

Your Postal Podcast 35th Edition Transcript

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Richard Watkins: Welcome to Your Postal Podcast. This is Richard Watkins of the Postal Service's Western Area Corporate Communications Center. In this edition, you'll hear how "going Green" can save some serious "green" for the Postal Service. And we'll sort through some of the more unique modes of delivery used by the Postal Service through the years.

Go Green Segment

Watkins: Going Green is all the rage. But the Postal Service goes beyond slogans and is actually making big strides in sustainability, which is impacting the bottom line. David Rupert is here with the details.

David Rupert: Each year, the Postal Service issues a social awareness stamp. Alzheimer's, Adopt a Pet, and Domestic Violence are some of the recent stamp issuances in the series.

This year, it's "Go Green."

Emil Dzuray, the acting USPS Chief Sustainability Officer is positive about the stamps:

Emil Dzuray: We've received a tremendously positive reaction from everybody who has seen the stamp: Our customers, our employees, and also the media. Media around the country and international are calling to learn more about the initiative. So we're really getting a lot of positive reaction. Not only the beautiful artwork on the stamps, but the clear and simple messages that there are simple steps we all can take to make the world a better place.

Rupert: The stamps have a whimsical, simple approach to common-sense sustainability efforts. The message of the stamps can apply to postal operations as well.

Dzuray: There are really, even now with our current financial crisis, very simple and small steps that each employee can make, that when added up over time, make an enormous positive benefit to the environment, to our cost savings and in some cases, to actual revenue generation.

Rupert: Our supply usage is lower, which leads to big savings as well.

Dzuray: We've used about 20 percent less consumables in the last two years, and that turns out to be hundreds of millions of dollars less that we're spending on supplies to get our job done. So, we're using less, being more efficient and encouraging our employees to waste nothing. Instead of throwing things away, we're really trying to encourage our employees to recycling everything. Last year we made about \$15 million corporately in our recycling revenues.

Rupert: And there's more. Energy use is down as well.

Dzuray: Our facilities teams have been doing a nice job of putting in energy-efficient lighting, upgrading HVAC systems, working in insulation, roofs, windows -- things of that nature. As a result of their efforts, corporately we've seen a reduction since 2003 of about 28 to 29 percent of our total energy use, and that is a tremendous savings cost-wise, as well as a tremendous benefit to the environment.

Rupert: There's one thing that the public really needs to know about our sustainability efforts.

Dzuray: I really wish the public would understand that everything we do at the Postal Service, whether it's our green initiatives, or everything, we do with our own operating funds. And the sustainability initiatives we are doing are good for the Postal Service, they're good for the environment, and they're good for the public at large -- and we do it all without taking taxpayer dollars.

Mail Transportation Segment

Watkins: Moving the mail -- it's a key component to our operations. Throughout our history, we've used all kinds of ways to get letters from Point A to Point B. Lisa Nystuen gives an historical perspective on some of the quirkier methods.

Lisa Nystuen: Over the years, we've changed our mail transportation and delivery methods numerous times thanks to war, economic turmoil and emerging new technologies.

Here's a few of the quirkier ways:

Since the 19th Century, we've used mules to deliver the mail. These beasts of burdens have faithfully served over the years and continue to haul mail down to the bottom of the Grand Canyon.

From the turn of the century until the 1950s, we used an underground system of pneumatic tubes to move the mail in New York, Boston, St. Louis, Chicago and Philadelphia.

We still use snowmobiles in snowy places like Minnesota, Wisconsin and Alaska for winter deliveries.

From 1941 to 1974, the White Motor Company built special buses equipped with letter cases and as many as 150 mail sacks to sort the mail while en route.

And when suburbia blossomed in the 50s, the postal service responded with the Mailster -- a three wheeled vehicle that hauled 500 pounds of mail.

And the most ambitious? On June 8, 1959, the Navy submarine USS Barbero launched a cruise missile filled with 300 commemorative letters off the coast of Florida. The missile made a flawless descent after soaring for 22 minutes. The PMG declared this: "Before man reaches the moon, mail will be delivered within hours from New York to California, to Britain, to India or Australia by guided missiles. We stand on the threshold of rocket mail." Despite the success of the initial experiment, the USPS never revisited the idea of missile mail. It was... cost prohibitive.

We have toyed with Segways, but uneven surfaces seemed to slow them.

Today we have a few electric vehicles, a hydrogen fuel cell vehicle, and ethanol and bio diesel-fueled vehicles.

It seems our hunt for the perfect delivery vehicle will never stop.

Watkins: And now, here's a brief rundown of Postal Service headlines. In a first-of-its-kind contract, the Postal Service and Discover Financial Services have entered into an agreement that will help retain First-Class Mail and grow Standard Mail volume. On March 15th, the Postal Regulatory Commission notified the Postal Service that the agreement could be implemented. This is the first such agreement for domestic market dominant products under the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006.

Quoting Paul Vogel, Postal Service president and chief marketing/sales officer, "This ruling benefits both Discover Financial Services and the Postal Service." Mr. Vogel added that, quote: "It's important in its approach as the first multi-class agreement that is designed to add new vitality to billing and statement mail." The agreement provides incentives to slow the diversion of First-Class Mail to electronic channels, while spurring a corresponding increase in Standard Mail.

And on April 6th, the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) announced that the nation's largest food drive to combat hunger will be conducted this year on Saturday, May 14th. On that day, letter carriers will collect non-perishable donations from homes as they deliver mail along their postal routes. This is the 19th Annual NALC National Food Drive to Stamp Out Hunger. The one-day drive is held annually on the second Saturday in May in 10,000 cities and towns in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Guam.

Carriers last year collected a record 77.1 million pounds of food donations along their postal routes – pushing the total to more than one billion pounds for the food drive, which began in 1992.

Americans are encouraged to leave a sturdy bag containing non-perishable foods, such as canned soup, canned vegetables, canned meats and fish, pasta, rice or cereal next to their mailbox before the regular mail delivery on Saturday, May 14th.

Watkins: Thank you for listening to Your Postal Podcast. Now we'd like to hear from you. Please send your feedback and story ideas to YourPostalPodcast@usps.com. A production of USPS Western Area Corporate Communications. Copyright 2011, All Rights Reserved.