



U.S. Postal Inspection Service

A Guide for the U.S. Congress

Publication 278
August 2006

SAFETY ■ SECURITY ■ INTEGRITY





U.S. Postal Inspection Service

A Guide for the U.S. Congress

The mission of the United States Postal Inspection Service is to protect the U.S. Postal Service®, its employees, and its customers from criminal attack and protect the nation's mail system from criminal misuse.



Founded by Benjamin Franklin, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service has a successful history of fighting criminals who attack and misuse our nation's postal system. Postal Inspectors — authorized by Congress to enforce nearly 200 federal statutes related to crimes involving the U.S. Mail and postal system — safeguard every aspect of the mail.

Postal Inspectors throughout the United States — and at key international locations — investigate crimes that fraudulently use the U.S. Mail and postal system. Postal Inspectors work closely with U.S. attorneys, other law enforcement agencies, and local prosecutors to investigate postal cases and prepare them for court. Uniformed Postal Police Officers are assigned to facilities considered most at risk for crime and provide protection for Postal Service™ employees, mail, and property.

The U.S. Postal Service:

- Operates more than 37,000 Post Offices and facilities.
- Employs more than 700,000 workers.
- Delivers to more than 144 million households and businesses in the United States.
- Moves 212 billion pieces of mail per year — more mail than any other postal system in the world.



Protecting Americans From Mail Fraud

The mail fraud statute is the most effective of the consumer protection laws. The U.S. Postal Inspection Service uses the statute to maximum effect. For more than a century, Postal Inspectors have protected the American public by investigating fraud when it involves the U.S. Mail. Although “corporate fraud” implies business fraud, the majority of fraud victims are private citizens.

Mail fraud charges may result from:

- Illegal sweepstakes schemes.
- Chain letters.
- Travel and vacation scams.
- Merchandise misrepresentations.
- Phony billings.
- Fraudulent investment opportunities.
- Work-at-home schemes.
- Rebate fraud.
- Foreign lottery scams.

Fraud Schemes on the Internet

Opportunities for mail fraud have increased as criminals turn to the Internet to operate illegal schemes on a larger scale, with greater anonymity. The Postal Inspection Service works with Internet service providers, consumer-protection groups, and related industry groups to educate businesses and individuals about how to safely conduct business over the Internet.

President’s Corporate Fraud Task Force

In the wake of numerous high-profile financial scandals in 2002, President George W. Bush created the Corporate Fraud Task Force by Executive Order. Deputy Attorney General of the United States Larry Thompson appointed Chief Postal Inspector Lee R. Heath to the task force. Following the director of the FBI, Chief Heath became the second head of a criminal investigative agency assigned to the President’s Corporate Fraud Task Force.

Consumer Protection Program

The U.S. Postal Inspection Service’s Consumer Protection Program assists customers in resolving complaints when there is no evidence of an intentional scheme to defraud but rather poor or faulty business practices. Members of the public may report suspected mail fraud online at the Postal Inspection Service’s Web site at: www.usps.com/postalinspectors.



©2005 Newsday, Inc. Reprinted with permission

Investigating Child Exploitation and Obscenity

In 1873, Congress passed a law banning the use of the mail to distribute obscene material. Known as the Comstock Act, the bill was drafted by Post Office Inspector Anthony Comstock. The Act was a forerunner to the current statute used to prosecute those who send or intentionally receive obscene material through the mail. For more than a century, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service has been investigating mailings of obscene matter.

Today, the Internet is the most-used venue for advertising obscene material and introducing it into American homes. From the Internet, such items can easily reach young children, exposing them to graphic and often violent sexually oriented matter. While obscenity is advertised on the Internet, obscenity dealers are likely to use the U.S. Mail to deliver the product to their customers, in violation of federal law.

Obscenity Prosecution Task Force

The Department of Justice established an Obscenity Prosecution Task Force in Washington, DC, in May 2005, dedicated to investigating and prosecuting obscenity cases. The task force comprises attorneys from the Department's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section, Organized Crime and Racketeering Section, and Computer Crimes and Intellectual Property Section. The task force draws investigative support from the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and other federal and local law enforcement agencies. A Postal Inspector on the task force targets obscenity dealers who try to distribute their products via the mail in violation of the postal obscenity statute. Potential cases are referred to Postal Inspection Service division offices for further investigation and prosecution.

The Postal Inspection Service was the first federal law enforcement agency to aggressively identify, target, and arrest child pornography distributors and their customers.

At least one in three suspects arrested by Inspectors for child pornography offenses has also sexually abused children. Postal Inspectors have arrested hundreds of child pornography criminals and, more important, have identified and rescued hundreds of child victims. That is why such crimes continue to be among its top investigative priorities.



Photograph by Postal Inspector Allen L. McHenry.

For customers who do not want to receive unsolicited sexually oriented ads through the mail, the Postal Inspection Service offers:

- Publication 307, *Stop Unsolicited Sexually Oriented Advertisements*.
- PS Form 1500, *Application for Listing and/or Prohibitory Order*. Both items are available for viewing and printing at the Postal Inspection Service Web site or may be ordered by calling the Postal Service's Material Distribution Center toll-free at 1-800-332-0317.



U.S. Postal Inspection Service

Jurisdiction and Laws

Postal Inspectors enforce more than 200 federal laws in investigations of crimes that may adversely affect or fraudulently use the U.S. Mail, the postal system, or Postal Service employees. The list below describes some of our most important areas of jurisdiction.

Assaults **(18 USC 111 & 1114)**

The protection of Postal Service employees is one of our most important responsibilities. Inspectors promptly investigate assaults and threats that occur while Postal Service employees are performing official duties or as a result of their employment.

Bombs **(18 USC 1716)**

Although a rare crime, the mailing of bombs is given one of our highest investigative priorities due to the severe impact it can have on Postal Service customers, employees, and operations.

Burglary **(18 USC 2115)**

The Postal Service experiences about 300 burglaries each year. Inspectors have minimized losses through the use of security equipment and facility design.

Child Exploitation **(18 USC 1470, 2251, 2252, 2253, 2254, 2422, & 2425)**

The Postal Inspection Service has long been recognized as the leading federal law enforcement agency in the effort to combat the production and distribution of child pornography and other crimes exploiting children through the mail and, when it involves the mail, over the Internet.

Controlled Substances **(21 USC 841, 843 & 844)**

Postal Inspectors initiate investigations related to transporting and distributing narcotics through the mail or at Postal Service facilities.

Counterfeit Stamps, Money Orders, and Related Crimes **(18 USC 500, 501, 503 & 1720)**

Postal Inspectors preserve public confidence in the mail by pursuing individuals who forge, alter, or counterfeit postage stamps, postal money orders, and other stamp products. The Inspection Service helps train Postal Service employees to recognize bogus postal money orders.

Destruction, Obstruction and Delay of Mail **(18 USC 1700, 1701, 1702 & 1703)**

The Postal Inspection Service upholds federal statutes aimed at securing customers' mail, including those related to the desertion, obstruction, delay, or destruction of mail. Postal Inspectors demonstrate their resolve by implementing mail security processes to ensure that customers receive their mail intact and free from outside interference.

Electronic Crimes **(18 USC 1029, 1030, 1037, 1343, & 2701)**

Inspectors protect Postal Service customers from fraud schemes and other crimes that may occur online and involve the misuse of the mail or of the Postal Service. This includes using or selling stolen or counterfeit access devices, such as credit card numbers; using protected computers without proper authority or exceeding authorized access; using computer communications in a scheme to defraud; using a false identity when sending commercial e-mails to mislead or deceive recipients, as with spam; and unauthorized access to communications that are stored electronically via a communications service.

Extortion

(18 USC 873, 876 & 877)

Postal Inspectors investigate extortion and blackmail when demands for ransoms or rewards are sent through the U.S. Mail. Inspectors also strictly enforce laws prohibiting mail that contains threats of kidnapping, physical injury, or injury to the property or reputations of others.

Forfeiture

(18 USC 981 & 982)

Postal Inspectors use criminal and civil forfeiture statutes, when appropriate, to seize assets associated with criminal acts.

Identity Fraud

(18 USC 1028)

The Postal Inspection Service is a leading federal law enforcement agency in the investigation of identity takeovers.

Lotteries

(18 USC 1301, 1302 & 1303; 39 USC 3005)

Postal Inspectors protect consumers by strictly enforcing all laws related to importing, transporting, and mailing lottery tickets. Under the false representations and lottery statute (3005), Inspectors are authorized to instruct postmasters to withhold from delivery and return to sender any mail that violates the law.

Mail Fraud

(18 USC 1341, 1342 & 1345; 39 USC 3005 & 3007)

The Postal Inspection Service is committed to protecting Postal Service customers from misuse of the mail. Inspectors place special emphasis on mail fraud scams related to advance fees, boiler rooms, health care, insurance, investments, deceptive mailings, and other consumer frauds, especially when they target the elderly or other susceptible groups.

Mail or Mailbox Destruction

(18 USC 1705)

The Postal Inspection Service is committed to ensuring the safety of the nation's mail by securing letter boxes or other receptacles for U.S. Mail. To this end, Postal Inspectors aggressively pursue individuals who willfully or maliciously injure or destroy such receptacles.

Money Laundering

(18 USC 1956 & 1957)

Postal Inspectors aggressively investigate criminals who attempt to conceal the proceeds of illegal acts through monetary transactions. Inspectors identify and seize criminals' assets, denying violators the proceeds of their crimes.

Obscenity and Sexually Oriented Advertising

(18 USC 1461, 1463 & 1735; 39 USC 3010)

Postal Inspectors follow court-established guidelines to uphold obscenity standards, which prohibit "obscene, lascivious, indecent, filthy or vile" mailings. Customers who wish to halt mailings of sexually oriented advertisements or similar solicitations may complete and submit a Postal Service Form 1500, available at Post Offices.

Robbery

(18 USC 2114)

Postal Inspectors respond promptly to robberies of Postal Service employees and contractors. Inspectors focus on preventing robberies through the use of security equipment and improved Postal Service procedures.

Theft of Mail

(18 USC 1708 & 1709)

Postal Inspectors invest significant resources into the investigation of mail theft by criminals.



Keeping the Mail Secure

For more than 200 years, Postal Inspectors have investigated bombs, poisons, and other dangerous items in the mail. Forensic analysts at the Inspection Service's National Forensic Laboratory and its three field offices provide expert examinations and testimony on evidence submitted by Postal Inspectors for document, fingerprint, chemical, and physical evidence analysis. Lab personnel respond to the most critical and complex cases and assist in processing and evaluating evidence, including threatening or dangerous items in the mail.

Response to Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Explosive Incidents

After anthrax in the mail took five lives and harmed others in 2001 and incidents such as ricin mailings and panic-causing hoaxes and threats have escalated, the Postal Inspection Service has stepped up its responses to mail-related terrorism and hazardous materials. Teams of Postal Inspectors are trained to respond to chemical, biological, radiological, and explosive incidents involving the mail and, in concert with other "first responders," use their unique knowledge of the mail and postal systems to identify and preserve evidence for criminal investigation. Inspectors are integral to the development and deployment

of equipment that detects biohazards in the mail. Postal Inspectors provide security guidelines and on-site evaluations of mail centers to help identify security risks and educate businesses on safe mail-handling.

Mail Center Security Guide

The Postal Inspection Service's Publication 166, *Mail Center Security Guide*, helps businesses assess and improve their mail operations. You may also order a new Postal Inspection Service-produced DVD, *Mail Center Security*, that offers advice on how to maintain a safe and secure corporate mailroom.

Mail Theft

The American public has an expectation that its mail will be delivered in a timely fashion. Americans trust that their mail will not be tampered with or stolen. Mail theft comes under the jurisdiction of U.S. Postal Inspectors, who are charged with preserving the "sanctity of the seal."

Every day, more than 650 million letters travel across the country and around the globe. The mail is delivered to 145 million addresses 6 days of every week. And every day those millions of mail pieces are moved to their destinations by plane, ship, rail, truck, automobile, and human beings.

Postal Inspectors know that, because mail may contain valuables — jewelry, personal and financial information, and credit cards — criminals may try to steal it. Postal Inspectors devote considerable resources to securing the mail and deploy the best security technology available. Additionally, Inspectors employ preventive tactics that help protect and educate Postal Service employees and the public about mail theft.

Members of the public may report suspected mail theft online at the Postal Inspection Service's Web site at www.usps.com/postalinspectors. Or go to www.usps.com and at the lower left of the page, click on "U.S. Postal Inspectors: Preserving the Trust."



Fraud is one of the few crimes in which victims can actively decline to participate — if they recognize the warning signs. That's why the U.S. Postal Inspection Service regards consumer education as one of its top weapons in fighting fraudsters.

Inspection Service Can Help You Reach Your Constituents

Through consumer-protection campaigns, educational publications, video productions, and congressional liaison, Postal Inspectors and support staff from the Liaison Group work to raise public awareness, especially among older Americans, about how to protect themselves from fraud and avoid becoming victims of fraud or other postal-related crime. Towards this goal, the Postal Inspection Service has produced several free, fraud-prevention DVDs. Individuals may order the DVDs from the U.S. Postal Inspection Service Web site or by calling toll-free 1-800-STAMP-24 (1-800-782-6724). All DVDs feature a Spanish-language option. Multiple copies may be ordered from a Postal Inspector in your area or by contacting the Liaison Group at Headquarters.

Fraud-Prevention DVDs

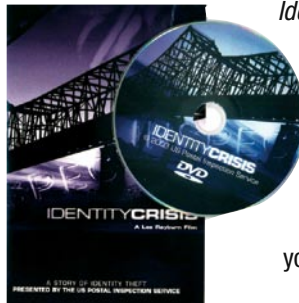
All the King's Men: Picking Up the Pieces. Explains the laws that protect victims of federal crimes and services and support available to them. The U.S. Postal Inspection Service urges victims to learn more about their rights and services.

Nowhere to Run: Cross-Border Fraud. Illustrates how U.S. Postal Inspectors created task forces with Canadian law enforcement partners to stop “long distance” scams.

Web of Deceit: Internet Fraud. Tells the story of a scammer who uses the Internet to victimize unsuspecting consumers around the world until he gets caught in his own web of deceit. It also provides tips on what to watch out for when you do business on the Internet.

Long Shot: Foreign Lottery Scams. Tells the story of a foreign lottery fraud victim and the con artist behind the scam and provides tips on helping you avoid becoming a victim of foreign lottery scams.

Work-at-Home Scams: They Just Don't Pay. Tells the story of a new type of work-at-home scam and how a young mother gets caught up in it. It also provides tips on how to avoid being duped by criminals and what to do if you have been victimized.



Identity Crisis: Protect Your Identity. Tells the story of a couple whose credit is ruined and of the criminals who defrauded them and provides tips on how to protect against identity fraud — and what to do if you become a victim.

Delivering Justice: Dialing for Dollars. Telemarketing fraud costs Americans millions of dollars each year, and older Americans are prime targets. This 15-minute DVD relates the story of such a scam and the lives that are ruined by criminals. It includes tips on how to protect yourself from investment fraud and tells you what to do if you've been victimized.



Publications

The Postal Inspection Service also offers consumer-awareness and public information guides, including the following:

- *Annual Report of Investigations.*
- Notice 299, *Money Order Security Features* (also in Spanish).
- Publication 146, *Law Enforcement Guide to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.*
- Publication 280, *Identity Theft.*
- Publication 166, *Mail Center Security Guide.*
- Publication 260-A, *Delivering a World of Career Opportunities.*
- Publication 281, *Consumer Fraud by Phone or Mail.*
- Publication 300-A, *Guide to Preventing Mail Fraud* (also in Spanish).
- Publication 308, *Know Your Rights: A Guide for Victims and Witnesses of Crime* (also in Spanish).

Postal Inspection Service publications are available at its Web site for viewing and printing and the publications may be ordered from the Postal Service's Material Distribution Center by calling, toll-free, 1-800-332-0317 and providing the publication's title and number. There is a minimal charge for printed material.



U.S. Postal Inspection Service Divisions

ATLANTA DIVISION

PO BOX 16489
ATLANTA GA 30321-0489
404-608-4500

BOSTON DIVISION

495 SUMMER ST STE 600
BOSTON MA 02210-2114
617-556-4400

CHARLOTTE DIVISION

PO BOX 3000
CHARLOTTE NC 28228-3000
704-329-9120

CHICAGO DIVISION

433 W HARRISON ST RM 50190
CHICAGO IL 60669-2201
312-983-7901

DENVER DIVISION

1745 STOUT ST STE 900
DENVER CO 80299-3034
303-313-5320

DETROIT DIVISION

PO BOX 330119
DETROIT MI 48232-6119
313-226-8184

FT WORTH DIVISION

14800 TRINITY BLVD SUITE 600
FT WORTH TX 76155-2675
817-359-2711

HOUSTON DIVISION

PO BOX 1276
HOUSTON TX 77251-1276
713-238-4400

LOS ANGELES DIVISION

PO BOX 2000
PASADENA CA 91102-2000
626-405-1200

MIAMI DIVISION

3400 LAKESIDE DR 6TH FL
MIRAMAR FL 33027-3242
954-436-7200

NEWARK DIVISION

PO BOX 509
NEWARK NJ 07101-0509
973-693-5400

NEW YORK DIVISION

PO BOX 555
NEW YORK NY 10116-0555
212-330-3844

PHILADELPHIA DIVISION

PO BOX 7500
PHILADELPHIA PA 19101-9000
215-895-8450

PITTSBURGH DIVISION

1001 CALIFORNIA AVE
PITTSBURGH PA 15290-9000
412-359-7900

ST. LOUIS DIVISION

1106 WALNUT ST
ST LOUIS MO 63199-2201
314-539-9300

SAN FRANCISCO DIVISION

PO BOX 882528
SAN FRANCISCO CA 94188-2528
415-778-5800

SEATTLE DIVISION

PO BOX 400
SEATTLE WA 98111-4000
206-442-6300

WASHINGTON DIVISION

10500 LITTLE PATUXENT PKWY 2ND FL
COLUMBIA MD 21044-3509
410-715-7700



This booklet was published by:

LIAISON GROUP
1735 N LYNN STREET
ARLINGTON, VA 22209-4011

or visit our Web site at: www.usps.com/postalinspectors