

## Mailing Tips

Most mail accepted at military post offices in Europe is flown to the U.S. on commercial aircraft. Once mail arrives stateside, it's transported based on the service selected and paid for.

Customers should keep in mind that packages transiting through the mail stream are handled numerous times, and therefore proper packaging is very important. The following USPS mailing tips are provided to help ensure packages arrive safely and undamaged:

### **The Box**

Choose a box with enough room for cushioning material around the contents. Sturdy paperboard or corrugated fiberboard boxes are best for weights up to 10 pounds. If reusing a box, cover up or mark-out any old labels and markings.

### **USPS Provided Boxes**

Priority Mail Express and Priority Mail boxes are available at no cost to the customer at the post office for items sent using either of these services.

### **Cushioning**

Place cushioning around your items. Close and gently shake the box to see whether there is enough padding. Place an extra address label with the delivery and return addresses inside the package to ensure it can be delivered in case the outside label becomes damaged or falls off.

### **Sealing**

Tape the box shut and reinforce the seams with 2-inch wide tape. Use clear or brown packaging tape, reinforced packing tape, or paper tape.

**Liquids** (Some host country restrictions apply, check with your post office personnel)

Nonflammable, nonhazardous liquids are acceptable to mail, if sealed inside a waterproof container. The outer container with the address label should also be strong and securely sealed. Mailers must mark the outer container of a mailpiece containing liquid to indicate the nature of the contents, and annotate "this side up" on the package. Packages containing liquids need to be carefully packed to withstand the grueling transportation journey.

### **Size**

The weight of each package cannot exceed 70 pounds. For customers planning to use Priority Mail Express Military Service or Priority Mail services for faster delivery, length plus girth (distance around the thickest part of the package) cannot exceed 108 inches. The total cannot exceed 130 inches when using USPS Retail Ground/SAM.

### **Correct Address**

Using a complete and correct address is critical for timely delivery. To find the correct spelling of a city name and state abbreviation or to find a ZIP-Code, visit [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com). Print or type the delivery address parallel to the longest side of the package. Type or print clearly with a pen or permanent marker so that the address is legible from an arm's length away.

### **Return Address**

Print or type the address in the upper left corner on the same side of the package as the delivery address.

## **USPS Extra Services**

Extra services can provide additional protection and peace of mind.

- Adult Signature - Requires the signature of someone 21 years of age or older at the recipient's address.
- Certificate of Mailing - Provides evidence of mailing.
- Certified Mail - Provides proof of mailing at time of mailing and the date and time of delivery or attempted delivery.
- Insured Mail - Provides coverage against loss or damage up to \$5,000. Fee based on value of item.
- Registered Mail (service not available at all locations) - Provides maximum security. Includes proof of mailing at time of mailing and the date and time of delivery or attempted delivery. Insurance can be added up to \$50,000. Fee based on value of item.
- USPS Tracking - Provides the date and time of delivery or attempted delivery. Free with select services.
- Signature Confirmation - Provides the date and time of delivery or attempted delivery and the name of the person who signed for the item. Customers can request a printed copy of the signature.
- Return Receipt - Provides a postcard or electronic notification with the date of delivery and recipient signature.
- Restricted Delivery - Confirms that only a specified person, or authorized agent, will receive a piece of mail.
- Special Handling — Fragile - Is a domestic extra service offered to our customers for a fee to enhance their shipping options, but does not insure the item against loss or damage.

## **Customs Declaration Form**

All mail originating outside of the U.S. is subject to customs examination. Mailers are responsible for accurately completing USPS customs forms when mailing packages containing dutiable goods to the United States. Mailers are also required to certify the information provided is correct and the items do not contain any dangerous articles, or articles prohibited by legislation or by postal or customs regulations. Recent USPS policy change derived from Global Trade Compliance requirements resulted in USPS phasing out handwritten customs declaration forms. This means that pre-printed, hard copy PS Form 2976, PS Form 2976-A, and PS Form 2976-B customs declaration forms are no longer accepted.

Customers can avoid waiting in line longer at post office finance windows if they complete an online customs declaration form using the USPS website prior to presenting packages for mailing at the APO. In addition, some post offices will make available or offer a separate, expedited mail acceptance window as an incentive for customers who arrive at the post office with online, pre-printed USPS electronic customs declarations.

Customers have several options available to them when completing required electronic customs declarations using the USPS.com website:

Option 1: Customers can choose the USPS Click-N-Ship feature to establish an account, complete their customs declaration and pay for their mailing using one of several USPS approved credit cards.

Option 2: Customers can print a customs declaration at home on the USPS website without establishing an account and then pay at the postal finance window when presenting their parcels and packages for mailing.

Option 3: Customers can use the customer work station (if available) at the APO to go online and complete a customs declaration before presenting mail pieces at the postal finance window.

Option 4: Postal patrons who do not present articles for mailing with an online declaration can still mail their packages using the hard copy PS Form 2976-R, **USPS Customs Declaration and Dispatch Note declaration form**. However, the accepting finance mail clerk must enter the information from the PS Form 2976-R into the Customs Border Protection Manifest system via the USPS Point of Sale retail terminal with the customer present, as clarifying questions may be required to ensure that PS Form 2976-R contains accurate and complete data to complete the mailing transaction. This will result in longer customer waiting times and longer lines at the post office finance windows.

Contact your local installation postmaster for additional information on customs form requirements and for advice on the best service to use based on your mailing needs.