

Postmarking Myths and Facts

Jan. 2, 2026

MYTH: How the Postal Service applies postmarks is changing.

FACT: The Postal Service has not changed and is not changing our postmarking practices, which have been consistent since we began moving away from hand-canceling every item at Post Offices decades ago. Postmarks are generally applied by machines at our originating processing facilities and will continue to be applied at those facilities in the same manner and to the same extent as before. Postmarks applied at those facilities will continue to contain the name or location of the facility that applied the postmark and the date on which the first automated processing operation was performed on that mailpiece.

While we are not changing our postmarking practices, we have made adjustments to our transportation operations that will result in some mailpieces not arriving at our originating processing facilities on the same day that they are mailed. This means that the date on the postmarks applied at our processing facilities will not necessarily match the date on which the customer's mailpiece was collected by a letter carrier or dropped off at a retail location.

As before, a customer can ensure that a postmark is applied to his or her mailpiece, and that the date on the postmark matches the date of mailing, by visiting a Postal Service retail location and requesting a manual (local) postmark at the retail counter when tendering their mailpiece. Manual postmarks will be applied free of charge.

MYTH: The Postal Service has long offered the postmark as a way of proving when mail was sent.

FACT: Customers have used postmarking for their own purposes, but postmarking is not and has not been a service that the Postal Service has provided to the public for such purposes. The postmark has always fundamentally existed to perform functions (including cancellation of postage) internal to Postal Service operations.

Customers who wish to obtain a postmark aligning with the date of mailing may request a manual (local) postmark at a retail location. Customers who wish to retain a record or proof of the date on which the Postal Service first accepted possession of their mailpiece(s) may purchase a Certificate of Mailing. Registered Mail and Certified Mail services also provide mailing receipts for individual mailpieces.

MYTH: The Postal Service didn't notify the public about this update to its language.

FACT: The Postal Service engaged in discussions with customer groups, posted information on our [website](#), and initiated a public notice and comment period in the Federal Register in August 2025, which concluded when the Postal Service published its final notice on this topic, including responses to the comments received, in November 2025. [Federal Register :: Postmarks and Postal Possession](#). The filing also includes details about our efforts to communicate this information with the public and various interest groups. The updated Domestic Mail Manual (DMM) language clarifies our practices so that customers who need a postmark, including a postmark with a date that aligns with the date of mailing, can plan accordingly.

MYTH: Postmarks show when and where the Postal Service took possession of my mail.

FACT: A postmark date does not necessarily indicate the first day that the Postal Service took possession of the mailpiece. Rather, it confirms that the Postal Service accepted custody of a mailpiece, and that the mailpiece was in the possession of the Postal Service on the identified date. Also note that the absence of a postmark does not necessarily imply that the Postal Service did not accept custody of a mailpiece, because the Postal Service does not postmark all mail in the ordinary course of operations and because occasional circumstances may arise where a legible postmark is not applied.

Again, if a customer wants to ensure that their mailpiece receives a postmark, and that the date on the postmark aligns with the date of mailing, the customer may take the mailpiece to a Postal Service retail location and request a manual (local) postmark at the retail counter when tendering their mailpiece. The manual postmark will be applied free of charge.

