

Post Office suggests early mailing

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Encouraging customer to mail early this holiday season, the Gothenburg Post Office has released its suggested mail-by dates to ensure holiday cards and packages reach their destinations in time.

Holiday cards and packages destined for military addresses in Afghanistan should be in the mail no later than Dec. 3. The mail-by date for all other military addresses is Dec. 10.

To help the families and friends of U.S. military personnel, the Postal Service offers a \$2 discount on its largest Priority Mail Flat Rate boxes.

For international destinations, mail-by dates range from Dec. 3 to Dec. 13 depending on the destination, with Global Express Guaranteed service available through Dec. 19 for most countries (Dec. 20 if mailing to Canada or Mexico).

Suggested mail-by dates for cards and packages destined for U.S. addresses are: Dec. 14 for Parcel Post; Dec. 20 for First-Class Mail, Dec. 21 for Priority Mail, and Dec. 22 for Express Mail.

Monday, Dec. 17, is expected to be the busiest mailing day of the year and Dec. 19 and 20 the busiest delivery days.

The Postal Service expects to handle 365 million packages this holiday season—a 20% increase over last year. Overall, the Postal Service projects to handle nearly 18 billion cards, packages and letters between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve.

Postmaster Kevin Allard says the best advice he can give busy customers this time of year is to ship from home for the holidays.

Tips for holiday mailing and shipping:

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Confirm addresses. Print addresses clearly and be sure to include all address elements—apartment numbers, suite numbers and directional information for streets. For example: 123 S Main St. or 12456 Elm St. N. Include both “to” and “from” information on packages—and only on one side. Never guess a ZIP Code. Visit usps.com to find all ZIP codes.

Choose the right box. Select a box that is strong enough to protect the contents. Leave space for cushioning inside. Do not reuse mailing boxes—they weaken in the shipping process.

Pack delicately. Cushion contents with shredded or rolled newspaper, bubble wrap or foam peanuts. Plain air-popped popcorn also is good for cushioning—it’s inexpensive and environmentally friendly. Pack contents tightly to avoid shifting during transit. Always use tape that is designed for shipping, such as pressure-sensitive tape, nylon-reinforced craft paper tape or glass-reinforced pressure-sensitive tape. Do not use wrapping paper, string, masking tape, duct tape or cellophane tape.