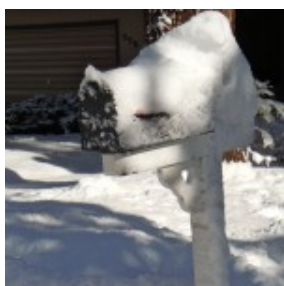


Postal Service predicts busiest day of year to be Dec. 20

By Kathryn Reed

For many people this is the one time of year when there is something in the mail besides bills and unwanted solicitations.

It's also the time of year when anyone and everyone associated with U.S. Postal Service barely has time to take a break.



Mail keeps coming even in the snow and with the house number covered.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

"It's a fun time of year – giving cards and presents," Donna Bobeda, a carrier in South Lake Tahoe, told *Lake Tahoe News* as she delivered mail this week.

It's taking her about an hour longer these days to do her route because of the extra volume of mail.

Even though the Postal Service is seeing a reduction in the

amount of mail being sent because of email and other mailing options, people still like to communicate at the holidays the old-fashioned way – with a handwritten note.

South Lake Tahoe Postmaster Toni Passot said Dec. 13 was extremely busy at all the South Shore locations, but it's Dec. 20 that is expected to be the busiest mailing day of the year. The USPS anticipates 801 million pieces of mail will be processed Monday.

Passot is not allowed to hire extra staff for the extra work, but just about everyone is getting more hours.

"We are bringing in all the troops," Passot said for Dec. 20.

Bobeda has noticed larger packages being sent this year.

"I think more people are ordering online," Bobeda said.

She and other carriers often finish their route, go back to the main office and there is another truckload of parcels to deliver. This means out they go – twice in a day this time of year.

But not everything in the mailbox is supposed to be delivered. Bobeda said every now and then a plate of cookies is in the box as a thank you for the work she has done. After all, even if the snowplow doesn't come or school is canceled, the mail keeps being delivered.

During the holidays the Postal Service processes an average of 661 million pieces of mail. This compares to an average of 559 million pieces the rest of the year.

Between Thanksgiving and Christmas the USPS delivers about 15.8 billion cards, letters and packages. The agency has been doing this for 235 years.

For people hoping to have letters delivered by Christmas, it's recommended to have them in the mail by Dec. 20.