps are delivered by mail within 3 to 5 business days.

15-8 Stamps by Fax

The Stamps by Fax program allows customers to fax their orders to be delivered by their carrier using collect on delivery (COD) mail, or arrange for a specific pick up time at the Post Office.

For information and guidance, consult your district retail office.

15-9 Contract Postal Units

Contract postal units (CPUs) and community Post Offices (CPOs) are operated under contract by persons who are not Postal Service employees. The facilities are provided by the contractor. Contracts to operate these units provide that the contractor will transact specified Postal Service business.

Postmasters or installation managers identify the need and must request approval to solicit contracts, evaluate business proposals submitted by potential contractors, and supervise performance under the contract as specified by Publication 116, *Contract Postal Unit Operations Guide*, dated August 2002 or later.

All contracts are awarded through negotiation and are for an indefinite period.

Customers at a full-service CPU generally receive the same products, services, and information that are available at all Post Offices, stations, and branches. Customers are charged the same rates for Postal Service services and products as those charged in Post Offices.

Limited-service CPUs do not carry the full line of postal products and services. Contracts for limited service CPUs specify which products and services will be offered, and the days and hours of operation.

15-10 Mobile Retail Units

For special events, holidays, etc., the Postal Service provides service by taking the Post Office to our customers. Most districts have equipment for a mobile retail unit. Contact your district retail office for availability.

15-11 www.usps.com

The Postal Service Internet Web site (<http://www.usps.com>) provides a full set of services for Postal Service customers.

Interactive pages include lookups for ZIP Codes, Post Offices, and other specialized Postal Service facilities, stamp purchasing, track and confirm, domestic and international rate calculators, Java-based postage statements, and an online change-of-address form.

Other key pages include rates in a variety of formats, rate case information, national job postings, print-on-demand portable document format (PDF) forms, a wide range of Postal Service publications, and complete consumer information. The site also provides news releases, speeches, and special news features.

The site is indexed so that users can search for specific information. The functional areas participating are responsible for keeping their information accurate and up-to-date.

16 Postage Alternatives

16-1 PC Postage

PC Postage[®] service is a form of postage payment. It may be used with Click-N-Ship[®] at www.usps.com or on other Web sites that are not operated by the Postal Service. It is also printed from vending machines in some cases. Customers can print postage stamps from a computer by setting up an account with an authorized provider. PC Postage software is authorized for use with all mailing services except periodicals. To learn more about PC Postage options or to see listing of vendors, go to http://www.usps.com/postagesolutions/pc_post.htm.

16-2 Online Label Printing

Click-N-Ship is the easy-to-use online shipping service at www.usps.com. It provides our customers a convenient way to print shipping labels from their home or office. All they need is a computer, printer, and an Internet connection. Customers can now print labels with PC Postage indicia from our Web site and use their credit card to pay for postage. Labels can be printed on regular printer paper or self-adhesive labels. Also, no additional fees are needed for electronic Delivery Confirmation service on Priority Mail service.

Customers can print online shipping labels with or without postage for these domestic and international services on www.usps.com:

- Priority Mail service.
- Express Mail service.
- Global Express Mail[™] service.
- Global Express Guaranteed[®] service.

Click-N-Ship can also make mailing more convenient for your customers. Domestic Express Mail and Priority Mail mailpieces with PC Postage service, 16 ounces and over, *can be* dropped in a collection box. This is because these customers have registered online and paid for postage with a credit card. Customers can also hand their Click-N-Ship packages to their carrier at the time of delivery. Each barcoded label printed is assigned a unique Track and Confirm number.

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17 Refunds and Exchanges/ Claims and Inquiries

17-1 Service Failure Refunds

17-1.1 Express Mail Refunds

If an Express Mail item was not delivered or made available for the customer as guaranteed under the applicable service purchased, a refund request must be made within 90 days after the date of mailing as shown in the "Date In" box on Label 11-B, *Express Mail Mailing Label — Post Office to Addressee*.

Refunds for Express Mail postage may be made only by the mailer or the holder of the Express Mail Corporate Account used to pay for postage. The mailer must complete Part I of PS Form 3533, *Application and Voucher for Refund of Postage, Fees, and Services*, in duplicate and submit it, along with the original customer copy of Label 11-B, to any Post Office.

17-1.2 Signature Confirmation and Delivery Confirmation

Service failures for Signature Confirmation and Delivery Confirmation (*fee only*) are refundable locally if service is not rendered. Determine appropriate amount and follow normal accounting procedures as outlined in the Handbook F-1, *Post Office Accounting Procedures*.

17-2 Postage and Fee(s) Refunds

17-2.1 Unused, Dated Postage Meter Indicia

Unused, dated postage meter indicia are considered for refund only if complete, legible, and valid.

The licensee must submit the request within 60 days of the date(s) shown in the indicia. The refund request must be submitted with a properly completed PS Form 3533.

Charges for processing a refund request for unused, dated meter indicia are as specified in the *Domestic Mail Manual*.

17-2.2 **Unused, Dated PC Postage Indicia**

Unused, dated PC Postage indicia are considered for refund only if complete, legible, and valid. The request is processed by the provider, not the Postal Service. The licensee must submit the refund request within 30 days of the date(s) shown in the indicia.

Disbursements of refunds for online postage are *not* permitted at local units.

17-2.3 **Metered Postage Items Ineligible for Refund**

The following metered postage items are ineligible for refunds:

- Reply envelopes or cards paid at the proper postage rate.
- Indicia printed on labels or tape removed from wrappers or envelopes.
- Loose indicia printed on labels or tape that have been stapled together or attached to paper or other medium in any manner.
- Indicia lacking clearly readable identification of the licensing Post Office, meter serial number, postage amount, or other required information.
- Indicia printed on mail dispatched and returned to sender as undeliverable as addressed, including mail marked “no such post office” and mail addressed for local delivery and returned after directory service was given or delivery was attempted.

17-2.4 **Click-N-Ship PC Postage**

Refer Click-N-Ship customers to the Click-N-Ship site. Log on to www.usps.com/clicknship and click on the *MyAccount* link.

17-3 Exchanges

17-3.1 **Stamp Exchanges**

17-3.1.1 **Postal Service Fault**

The Post Office may correct mistakes in selling damaged, defective, or otherwise unserviceable stamps by exchanging stamps at full postage value.

17-3.1.2 **Damaged in Customer’s Possession**

Stamps that are damaged or otherwise unusable for postage (because of humidity, moisture, or other causes) while in a customer’s possession may be exchanged only for an equal number of stamps of the same denomination.

Unusable stamps accepted from a customer under these conditions must be those on sale at Post Offices within 12 months before the transaction.

Quantities of the same denomination totaling over \$10 in value must be returned in the same configuration as when bought, i.e., sheets, coils, booklets. Each such transaction is limited to \$100 worth of postage from each customer.

17-3.2 **Exchange of Spoiled and Unused Postal Matter**

Unusable and spoiled stamped envelopes; stamped cards, if uncanceled; and unused, precanceled stamps and stamped cards are exchanged for other postage-stamped paper.

Only the buyer may exchange stamped envelopes or aerogrammes (air letter sheets) with a printed return address and stamped cards with any printed matter of the buyer. If there is no purchaser's printing, any responsible person may exchange them.

17-3.3 **Stamps Converted to Other Postage Forms**

A customer may submit postage stamps for conversion to an advance deposit for permit imprint mailings, subject to the conditions set forth in the DMM.

17-3.4 **Not Exchangeable**

The following postage items are not exchangeable:

- Adhesive stamps, unless mistakes were made in buying, stamps were defective, or stamps were affixed to commercial envelopes and postcards.
- Stamps cut from stamped cards, stamped envelopes, or aerogrammes (air letter sheets).
- Parts and pieces of stamped cards.
- Stamped cards, stamped envelopes, and aerogrammes received for reply.
- Mutilated and defaced stamps.
- PC Postage cannot be exchanged at Post Offices. Customers must go online to request exchange/refund for this service.

17-4 **Vending Reimbursements**

Customers may submit vending complaints, such as equipment malfunction, loss of money or stamps, or empty equipment, in person, by telephone, by mail, or by e-mail.

Employees record complaints concerning vending reimbursements on PS Form 5445, *Stamp Vending Machine Reimbursement Request*. PS Form 5445 is used to process and document the reimbursement process, provide a receipt to the customer, and provide written proof of the reimbursement itself for use by vending servicing employees in periodic credit examinations.

Vending reimbursements are made in cash. If a vending reimbursement is to be mailed, a no-fee postal money order must be used.

Follow procedures outlined in Handbook PO-102,

Self Service Vending Operational and Marketing Program, Chapter 8, Handling Customer Complaints, Claims, and Reimbursements.

17-5 Mail Claim/Registered, Insured/ PS Form 1000

A customer should file a claim immediately, but must file no later than 60 days from the date of mailing, when the contents of an article are damaged or missing from the mailing container. For a lost article, a customer must file a claim within the time limits in the chart below.

Mail Type or Service	When to File (From Mailing Date)	
	No Sooner Than	No Later Than
Insured Mail	21 days	180 days
COD Mail	45 days	180 days
Registered Mail	15 days	180 days
Registered COD Mail	45 days	180 days
Express Mail	7 days	90 days
Express Mail COD	45 days	90 days
APO/FPO Insured Mail (First-Class Mail, SAM, PAL, or COD)	45 days	180 days
APO/FPO Insured Mail (Surface Only)	75 days	180 days

Check current DMM and IMM for proper forms and current processing policy.

17-5.1 Domestic

Claims for an insured parcel may be initiated by either the sender or the addressee. The claimant must initiate a claim for indemnity no sooner than 30 days and no later than 1 year from the day following the date of mailing. Claims may not be processed until after appropriate inquiries/complaints have been initiated in accordance with procedures in chapter S010 of the DMM.

Customers must show that insurance, COD, or Registered Mail service was purchased for the parcel mailed. The customer must provide proof that the article was lost or damaged. If the article was damaged or if some or all of the contents were missing, the article, box, wrapper, and all packing materials must be taken to the Post Office. If the article was lost, submit proof of the loss.

Although it is better to submit the original mailing receipt if possible, either of the following is acceptable:

The original mailing receipt that was given at the time of mailing (reproduced copies are not acceptable).

The wrapper, showing the names and addresses of both the sender and addressee, along with the endorsement, tag, or label showing that the article was sent insured, COD, or Registered Mail service.

17-5.2 **International**

Inquiries pertaining to the disposition of a letter-post item or a Parcel Post package can be initiated at any Post Office facility by the U.S. sender or addressee. Inquiries must be initiated within 6 months from the day following the date of the mailing.

Inquiries pertaining to the disposition of a Global Express Mail Service (EMS) item can be initiated only by the U.S. sender (not the addressee). In order to initiate an inquiry for loss, rifling, or damage, the sender *must* call the EMS Inquiry Center at 800-222-1811.

Inquiries for an EMS item must be initiated within 90 days from the date of the mailing.

Claims may not be processed until after appropriate inquiries (complaints) have been initiated in accordance with procedures in Chapter 9 of the IMM.

The customer must present the following when filing the claim:

- Original mailing receipt issued at the time of mailing (reproduced copies are not acceptable.)
- Acceptable evidence to establish the cost or value of the article at the time it was mailed. (Other evidence may be requested to help determine an accurate value.)

17-6 Paying Unnumbered Insured Articles (\$50 or less)

If approved by the postmaster/station manager or designated supervisor, unnumbered insured article claims will be locally adjudicated at the Post Office accepting the claim. The retail associate will pay the claim with a no-fee money order.

- Complete section B on PS Form 1000, *Domestic Mail Insurance Claim or International Inquiry*.
- PS Form 1000 and PS Form 3813, *Receipt for Domestic Insured Parcel*, must be stamped "paid" and initialed by the retail associate.

All related documentation, including the customer receipt of the money order and copy 4 of PS Form 1000, should be retained at the Post Office that paid the claim.

17-7 PS Form 1510, Mail Loss/Rifling Report

Consumer Affairs and Corporate Contact Management personnel accept complaints of nonreceipt of mail from Postal Service customers. If mail is missing for at least 11 days, customers should complete this form. The top copy of the form is directed to:

POSTAL INSPECTION SERVICE
CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS SERVICE CENTER (CISC)
222 S RIVERSIDE PLAZA STE 1250
CHICAGO IL 60606-6100

All remaining copies are directed to district claims and inquiry offices. If the complaint indicates rifling, obtain the envelope or wrapper (if possible) and forward it with PS Form 1510, *Mail Loss/Rifling Report*, to the CISC.

Note: With PS Form 1510 filings, customers will receive a response only when there is a successful retrieval.

17-8 We Want to Know

Notice 4314-C, *We Want To Know* (WWTK). WWTK replaces PS Form 4314-C, *Consumer Service Card*, and promotes several different immediate methods for customers to contact the Postal Service:

- Speaking to our postmaster/management staff.
- Calling 1-800-ASK-USPS (800-275-8777).
- Visiting *www.usps.com*.

The notice should be prominently displayed in all Post Office lobbies and made available to customers as a “take one.”

Resolve all person-to-person and telephone contacts within 14 calendar days.

17-9 Call Center Program

The Postal Service's toll-free customer service telephone number is 1-800-ASK-USPS (800-275-8777).

Complaints, service issues, redelivery, and vacation hold mail requests are electronically referred to local Post Offices through the Post Office Messaging System (POMS). This is an electronic transfer of information through the Internet to the Post Office from the call center agent. The local Post Office must download the POMS information by 9 a.m. each morning and again in the afternoon so that customer requests for these services are handled in a timely manner.

17-10 Mail Fraud

If customers are having trouble with a mail order company or suspect that they have been the victim of fraud, instruct them to contact the Postal Inspection Service or complete PS Form 8165, *Mail Fraud Report*, which is available at all Post Offices. The customer should return the completed form to the local Post Office or send to the following address:

CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS SERVICE CENTER
US POSTAL INSPECTIONS SERVICE
222 S RIVERSIDE PLAZA SUITE 1250
CHICAGO IL 60606-6100

17-11 Unwanted Mail

Certain unsolicited or undesirable mail is prohibited from the mailstream, including obscene materials, violence-inciting materials, and some types of mail relating to lotteries.

17-11.1 Sexually Oriented Mail

Section 3010 of Title 39 U.S.C. gives people a way to protect themselves and their minor children from receiving unsolicited sexually oriented advertisements through the mail. Customers may invoke the protection either of the following ways:

- Completing PS Form 1500, *Application for Listing and/or Prohibitory Order*.
- Filing the form with any postmaster or designated Postal Service representative. Customers may file for themselves or for their children under 19 who live with them or who are under their care, custody, or supervision. An authorized officer, agent, fiduciary, surviving spouse, or other representative may file on behalf of a corporation, firm, association, estate, or deceased or incompetent addressee.

After a customer is on the list for 30 days, any mailer who sends them unsolicited sexually oriented advertisements is subject to criminal sanctions under 39 U.S.C. 3011 and 18 U.S.C. 1735-371.

This prohibitory order remains in effect for 5 years unless the customer asks to have it removed. At the end of 5 years, customers must file again to have the names reinstated.

17-11.2 Unsolicited Mail

Federal law prohibits the shipment of unordered merchandise. Such a practice may constitute an unfair trade practice. Merchandise mailed in violation of the U.S. Code may be treated as a gift by the recipient without any obligation to the sender. The laws governing this practice are enforced by the Federal Trade Commission.

17-11.3 Direct Marketing (Remove Name)

Some consumers would like to receive less advertising mail at home. Mail Preference Service (MPS), a service of the Direct Marketing Association, helps decrease the amount of national nonprofit or commercial mail customers receive. To register with the name removal file, customers should write to the following:

MAIL PREFERENCE SERVICE
DIRECT MARKETING ASSOCIATION
PO BOX 9008
FARMINGDALE NY 11735-9008

17-12 Mail Recovery Centers

Mail recovery centers (MRCs) are now located in Atlanta, Georgia, and St. Paul, Minnesota. MRCs are responsible for the final disposition of undeliverable First-Class Mail items, packages, and accountable mail items; and for protecting the privacy of the mail.

For more information on MRCs, visit Consumer Affairs Operations at http://blue.usps.gov/caweb/html/fr_ops.htm

17-12.1 First-Class Mail

Send all First-Class Mail items (except postcards and postal cards), single-piece-rate Standard Mail items, and Package Services mail that cannot be forwarded or returned, to an MRC for disposition. Send dead letters daily and dead parcels weekly.

17-12.2 Express Mail

Send Express Mail articles that cannot be forwarded or returned during the specified holding period to the area MRC in an Express Mail pouch.

17-12.3 Postcards and Postal Cards

Dispose of postcards and postal cards without a return address if the Post Office can shred or destroy them completely. If not, forward them to the area MRC.

18 Philatelic

18-1 General Information

Employees should familiarize themselves with the national announcements governing the release, sale, and discontinuance of postage stamps and postal stationery. Commemorative stamps and postal stationery (postal cards, embossed stamped envelopes, and aerogrammes) depict the cultural and historical heritage of the United States. These policies are established and governed by Stamp Services at Headquarters. Uniform application of these policies provide a high degree of integrity to the entire program. All employees and contractors must comply with these policies and procedures.

To accommodate stamp collectors and their purchasing needs, philatelic centers provide collectors with a retail location where they can personally review and select stamps and stamp products for their collections.

18-2 Definitions

The term “philatelic center” is most frequently used to describe the centers in the philatelic network. A philatelic center may be referred to as a “Postal Shoppe,” “Stamp Shoppe,” or “Postique®.” Additionally, philatelic centers may be called “philatelic windows”.

18-3 Philatelic Centers

Philatelic centers generally have a retail selling area in a self-contained facility. Philatelic centers are normally separate from lobby window positions, have special display units, and sell all current stamps, postal stationery, and philatelic products.

18-4 Philatelic Window

A philatelic window is a designated retail window that sells stamps and philatelic products to stamp collectors. The window is identified clearly so that customers will not go to it for other postal services. Dedicated philatelic windows are maintained in Post Offices having high philatelic revenue

potential, but lack sufficient display space as required in a philatelic center. All current stamps, postal stationery items, and philatelic products are sold at philatelic windows.

18-5 Important Reference Tools

18-5.1 Stamps and Postal Stationery Announcement

This announcement includes a schedule of issuance dates for upcoming stamps and stationery items and includes the format that they will be issued. The Stamps and Postal Stationery Announcement is updated every 2–3 months in the *Postal Bulletin*.

18-5.2 USA Philatelic Catalog

The *USA Philatelic Catalog* features the stamps, stationery items, and philatelic products currently available for sale through mail order at the Stamp Fulfillment Service Center, Kansas City, Missouri. One copy of the catalog should be posted prominently in the philatelic center service area and marked to indicate only those products available at that center. The catalog is published six times a year.

Customers who are interested in receiving a catalog should call 800-STAMP-24 to order a free catalog.

18-5.3 Postal Bulletin and Other Reference Materials

While a majority of Post Offices nationwide have computers and use e-mail, Postal Link, Direct Line, and other electronic messaging as their main source of news and information, some Post Offices still rely on hard copies of the *Postal Bulletin* and other printed materials as their main source of news and information.

For current and updated information on the stamps and stationery program, all Post Offices and philatelic centers should refer to the *Postal Bulletin*, “Philately Section” on a biweekly basis. Retail associates and postmasters are responsible for providing customers with current and correct information on all aspects of stamps and the stamped stationery program. Also, information on the stamp program can be found in *The Postal Service Guide to U.S. Stamps*, which is published annually. The F-1 Handbook and *Domestic Mail Manual* are also good sources for obtaining additional information.

18-6 Service to Customers

Stamp collectors purchase a wide variety of stamps and stamp-related products. Since stamp collectors save the stamps, stationery items, and stamp products they purchase, and generally never use the stamps and stamp products for mailing purposes, a majority of the revenue from these sales is retained as profit. To serve the unique needs and requirements of stamp collectors, the Postal Service established philatelic centers. See below for guidelines for operating philatelic centers.

18-7 Hours of Operation

Philatelic centers should be open for business during the hours which are most convenient for their customers. The hours of operation for the philatelic center should be posted for public information.

18-8 Community Role

Philatelic and retail associates should familiarize themselves with the stamp collectors and the stamp clubs within their communities. Whenever possible, dates and locations of stamp club meetings should be posted and members should be encouraged to display selected collections in Post Offices in accordance with space and security requirements.

18-9 Requirements for Philatelic Centers

18-9.1 **Establishment Criteria**

To increase the effectiveness of the philatelic center network, proposed centers must meet one of these two standards:

- Be located in a city having at least 50,000 residents; or
- Be the single designated philatelic center within a district which does not have a city with a population of at least 50,000.

Cities with populations greater than 100,000 may be considered for more than one center. The number of centers approved for such cities will depend on total population and revenue potential.

Exceptions: Since some sparsely populated areas have large and active philatelic communities, exceptions to these criteria may be warranted. Requests should be submitted to the district retail manager with a written statement justifying the need. Such a statement, describing feasibility and revenue potential of proposed site, must be approved by the area retail manager who is responsible for notifying the manager of Customer Services Operations in Washington, DC, and the local Stamp Distribution Office (SDO/SSC) that supplies the stamp stock.

18-9.2 **Request to Establish a Philatelic Center**

Requests to establish a philatelic center should be forwarded directly from the area retail manager to the manager of Customer Services Operations at Headquarters in Washington, DC. The request should include the following:

- Complete name, address, and finance number of the Post Office where the philatelic center will be located. Indicate whether the center is at the main Post Office or in a station or branch.
- The establishment criterion the center meets (i.e., whether it has a population of at least 50,000, it is the only designated center in the district, or it is an exception which deserves consideration).
- A statement forecasting revenue potential.

18-9.3 **Approval Process**

If approval is granted, the manager of Customer Services Operations at Headquarters in Washington, DC, will notify the area retail manager who must send written notification to the local SDO.

The local SDO will send to the following address written notification of the approval. Once Stamp Acquisition and Distribution has been notified, the newly approved center will be placed on a master list of philatelic centers authorized to receive automatic distribution of position stamp stock and special-edition philatelic products.

MANAGER OF STAMP ACQUISITION AND DISTRIBUTION OFFICE
475 L'ENFANT PLAZA SW RM 5670
WASHINGTON DC 20260-2436

18-9.4 **Physical Location Criteria**

The physical location of a philatelic center is important both for customer convenience and for efficient and profitable operation.

All proposed philatelic centers must be easily accessible via main and traffic arteries, and have ample customer parking within walking distance (accessibility for handicapped persons is important).

Philatelic centers must have sufficient space to display available stamps and philatelic products.

Dedicated philatelic windows should be located in heavy traffic areas of the lobby, convenient to customers.

18-9.5 **Hours of Operation/Developing the Schedule**

The postmaster must determine the schedule of operation (i.e., days and hours a philatelic center will be open) based on the following factors:

- Customer traffic.
- Staffing requirements.
- Regular office hours at the proposed site.

Days/hours changes must be reported to the district finance number control master (FNCM) coordinator at least 7 days prior to change.

18-9.6 **Uniform Days and Hours**

Although the schedule of operation is determined at the local Post Office level, uniform days and hours must be selected. A uniform schedule of operation allows customers to schedule their visits. Erratic, early, or unscheduled closings of philatelic outlets must be avoided since many collectors travel long distances to obtain the products and services provided exclusively at these centers. Whenever possible, these hours should conform to those of the office. Additionally, they must be stated clearly on signs in high traffic areas in the lobby, and periodically published in local newspapers, employee publications, and in brochures sent to customers about local postal services.

18-9.7 **Customer Convenience**

Major emphasis must be placed on having the outlet in operation during hours that are most convenient for our customers.

All offices with philatelic windows should ensure that other windows have access to philatelic items in the event the philatelic window is closed.

18-9.8 **Posting Assignments**

Assignments are to be posted in accordance with the terms of the national agreement. Employees who work in this position must currently hold a retail associate's position or qualify by successfully completing the SSA course.

It is desirable to have employees who have knowledge and are enthusiastic about stamp collecting assigned to philatelic centers.

Duty assignments posted for such positions should include a statement identifying the assignment as one primarily "dedicated" to philatelic sales. It should also include a statement that "Stamp collectors and others who have a working knowledge or have an enthusiastic attitude toward a stamp collecting hobby are encouraged, if otherwise eligible, to bid for this position."

Retail associates assigned to philatelic centers report to the designated manager.

18-9.9 **Closing Philatelic Centers**

When the manager of Customer Services Operations approves closing of a philatelic center, the area retail manager is responsible for notifying the district and the local SDO/SSC.

The SDO/SSC will send written notification to the manager of Stamp Acquisition and Distribution. Written notification must be provided so that automatic distribution of the position stamp stock may be discontinued.

18-9.10 **Philatelic Center Database**

When new philatelic centers are opened or philatelic centers are closed, address information must be updated on the nationwide philatelic center database. This database provides information to the National Call Center and www.usps.com.

18-10 Products and Services

18-10.1 **Products**

18-10.1.1 **Stamp Stock**

Authorized philatelic centers will be automatically furnished with select position stamp stock from various stamp printers. Offices will automatically receive a minimum of 8,000 commemorative and definitive stamps in position format as they are issued. Stamp quantities may vary based on the number of positions used during the printing process.

Stamp quantities have been established to meet an average 60-day supply demand. Adjustments of minimum quantities can be made by sending a memorandum to your local SDO/SSC. The SDO/SSC will notify the manager of Stamp Acquisition and Distribution Office of any quantity adjustments. Establish position stock quantities for commemoratives and definitive stamps:

Positions	Quantities
4 Position Press	8,000
6	12,000
8	16,000
10	20,000
12	24,000

Additional amounts must be expressed in increments of 2,000 for 20 stamps per pane for commemoratives; and 10,000 for 100 per pane for definitive stamps. Changes to automatic distribution must be stated in these quantities.

18-10.1.2 **Position Stamp Stock**

Since many collectors are interested in position stamp stock, all philatelic centers must have it available. Position stamp stock features matched plate numbers in each of the appropriate positions of the sheet whenever possible.

Stamp stock is distributed automatically to all Post Offices having philatelic centers. Whenever additional quantities are needed, include a memorandum with a requisition requesting additional position stock to your SDO/SSC.

18-10.1.3 **Required Inventory**

Philatelic centers are required to carry the line of stamps, postal stationery items, and philatelic products that are available from their SDO/SSC. These items are listed in the *USA Philatelic Catalog* along with other products that are only available for sale through the catalog.

Philatelic centers do not sell all items listed in the philatelic catalog; (e.g., American Commemorative Panels, American Commemorative Collection, American Commemorative Cancellations, and collector binders).

All philatelic centers must have these current stamps and stationery items available for sale (all items not officially called offsale in the *Postal Bulletin*):

- Stamps in sheet, coil, and booklet formats (commemoratives, definitives, precancels) in all denominations, varieties, and formats in which they are produced.
- Position stamp stock.
- Souvenir sheets.
- Stationery items (stamped cards, embossed stamped envelopes in all sizes — with and without windows — and aerogrammes) in all denominations, sizes, and formats.
- Migratory bird hunting and conservation stamps (three most recent issues).
- Commemorative Year Book (three most recent issues).
- The Postal Service Guide to U.S. Stamps.
- Special philatelic products (available in limited quantities).

Local precancels may be made available at philatelic centers that have them on hand or have a hand stamp for precanceling purposes. Philatelic centers may not acquire a precancel hand stamp solely to meet philatelic demand. More information can be found in the *Domestic Mail Manual* (DMM).

18-10.1.4 **Available Stamps, Stationery, and Philatelic Products**

A complete list of available stamps, stationery items, and philatelic products may be requested from your SDO/SSC.

Announcement and instructions on items being withdrawn from sale are published in the *Postal Bulletin* quarterly.

18-10.1.5 **Other Products**

Only Postal Service–issued products can be sold in philatelic centers.

To sell other products, written authorization must be granted from Retail Marketing at Headquarters, your area retail manager, the district retail manager, and the manager of Stamp Acquisition and Distribution. When additional products have been authorized, full product details, including sales price, merchandising, etc., should be announced in the *Postal Bulletin*.

18-10.1.6 Sales Policies/Definitions

All philatelic centers should have available for sale any and all newly released stamps, stationery items, and philatelic products. The *Postal Bulletin* contains all updated information regarding the issuance and sale dates of all new stamps.

18-10.1.7 Commemorative Stamps

Philatelic centers may keep individual items on sale until notice is published in the *Postal Bulletin* to remove the stamps from sale. To allow for effective inventory management, this notice will appear in the *Postal Bulletin* one month prior to the official removal date. At that time, excess stock should be returned to the vault on PS Form 17, *Stamp Requisition/Stamp Return*, and reallocated to regular windows to be sold as postage.

18-10.1.8 Plate Blocks

Plate blocks are usually the four corner stamps (one design or block of four designs) with the printing plate number in the margin (selvage) of the pane. If the stamp issue consists of more than four stamps, like the *Space Achievement* issue of 1981, which consisted of eight different designs for a plate block of eight, the plate block would contain one of each of the eight designs.

18-10.1.9 Floating Plate Blocks

A floating plate number is one that floats or appears at different intervals along the margin. Most issues utilizing floating plate numbers only have selvage on the right and left sides of the pane.

The plate numbers and other marginal markings move progressively up and down the selvage on a pane-to-pane basis as a result of each full rotation of the press cylinders. If a single number floats, collectors may save it in the centers of the collectible, which is a block of six.

18-10.1.10 Plate Blocks and Marginal Markings

Plate number blocks and other marginal markings (i.e. copyright) that may be accumulated from previous sales are sheets that are broken in the normal course of business.

Sheets of stamps should not be broken specifically to provide plate blocks or marginal markings to customers. A new sheet may be broken to sell a plate block only if there are no stamps remaining from previously broken sheets. It is more advantageous to sell marginal inscriptions as strips, two stamps wide, rather than as blocks.

Blocks will be sold on a first-come basis only. Each customer may buy one matched set of four marginal strips for any stamp in stock. There are no limitations on the sale of plate blocks of stamps having denominations from \$1.00 to \$10.00. See *USA Philatelic Catalog*.

18-10.1.11 Coiled Stamps

Philatelic centers may open coils of stamps as requested and sell any number to a customer, with the exception of coils having fractional denominations, such as the 10.1 and the 12.5, etc. These must be sold only in multiples of 10 stamps.

To guarantee receipt of “line pairs” or “line markings” on coils, the following minimum purchases are required:

- Any fractional denomination = minimum of 30 stamps.
- \$1.00 = minimum of 6 stamps.
- All other denominations = minimum of 25 stamps.

Note: A “line marking” is a vertical line of color appearing at intervals of 25 stamps made by the joint seam where the printing plates meet on the rotary press. The “line pair” consists of one coil stamp on each side of the “line marking.” There are no “line markings” on multicolored coil stamps.

Plate numbers began to appear on all coils that were produced after 1981. Some single-color coil stamps do not have “line markings”. For those that do, the plate number appears adjacent to the “line marking” at intervals of 24 stamps.

Plate numbers also appear at intervals of 48 and 52 stamps depending on the press. As the older rotary presses are replaced over the next several years, “line markings” will cease to appear on coil stamps; only the plate number will appear.

18-10.1.12 Precanceled Stamps

The sales policy described in DMM P023, applies with the exception that coils of precanceled stamps may be opened for the sale of individual stamps to collectors.

18-10.1.13 Precanceled Stamped Envelopes

Philatelic centers cannot sell full box lots of precanceled stamped envelopes to collectors.

Precanceled stamped envelopes should be sold in amounts less than 500, and the selling price of a single precanceled stamped envelope will be the price listed for each appropriate size and type in the current issue of the *USA Philatelic Catalog*.

More information regarding the sale of stamped envelopes can be found in Handbook F-1, *Post Office Accounting Procedures*, and in the *Domestic Mail Manual*.

18-10.2 Services

18-10.2.1 New Issue Reservation Service

The New Issue Reservation Service is designed to improve service to stamp collectors who shop regularly at particular philatelic centers.

In the past, unnecessary trips have been a persistent cause of complaints. This service enables customers to reserve new stamp and stationery issues for 20 days to ensure their availability at a convenient time.

Even though full pane purchases are not required, the stock should be reserved in full panes only, so that it can be returned to regular stock if unclaimed after 20 days. The customer should provide one addressed postal card for each reservation made.

There is a minimum order of 20 stamps. A strip of 20 stamps must be purchased for each plate number block for denominations up to \$1.00.

Requests for plate number blocks by position will be filled only if the desired positions are available in stock.

Reserved items must be picked up at the Post Office, station, or branch no later than 20 days after the customer has been notified.

Items not stocked must be ordered from:

STAMP FULFILLMENT SERVICES
PO BOX 7247
PHILADELPHIA PA 19101-7097

Mail orders can be placed using the *USA Philatelic Catalog*.

18-10.2.2 **Philatelic Cancellation Services**

Cancellation services (except for first day of issue or other national philatelic programs) may be provided by philatelic centers on a continuous basis when authorized by:

STAMP DEVELOPMENT
475 L'ENFANT PLAZA SW ROOM 5670
WASHINGTON DC 20260-2436

One standard or pictorial hand-stamped cancellation may be used. Proposed designs must be submitted to the office of Stamp Development at least 45 days in advance for approval and appropriate publicity.

Handbook PO-230, *Pictorial Cancellations*, contains further information on postmark requirements and cancellation policies.

18-10.2.3 **Service Limitations**

For any single individual or group, hand stamping as a free service is limited to 50 covers. There is a service charge of \$.05 for each cancellation above 50, to a maximum of 1,000 cancellations. Requests for more than 1,000 cancellations must be approved by the district manager.

18-10.2.4 **Holding Philatelic Items**

Philatelic centers may hold philatelic items to comply with customers requests that they be postmarked on a specific date.

Philatelic centers however, may *not* hold philatelic items for cancellation on a date that is uncertain, subject to change, or a day when the office will be closed (exceptions may be authorized by Stamp Development).

In such circumstances, the philatelic items should be returned unserved in an outer envelope to the customer with a short note explaining why the requested service could not be performed.

18-10.2.5 **Multiple Cancellations**

Additional cancellations may be applied to items bearing previously canceled postage (on a hand back basis only), if unused postage, equal to the domestic First-Class Mail letter rate is affixed.

Items bearing multiple cancellations may not be mailed.

Additional information regarding philatelic cancellations can be found in DMM or Handbook PO-230, *Pictorial Cancellations*.

18-11 Required Merchandising Displays

Philatelic centers must have displays to feature the stamps currently available for sale.

All centers should also display all available stationery items and philatelic products. The products should be attractively, but securely, arranged in displayed cases, counters, and shelves with packaged products being prominently featured.

Assure all displays are current. Outdated displays create confusion and draw complaints.

18-12 Operational/Financial Procedures

18-12.1 **Accountability**

Philatelic centers should maintain an adequate level of stamp stock, stationery, and philatelic products to encourage philatelic interest to meet the needs of collectors.

For each philatelic center authorized at their office, postmasters may maintain a postage stock of up to \$125,000 in excess of normal authorized stock limits.

18-12.2 **Retail Associate Accountability**

All retail associates working in philatelic centers, other than Postal Stores, are fully accountable for their stamp credits. The postmaster must provide adequate security equipment for secure storage of these credits at all times.

18-13 Distribution of Philatelic Stamp Stock

18-13.1 **Main Office Accountable Paper Unit**

All Post Offices with philatelic centers receive an initial distribution of position stamp stock. Retail associates assigned to philatelic centers should obtain all stock from the main office accountable paper unit. Philatelic centers should work directly through their main office accountability paper unit to ensure that all their inventory needs are met.

18-13.2 **Position Stamp Stock**

Philatelic centers should receive position stamp stock for each stamp issue to meet the demand of its customers.

When all positions of a stamp issue are not available, philatelic centers should obtain those missing positions from their main office accountable paper unit or SDO/SSC.

18-13.3 **Philatelic Products**

Philatelic products such as the *Commemorative Yearbook*, *The Postal Service Guide to U.S. Stamps*, and matted prints, etc., are distributed automatically to SDOs/SSCs by the manufacturers.

SDOs/SSCs will establish a procedure for the distribution of new philatelic products and replenishment of existing philatelic products for philatelic centers.

SDOs/SSCs requiring additional philatelic products should requisition them from the accountable paper depository.

18-13.4 **Requisitioning Philatelic Stamp Stock**

Stamp stock for philatelic centers may be obtained from the main office accountable paper unit using PS Form 17. If stamp stock is depleted, the accountable paper unit must reorder from the SDO/SSC.

When reordering position stock, for both definitive and commemorative stamps, PS Form 17 must identify the stamp stock position being requested.

18-13.5 Redistribution of Philatelic Stamp Stock

Full panes of stamps that are being withdrawn from sale at philatelic centers/philatelic windows should not be destroyed.

This stamp stock should be redistributed immediately to regular stamp windows for sale.

With approval, excess supplies of philatelic products are to be returned to the SDO/SSC for redistribution to other stations and branches. Post Offices will return stock to the SDO/SSC only when directed by their SDO/SSC or a *Postal Bulletin* announcement.

Note: Neither commemorative nor definitive stamps or philatelic products should be destroyed unless specifically directed by a Postal Bulletin announcement.

18-13.6 Withdrawal of Philatelic Stamp Stock from Sale

The actual date that stamp stock must be removed from sale at philatelic centers will appear in a *Postal Bulletin* announcement. To allow for effective inventory management, this announcement will appear approximately 1 month in advance of the removal date.

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