

INVEST IN A LOCKING MAILBOX

Why is the Montclair Neighborhood Council promoting locking mailboxes?

The best way to crack this crime in Montclair is to prevent it, and locking mailboxes have proven to be strong deterrents. A community full of locking mailbox sends a very strong message to mail thieves that we're not worth their while.

Where can I purchase a locking mailbox?

The Montclair Neighborhood Council does not endorse any manufacturer's box. Residents are encouraged to check out all the options available and select the locking box that best meets their needs. Local hardware stores such as Montclair Village Hardware (Woodminster), Ace Hardware and The Home Depot typically carry or can order locking mailboxes. The following Internet sites also offer locking boxes, and you may find others by searching the Web:

- Locking Security Mailbox: www.lockingsecuritymailbox.com
- Fort Knox Mailbox: www.fortknoxmailbox.com
- Mail Boss: www.mailboss.com
- Mailguard: www.mailguard.net

Why is the provision for handling outgoing mail so marginal in some of these locking boxes?

The USPS and the Montclair Neighborhood Council highly recommend that NO outgoing mail be put in a residential mailbox for pick-up; the chances of mail theft are too great, especially if you raise the red flag. We recommend using USPS collection boxes on the streets or at the Post Office for all outgoing mail. At the very minimum, don't raise the flag if you have outgoing mail in your box; the USPS will pick up mail even if the flag is not raised.

What if I lose the key to my box?

All locking boxes come with at least two keys. It is recommended a spare key be made and stored in a safe place. If you do lose all keys, a good locksmith can either replace the lock or provide a new key. Manufacturers in some cases can sell you a new lock with keys.

What about a locking box with a "smart-lock" feature?

Smart-lock is a mechanical device that allows you to lock your box but permits it to be opened one time after you do so, which permits the USPS to deliver your mail. When they close the door it is locked to all but you, using your key. The disadvantage, of course, is someone else could open the door before the USPS arrives, and defeat the carrier's ability to deliver your mail. Or, if you check for mail before it has been delivered you have to reset the lock.

Is there a way to put a locking insert in my existing mailbox?

Yes. There are several locking mailbox inserts available, including from [California Locking Mailbox Store](#) and the [Mailbox Shoppe](#). You may find others locally or by searching the Web.

How far can one go in designing and building their own locking box?

USPS regulations state that a custom-built box "must generally meet the same standards as approved manufactured boxes for flag, size, strength and quality of construction." Construction standards for manufactured boxes are available through USPS Engineering.

How can a group of neighbors mount a series of locking boxes on one post?

Posts with spreaders that can hold up to four locking boxes are available from a number of mailbox manufacturers. You can also install your own posts and spreaders using pressure-treated or weather-protected lumber. Installing the post(s),

spreaders and boxes can be a great neighbor-gathering activity and sends a message to would-be thieves that you are looking out for each other in all areas of crime prevention.

What standards apply to replacing our current box?

Every curbside mailbox must bear the following address information:

- A box number, if used, inscribed in contrasting color in neat letters and numerals at least 1 inch high on the side of the box visible to the carrier's regular approach, or on the door if boxes are grouped.
- A house number if street names and house numbers have been assigned by local authorities, and the postmaster authorizes their use as a postal address. If the box is on a different street from the customer's residence, the street name and house number must be inscribed on the box.
- The mailbox may bear the owner's name, but the Montclair Neighborhood Council does not recommend this—it's one more way for criminals to have information you don't want them to have.

As to the door slot:

- A mailbox with a lock must have a slot that is large enough to accommodate the customer's normal daily mail volume. The USPS neither opens a locked box nor accepts a key for this purpose.
- The clear rectangular opening in the outside slot plate must be at least 1-1/2 inches wide and 7 inches long.
- When an inside hood is used to provide greater privacy, the hooded portion must not be below the bottom line of the slot in the outside plate if placed horizontally, or beyond the side line of the slot in the outside plate nearest the hinge edge of the door if placed vertically.
- The hood at its greatest projection must not be less than 2-1/16 inches beyond the inside face of the door.
- The bottom of the slot must be at least 30 inches above the finished floor line.