

No Saturday mail delivery inches closer to reality

By Kathryn Reed



If officials keep moving in the direction they are headed, Saturday home delivery mail service may not exist this time next year.

The U.S. Postal Service is projecting a \$238 billion deficit for the next decade.

Eliminating Saturday service would also mean 49,000 full- and part-time jobs would be axed. More than half are likely to evaporate through attrition.

In South Lake Tahoe there are 14 rural routes. Some of the carriers work six days a week, while others rotate the sixth day. They are paid based on the volume of mail and the number of customers.

The most amount of mail is delivered on Mondays, while Tuesdays have the least volume. The average U.S. mailbox receives four pieces of mail a day. Officials say that number will drop to three in 10 years. Mail volume was down 12.7 percent in 2009.

The Postal Service says it makes \$1.40 for each delivery. That figure will drop to \$1 by 2020, according to the USPS. The agency is funded entirely by its own revenue and receives zero taxpayer dollars.

Going from six to five days a week is projected to save \$3.3 billion the first year and \$5.1 billion a year starting in 2020.

South Lake Tahoe Postmaster Toni Passot said she isn't sure how cutting Saturday delivery would affect the employees she oversees or workers throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin.

"The rural carriers still need to negotiate through their unions," Passot said. "The retail would still be open (Saturdays)."

People with post office boxes would continue to get mail on Saturdays, too.

The Postal Service board of governors approved the cuts this spring. Now it's up to the Postal Regulatory Commission to take action. Congress has the ultimate authority to change the number of days people receive mail even though the USPS is an independent government agency.

"Mostly residential customers would be affected. Most businesses in South Lake Tahoe don't get mail Saturday because the business is closed," Passot said.

She has not heard any feedback from customers about the potential changes.

The change, if approved, is slated to begin early next year.

Locally, the status of the Bijou Post Office remains up in the air. A decision is expected this month as to whether it will be closed. The Postal Service owns the building for the main office in South Lake Tahoe. It leases the buildings for the outlying offices.