

Postal Employee Crime Prevention



Publication 302, July 1999



United States Postal Inspection Service

For assistance with postal-related problems, please contact the nearest Inspection Service Division.

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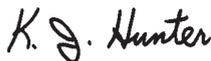
1. Purpose. This booklet was prepared by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service to help postal employees protect themselves and postal property against crime. Postal Inspectors wish to help employees to be good citizens by doing what they can to deny opportunities to potential criminals. While we cannot prevent all crimes, there are many actions we can take to decrease the likelihood of becoming victimized.

2. Requisition. To obtain a copy of this booklet, postal employees must submit Form 7380, *MDC Supply Requisition*, to the Topeka Material Distribution Center.

3. Questions and Comments. Check this page for Postal Inspection Service locations and contact numbers. If you would like to make suggestions or comments about this booklet, please send them to:

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4. Effective Date. This publication is effective upon receipt.



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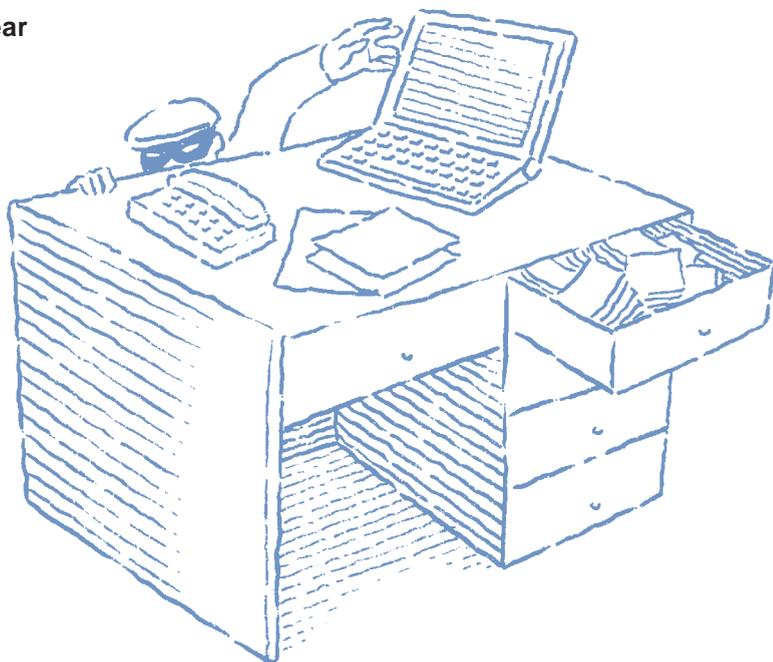
Protecting the Postal Service and YOU

Crime prevention shouldn't be limited to the home. Practice good security on the job too. The following pages list some precautions that you as postal employees can take while at work.

- 2** Office Security
- 3** Key Control
- 4** Sneak Thefts
- 5** Mail Theft
- 5** Vehicle Break-Ins
- 6** Check and Postal Money Order Precautions
- 7** Acceptable Identification
- 8** Burglary Prevention
- 10** Assault Prevention
- 11** Do's and Don'ts for Carriers
- 12** Carrier and Post Office Robbery
- 14** Bombs in the Mail
- 16** Employee Assistance Program

Office Security

- Don't leave valuable personal items on or in an unlocked desk. Lock them up — they can be stolen in a matter of seconds.
- Never carry more cash than you need.
- Always make it a habit to lock up calculators, tape recorders, radios, etc. in either your desk or a filing cabinet at the end of the day.
- Make sure the serial number on all U.S. Postal Service equipment issued to you is reported to the appropriate individual for recording.
- Make sure desk drawers and cabinets containing important documents, equipment, office doors, and windows are locked at the end of each workday.
- **Most important — immediately report any unauthorized or suspicious persons on postal property, in postal buildings, or near postal equipment.**

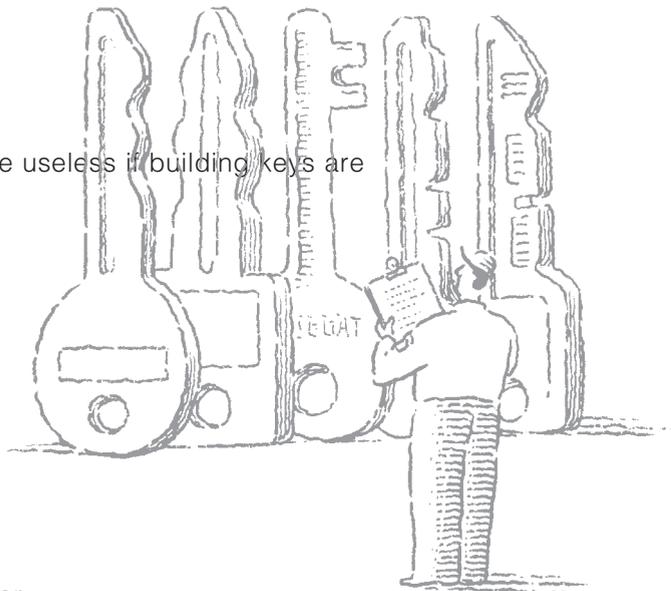


Key Control

The best doors and locks are useless if building keys are not properly controlled.

REMEMBER!

- Building keys should be issued only to employees required to open the office in the morning or to close the office at night.
- When keys are issued, number them and maintain an adequate record control log.
- Immediately report any lost keys to your supervisor.
- **Most important — never leave keys in desk drawers or where a burglar can find them if the keys provide access to retail cabinets, alarm controls, or any cabinets where valuable or confidential materials are kept.**

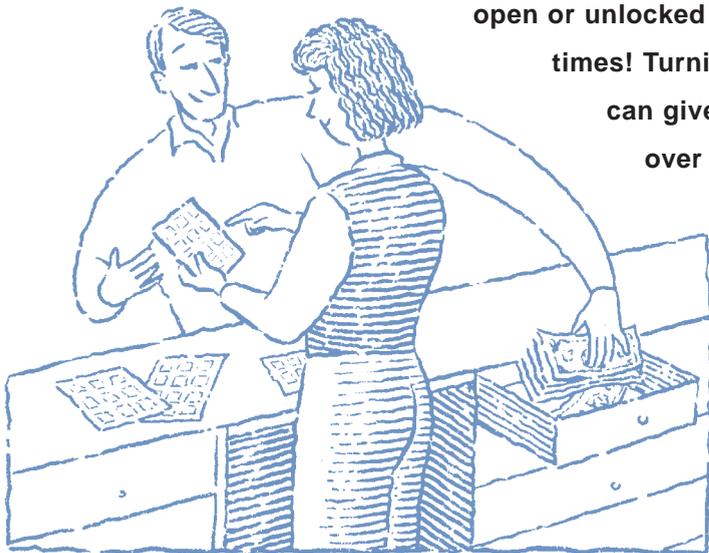


Sneak Thefts

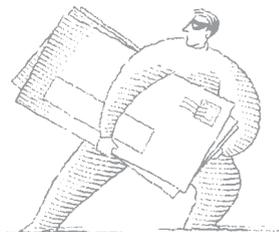
Cash and food stamps in cash drawers are very appealing targets for the “quick hand.” An experienced sneak thief requires only a few seconds to lean over the counter and grab a handful of large bills or food stamps while a clerk’s back is turned. Small offices are especially vulnerable to these thieves since they generally have only one person on duty. This makes it easy for the sneak thief to distract a clerk’s attention away from the cash drawer under some pretense.

USE THESE PRECAUTIONS:

- Watch out for persons stalling for time or loitering in the lobby.
- Separate large bills so they will be difficult to reach by leaning over the counter.
- **Most important — never leave your counterline drawer open or unlocked unless it is in your direct view at all times! Turning your back even for just a second can give a sneak thief enough time to reach over and grab a handful of bills from an open drawer.**



Mail Theft



Like many crooks, mail thieves like easy targets. Some think the U.S. Mail is one.

Let's prove them wrong. By taking the following precautions, letter carriers can force mail thieves into an early retirement.

Vehicle Break-Ins

It only takes a few seconds for a thief to remove a tray of mail from an unprotected and unlocked vehicle.

DON'T TAKE THE CHANCE!

- Make sure your vehicle's locking mechanisms are in good working condition before leaving your postal unit.
- Always lock your vehicle — even if you are only going to be away from it for a moment.
- When possible, park your vehicle near busy intersections rather than on isolated residential streets where there is little traffic.
- Use vehicle security containers when available.
- Report any suspicious persons to the Postal Inspection Service.
- **Most important — do not leave registered or other valuable mail exposed.**



Check and Postal Money Order Precautions

Don't let a bad check or postal money order bounce your way!

Employees who accept checks and money orders for postal business should take precautions.

REMEMBER!

- Require two forms of identification:

- One required photo identification (driver's license, passport, or military ID).
- One other form of identification (credit card or check cashing card).

- Have check or money order signed in your presence.
- Record number and expiration date of photo identification.
- Record type and expiration date (if applicable) of other ID.
- Compare signatures with signatures on ID. If signatures do not match, do not accept the check or postal money order.
- Upon receiving postal money orders from customers, compare them with the latest *Postal Bulletin* list of Missing, Lost, or Stolen U.S. Money Order Forms.
- Then, the following additional precautions should be taken:
 - Hold the postal money order up to the light and note the Benjamin Franklin watermark and the Postal Service security thread. If you cannot see the watermark or the security thread, you may have a counterfeit money order.
 - Look at the physical appearance of money order. Does the paper appear to be worn and/or an odd or unusual color?
 - Check all areas with the dollar amount to check for accuracy and signs of tampering. Remember that POS money orders also have a dollar value text line that spells out the dollar amount.



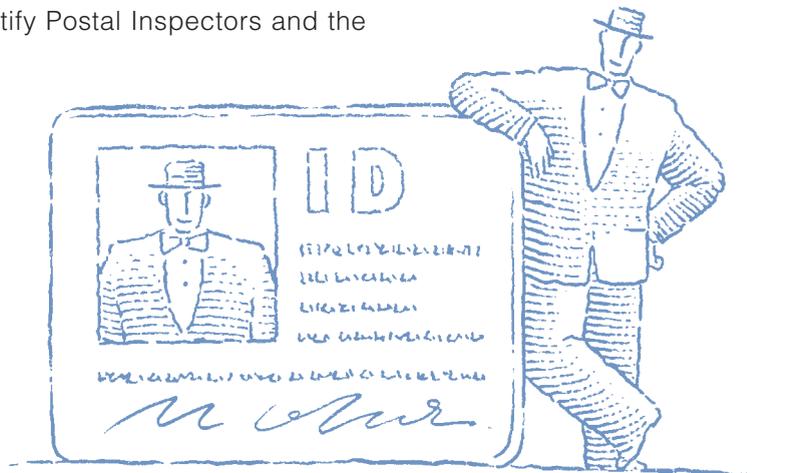
- In some cases, the color of the money order paper under the dollar amount area will be unnaturally shaded, showing signs of erasure and tampering. Crayons and chalk have been used by suspects to restore color in some altered money orders. Criminals will also raise the dollar amount of the money order by cutting and pasting. This can sometimes be seen by holding the document up to the light.

- **Most important — compare it with a genuine money order!**

If the money order appears on the list, or if there are signs of alterations or counterfeiting, then retain the money order and the record of the ID, issue the customer a receipt, and notify Postal Inspectors and the local police immediately.

Acceptable Identification

- Driver's license.
- Military identification card.
- Passport.
- Credit card.
- Other credentials showing the signature and having a serial number or other indicia, which can be traced to the bearer.
- **Note:** Social Security cards are not acceptable as identification because they are difficult to trace and are easily obtained in a phony name.



Burglary Prevention

Burglary is often a crime of opportunity. Burglars aim for the easiest targets, but most will give up if they can't get in within a few minutes. Let's make it hard for burglars to rob postal facilities. By following some tips, we can make their work difficult, risky, and unprofitable.

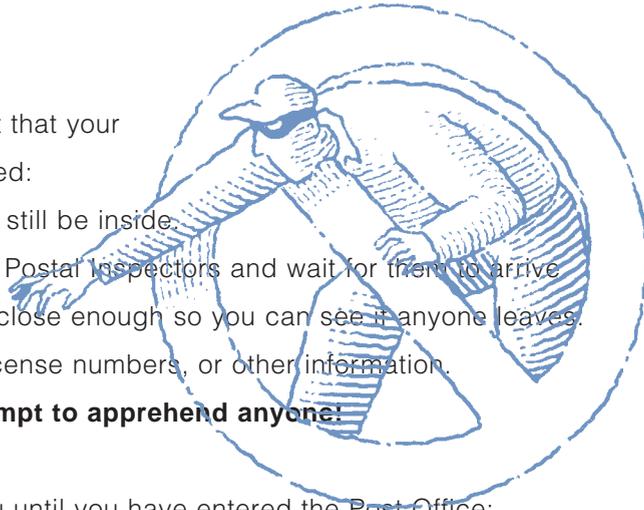
BEFORE CLOSING:

- Put all surplus cash in the bank.
- Put all remaining cash, food coupons, stamp stock, and money order forms in security containers, vaults, and burglarproof chests.
- Never store cash or accountable paper in service counter drawers. They can be easily pried open by burglars.
- Do not hide combinations to safes in the office.
- Be sure that safes and vaults are fully locked.
- Set the alarm.
- If vault doors or safes can be seen from the street, leave enough light burning to light these areas only if the local patrolling law enforcement agency requests that this be done.
- **Most important — make sure all doors and windows are locked when you leave.**

IF A BURGLAR GETS IN:

If you come to work and suspect that your postal facility has been burglarized:

- DON'T GO IN! The burglar may still be inside.
- Immediately call the police and Postal Inspectors and wait for them to arrive.
- Stay a safe distance away, but close enough so you can see if anyone leaves.
- Write down any descriptions, license numbers, or other information.
- **Most important — do not attempt to apprehend anyone!**



If a burglary is not obvious to you until you have entered the Post Office:

- DON'T TOUCH ANYTHING!
- Immediately call the police and Postal Inspectors.
- Protect the crime scene. Lock doors if necessary to keep others away.

Assault Prevention

Because of the nature of our jobs, postal employees must, on occasion, deal with dissatisfied or angry customers.

Although the likelihood of an assault occurring is quite small, unfortunately it can happen. You can reduce your chances of being assaulted, and, in the event you are assaulted, there are ways to increase your personal safety.

USE PREVENTATIVE MEASURES:

- Courtesy is contagious, and the courteous employee seldom has problems.
- Always display a pleasant disposition.
- Accept complaints and criticism as part of your job — don't take criticism personally.
- Don't get involved in verbal arguments! Most physical assaults result from minor arguments that get out of control. You should immediately report any problems to your supervisor.
- Don't expect your uniform or position as a government employee to protect you from assaults.
- Don't flaunt the right to withhold the irate customer's mail. Think of a demanding customer as a time bomb. Deliver his or her mail if it will prevent an assault and notify your supervisor of the incident.
- Don't subject yourself to possible criminal, civil, or disciplinary action by contributing to an assault.

IF PHYSICALLY ASSAULTED:

- Don't overreact and become the aggressor. Use no more force than necessary to defend yourself.
- Promptly notify police, Postal Inspectors, and your supervisor.

- Make notes of the events that led to the assault while they are fresh in your mind. Include the assailant's description, as much as possible.
- Get names and addresses of any witnesses.
- **Most important — be alert, be observant, and above all be careful!**



Do's and Don'ts for Carriers

DO use the inside pocket of your carrier satchel for registered and valuable mail.

DO make sure before delivering a check that the customer has not moved or filed a change of address.

DO make sure valuable mail (checks and food stamps) is placed in the correct receptacle, and, if possible, behind other mail.

DO take note of mail receptacles needing repair, using Form 4056, *Your Mailbox Needs Attention*.

DON'T deliver mail to customers on the street, the porch, or lobby of an apartment building if you are not sure they are the addressees.

DON'T leave mail containing checks or other valuable items outside mail receptacles at any time.

DON'T be an easy target on the street. Be alert for suspicious activities such as a person following you.

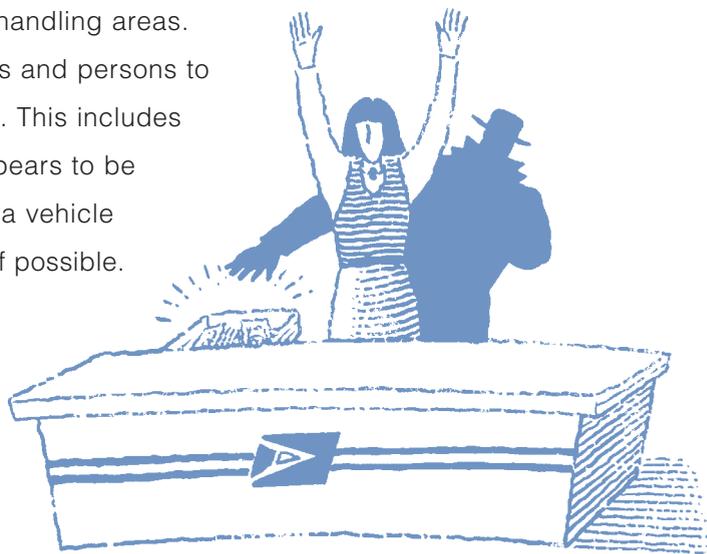
DON'T hesitate to report any suspicious activities to the police, Postal Inspectors, or your supervisor.

Carrier and Post Office Robbery

The likelihood of postal employees being robbed while on duty is small, but unfortunately it can happen. So, it's important that all postal employees know how to reduce the chance of being robbed.

TIPS FOR PREVENTING A ROBBERY:

- Carriers should be alert for trouble spots on their routes (such as a poorly lit apartment lobby) and approach them carefully. Don't carry excessive cash, jewelry, or personal items on your route.
- Drivers should secure their vehicles and the mail at all times.
- Be identification-conscious. Using caution, question unknown persons entering mail-handling areas.
- Report suspicious circumstances and persons to the police and Postal Inspectors. This includes anyone following you or who appears to be loitering on postal property. Get a vehicle license number and description if possible.
- Don't discuss currency shipments or other valuable mail procedures with unauthorized persons.
- Don't keep excess cash, or handle cash accounting transactions in public view.
- Lock cash and desk drawers when you are away from them.



IN CASE OF A ROBBERY:

- Someone points a gun at you and demands your money or mail. What do you do?
- GIVE IT TO HIM OR HER.
- Take no action that would jeopardize your personal safety. Don't panic; don't call for help; don't resist the robber or run away.
- "Play it cool"; do exactly as you are told.
- If you have a silent alarm and can reach it unnoticed, use it. Otherwise, wait until the robber leaves.
- Don't take any unnecessary chances.
- If the robber has written a note, place it aside and attempt to retain it as evidence.
- If possible, signal other employees. It might be a good idea to have a prearranged signal for such emergencies. Again, if there is a chance the robber will see you, wait. Try to avoid any sudden moves. Many robbers are just as nervous as you are.
- Don't be obvious, but try your best to observe the robber and his or her actions. Get a clear picture of the person in mind — features, voice, clothes, and the manner and direction of escape. When possible, get a vehicle description and license-plate number. Write down this information as soon as you can.
- Immediately contact police and Postal Inspectors. If the robbery occurs on the mail route, contact your supervisor.
- Do not compare notes with others until you have given your information to police and/or Postal Inspectors.
- **Most important — be alert, be observant, and above all, be careful!**

Bombs in the Mail

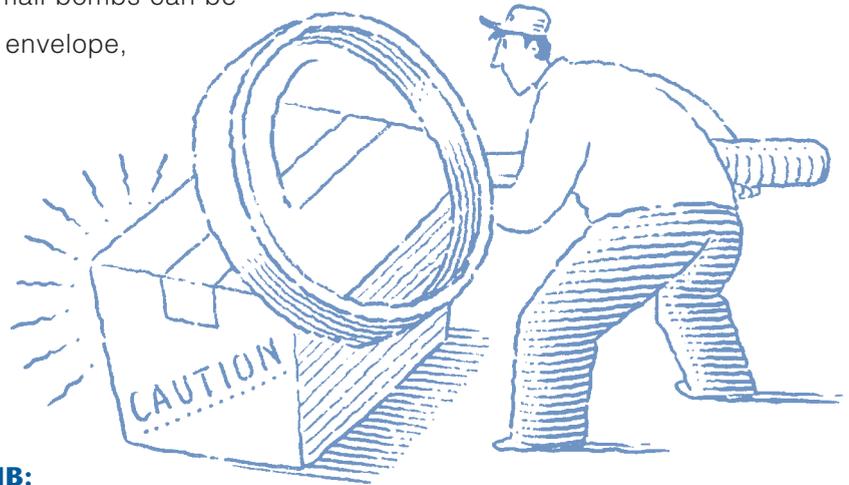
The likelihood of your ever handling a bomb is remote.

Over the past six years, Postal Inspectors have investigated an average of 16 mail bombs annually. Considering that the Postal Service delivers approximately 190 billion pieces of mail per year, Inspectors find less than one mail bomb per 10 billion pieces of mail.

However, to reduce the chances of a tragedy associated with mail bomb explosions, you should become familiar with the known characteristics of mail bombs and the proper procedures to follow if you **suspect** a package is a mail bomb. The following are mail bomb characteristics:

- An excessive amount of postage stamps may have been affixed.
- Letter bombs may feel rigid, or appear uneven or lopsided.
- Parcel bombs may be unprofessionally wrapped, with several combinations of tape to secure the package.
- The package may be endorsed FRAGILE — HANDLE WITH CARE, RUSH, or DO NOT DELAY.
- Parcel bombs may have an irregular shape, soft spots, or bulges.
- The package may bear restricted endorsements such as PERSONAL or PRIVATE.
- The package may show distorted handwriting or the name and address may be prepared with homemade labels or cut-and-paste lettering.
- The postmark may be different from the return address.
- Protruding wires, aluminum foil, or oil stains may be visible, and the package may emit a peculiar odor.

Keep in mind that mail bombs can be enclosed in either a parcel or an envelope, and the outward appearance is limited only by the imagination of the sender. New mail acceptance procedures for parcels over 16 ounces make it difficult for parcel bombs to enter the mailstream.



IF YOU SUSPECT A MAIL BOMB:

- If possible, open windows in the immediate area to assist in venting potential explosive gases.
- Contact the local police department (911), and your local Postal Inspector.
- Isolate the package and evacuate the immediate area.
- **Do not** place the package in water!
- If the article is being presented for mailing, do not accept it until you are satisfied it is not an explosive device.
- **Most important — CAUTION! If you have any reason to believe a letter or parcel is suspicious, do not take a chance or worry about possible embarrassment if the item turns out to be harmless. Contact your supervisor and Postal Inspectors immediately!**

Employee Assistance Program

If you've been a victim of a crime, you may need help and support. At varying times in our lives, we face problems, some of which may best be solved with professional assistance.

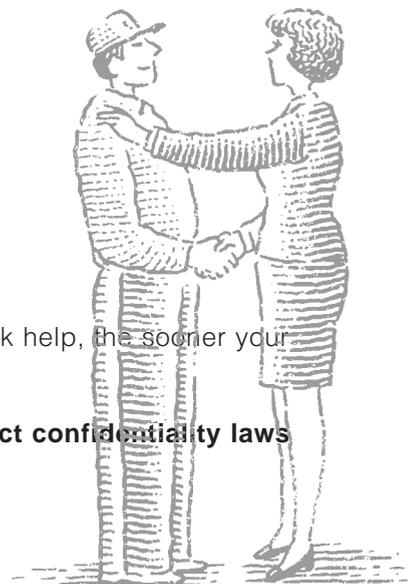
In response to this need, the Postal Service provides an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP is a counseling and referral service staffed by master's degree-trained health professionals. The EAP counselor can help you assess the problem, meet with family members as needed, provide short-term counseling, assist in selecting other professional services, and provide follow-up services you may need.

AT NO COST TO YOU, ASSISTANCE IS PROVIDED IN:

- Marital or family problems.
- Alcohol or other drug-related problems.
- Job-related problems.
- Legal or financial problems.
- Emotional problems.
- Other problems.

Don't wait too long! The sooner you seek help, the sooner your problems can be addressed!

Most important — your privacy is protected by strict confidentiality laws and regulations.



Be alert for indications of trouble:

- On your way to work.
- In the parking lot.
- Around entry and exit doors.
- While at work.
- In postal facilities.

Crime Prevention

REMEMBER!

If you see unauthorized or suspicious persons on postal property, in postal facilities, or near postal vehicles and mail, immediately contact your supervisor, a Postal Police Officer, or a Postal Inspector.

You'll be helping to...

Protect postal property and yourself!