

VILLAGE VIEW

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longer than 11-1/2", or thicker than 1/4", or if they are longer than 2.5, or shorter than 1.3, times the height. Such larger and odd-shaped envelopes must be hand-cancelled and the extra handling now costs 13 cents in addition to regular postage charges based on weight.

As always, whenever there's a change in regulations, the public is outraged. How we do hate change! No matter how small or insignificant and no matter how reasonable and necessary, we resist change as though we were being asked to readjust our entire life-style. Accepting zip codes took so long a time, the postal service nearly gave up in despair before Americans finally decided to make zip codes a regular part of their mailing practice.

In spite of the new rules being imposed, the postal service isn't as uncooperative as we're sometimes led to believe. The people behind the counter are anxious to provide good service to the public and are unfailingly helpful if we give them a chance to solve problems.

In addition to First Class Mail and Parcel Post with which most of us are familiar, second and third class are available to individuals as well as organizations and businesses. Less well known are priority and express mail.

Priority mail provides the fastest transportation and most expeditious handling of mail weighing more than 12 ounces but less than 70 pounds, measuring up to 100" in combined length and girth. Express mail guarantees fast, reliable, overnight delivery, or your money back. Since it's not available at all postal facilities, you may have to travel to an office other than your local one to use express mail.

If you want proof your mail was delivered, you can request a return receipt; if all you need is proof you mailed something, you can ask for a Certificate of Mailing. Certified mail provides you with a mailing receipt and the post office keeps a record of delivery at the recipient's post office.

Insured and registered mail is available when you send valuables by post. Money orders are a safe way to mail money. All such services cost something, of course, but when you need the extra protection, it's worth the fee.

If you send a package to someone in service or at an overseas base, PAL is the inexpensive way. For parcels up to 30 pounds, and 60 inches in combined length and girth, you pay the regular parcel post rate to port of exit, plus a small (25 cents to \$1) fee for air service. At the port of exit, it becomes space-available mail for airlift overseas; no additional charge.

In addition to the other services your post office offers, you may apply for a passport at some of them. When you move, first class mail will be forwarded free-of-charge for a full year. You can obtain a Change of Address kit from your post office prior to your move and notify correspondents and publishers of your new address, thereby avoiding fees to forward other classes of mail.

Many of us order merchandise through the mail to save time and money. Sometimes mail order companies are dishonest and we find our money gone and no merchandise forthcoming. If you're ordering from a company with which you're unfamiliar, postal officials suggest you check with the Better Business Bureau before placing your order. In any case, should you experience difficulty or suspect you've been the victim of a fraud or misrepresentation scheme, contact your postmaster, or write the Consumer Advocate.

Occasionally, pieces of mail arrive, unsolicited, that are offensive. You can avoid being the recipient of pornographic or sexually oriented advertisements by filing Form 2201, Application for Listing Pursuant to 39 USC 3010, at your local post office. Thirty days from the date your name is added to the reference list, any mailer who sends you sexually oriented advertisements is subject to legal action by the United States Government.

Furthermore, regardless of whether your name is on the reference list, you may obtain an order prohibiting any further mail from anyone who has sent you an advertisement which you, in your sole discretion, consider "erotically arousing or sexually provocative". Form 2150 is available at all local post offices for this purpose.

And finally, for many people the post office is a constant source of material for a fascinating hobby; stamp collecting. Collecting stamps requires no special skills and you don't need a lot of expensive equipment to enjoy it. Almost every imaginable subject is depicted on stamps.

All you need to start a stamp collection is a few stamps and a place to keep them, such as a book. Philatelic products are available at your post office, as are new and recently issued stamps and postal stationery. Collecting kits, the book titled "Stamps and Stories", and Mint Sets of commemorative and special stamps issued in recent years are on sale; should your local office have none in stock, they may be ordered from the Philatelic Sales Branch, U.S. Postal Service, Washington, D.C. 20265.

For further information about stamp collecting, write the U.S. Stamp Information Service, P.O. Box 23501, Washington, D.C. 20024.

There's one problem you still have if you own a large supply of those 'informals'; since you can't mail them anymore, what will you do with them? You don't have to throw them away.

You can enclose them with gifts, hand-deliver them yourself, or tuck them into an envelope of a size acceptable to the post office and send your message for the usual postage.

Next time you order note paper, of course, your stationery store will offer a larger size, one that conforms to the new regulations, and the new obsolete 'informal' will go the way of the Dodo bird.