

ABOUT THE UPS AND MAIL THEFT

What do USPS Postal Inspectors do?

They are the focal point for all investigations into mail theft and associated identity theft, fraud associated with mail theft, and all other associated crimes. They investigate the crimes and aid in the prosecution of all mail thieves.

Are USPS Postal Inspectors actively working on mail theft in our area?

Absolutely. The USPS Postal Inspectors have many inspectors throughout Northern California, and several inspectors assigned to an area spanned by the following counties: Alameda, Contra Costa, Solano, Lake, and Napa.

How are Postal Inspectors assigned and how many serve our area?

They are assigned by zip code. A portion of one inspector's time is assigned to 94611.

If mail theft is such a growing crime, why isn't a more diligent effort applied to investigation, arrest and conviction?

It's a question of resources. Recent budget cuts affect everything from the number of investigators that can be hired, to the number of courtrooms available for trying cases. Thefts are rising while resources to battle the war are shrinking.

Should I report mail theft to my *local* Post Office?

No. Local post offices are not equipped or staffed to respond to mail theft or keep records on mail theft. The local post offices forward any mail theft reports to the USPS Postal Inspectors. You will get more effective results if you report mail theft directly to the USPS Postal Inspection Service at their [Hotline numbers](#).

What role does the local postal service have regarding mail theft?

Mail carriers have been instructed to call evidence of any suspicious activity to the station, and to call the police directly if they observe a theft in progress.

They have also been instructed to be sure that mail is dropped securely into locking boxes, rather than leaving it hanging out.

How do I know if my stolen mail has resulted in identity theft?

If you suspect identity theft, the USPS Postal Inspector will provide you with guidelines and a course of action. There are also lots of internet resources. One way is to search on the Web for "Identity Theft Victim."

What is a likely sentence for a mail theft conviction?

Sentences are incongruously light: a drug offense will keep an offender behind bars longer than mail and identity theft. The federal statute allows a 5-year sentence, but that is rarely handed down.

How can we avoid mail carriers putting mail only partially into the locked mailboxes, thereby defeating the purpose of the locked mailbox?

Carriers are trained to insert mail completely into the box. If they don't, contact the Piedmont Post Office (which covers the Montclair satellite) and ask for the Stationmaster.

Mail carriers leave oversized mail and packages beside the mailbox. Shouldn't they bring it to the door?

The USPS is not required to deliver to a door. The carrier is instructed to leave a notice in your mailbox indicating undelivered oversized mail, then take the undelivered mail back to the Piedmont Post Office. You pick up the mail from the Post Office (do not check the re-deliver box). Some carriers may believe they're doing the resident a favor by leaving oversized mail at the mailbox and avoiding the need for a trip to the post office. This is contrary to their training.

Does the USPS allow moving mailboxes to a location that will more easily allow monitoring for theft?

You must obtain approval to move your mailbox: You may propose a location change through the Stationmaster at the Piedmont Post Office. Following are basic regulations about locating a mailbox:

- Customers must keep the approach to their mailboxes clear of obstructions to allow safe access for delivery. If USPS employees are impeded in reaching a mail receptacle, the postmaster may withdraw delivery service.
- A curbside mailbox must be placed to allow safe and convenient delivery by carriers without leaving their vehicles.

How do I put my mail on Vacation Hold?

Mail can be placed on hold on the Internet by going to www.usps.com. Click on "Hold Mail" and you'll be taken to a secure site for entering your information. You can also pick up a "Hold Mail" card at any Post Office branch.

Will the USPS automatically deliver mail at the end of a Vacation Hold?

If you anticipate that the accumulated vacation mail will require an additional box from the USPS and will not fit directly into your mailbox, **do not** check "Have Mail Delivered." Pick it up the mail from the Post Office in person.

We've been told that a white look-alike postal jeep is responsible for much of our mail theft. Is this true?

The USPS auctions off postal jeeps to the public after stripping off the USPS insignia. Many people buy the jeeps for legitimate uses, but some do not..

The white unmarked jeeps and other vehicles are often seen leaving fliers and business cards on mailboxes. Is this legitimate or a ruse for looking innocent while stealing mail? Is it legal?

As to legality, any advertising on a mailbox or its support is prohibited. Regulations state "No part of a mail receptacle may be used to deliver any matter not bearing postage, including items or matter placed upon, supported by, attached to, hung from, or inserted into a mail receptacle. Any mailable matter not bearing postage and found as described above is subject to the same postage as would be paid if it were carried by mail."