



POSTAL NEWS

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TIPS FOR SENDING BLIZZARD OF SANTA LETTERS

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Santa Claus has a lot in common with the United States Postal Service. Neither rain nor snow nor gloom of night keeps Santa from his appointed rounds at the homes of millions of children the world over. Of course, Santa's been doing it a bit longer than the Postal Service. But for the last 214 holiday seasons, he's relied almost exclusively on U.S. Mail carriers to bring him letters from girls and boys all across America.

This holiday season will be no different. The Postal Service is gearing up for a huge mail delivery to the North Pole to help Santa and his elves get ready for the big day.

Getting Mail to Santa – Quickly and Safely

Santa has offered to share these easy tips with children and their families to help their letters get to him as quickly and safely as possible:

- Children should ask their parents for help addressing and putting stamps on their letters. This can help reduce misspellings – which can slow down letters – or using too much or too little postage.
- Like all mail, it's important that letters to Santa include a complete return address with ZIP Code.
- Santa enjoys candy canes and cookies, and his reindeer enjoy fresh hay. But because these treats can be damaged or crushed when sent in a regular envelope, Santa says it's better to leave them out on Christmas Eve than to mail them.
- No extra packaging material, such as string or tape, is needed on a letter to Santa. The glue on the envelope flap is all that's needed.
- Letters addressed to Santa at the North Pole, AK, – as well as other holiday mail – can be given directly to letter carriers, rather than placed in collection boxes or taken to the Post Office. And, as always, families with curbside mailboxes can put mail in their mailboxes for pick up.

Helping Santa Help Those in Need

While Santa receives most of these letters addressed to him at the North Pole, AK, some are sent to certified organizations and individuals who help those in need. Many Santa letters will be answered by a variety of Santa's helpers – charitable organizations, employees of local Post Offices and volunteers who want to help make children's holiday wishes come true.

Post Office to Santa

The Postal Service is helping to create holiday memories for children. Parents and guardians can work with their children as they write letters to Santa. They can secretly craft a response from Santa and mail it in a second envelope to the Fairbanks, AK Post Office. Postal elves at the nearby North Pole Post Office will postmark Santa's replies and mail them back to the children. To make this holiday activity especially enjoyable, parents should follow these suggested ideas.

- Beyond the, “here’s what I want” list, parents can ask children to write about why the holiday season is special.
- Parents can also teach children that proper addressing techniques include a return address with ZIP Code.
- After taking the letters from the children, parents and guardians can tell them they will mail the letters. Parents should keep the letters in a safe place until they can write Santa’s response. In the event that the child might recognizes their handwriting, a friend or neighbor could rewrite the letter.
- To make Santa’s response special, beyond reminding children that Santa knows if they’ve been bad or good, a line or two about the child’s recent accomplishment could be added to the letter.
- As a P.S., Santa might want to remind the child to be in bed at a certain hour.
- Santa’s response should then be placed in a stamped envelope addressed to the child, and the North Pole, AK, should be included as the return address.
- This envelope should then be placed into a larger, properly stamped, First-Class Mail or Priority Mail envelope and mailed to:

North Pole Christmas Cancellation
 Postmaster
 5400 Mail Trail
 Fairbanks AK 99709-9998

- Cameras should be on hand so parents can record the excitement.
- Parents and guardians should save the child’s letter, Santa’s response and the photo and present them to the child years later in an album as a special gift.

North Pole postmark requests must arrive in Fairbanks, AK, before December 15, 2003. As the holidays approach, parents should consider mailing requests via Express Mail.

Customers interested in obtaining the North Pole Postmark on greeting cards should mail them to the same address, making sure that stamped envelopes contain inserts. Empty envelopes can be damaged by high-speed sorting equipment.

By following these helpful hints customers can keep letters to and from Santa moving as quickly as possible, thus avoiding delays that could result from the appearance of envelopes or the way the letters have been prepared. To learn more about new mail safety measures put into place by the Postal Service, visit www.usps.com.

Since 1775, the U.S. Postal Service has connected friends, families, neighbors and businesses by mail. It is an independent federal agency that visits 141 million homes and businesses every day and is the only service provider to deliver to every address in the nation. The Postal Service receives no taxpayer dollars for routine operations, but derives its operating revenues solely from the sale of postage, products and services. With annual revenues of more than \$68.9 billion, it is the world’s leading provider of mailing and delivery services, offering some of the most affordable postage rates in the world. The U.S. Postal Service delivers more than 46 percent of the world’s mail volume—some 202 billion letters, advertisements, periodicals and packages a year—and serves seven million customers each day at its 38,000 retail locations nationwide.