

# Then and now: ZIP codes turn 50

Coming up this Monday is the 50th anniversary of the Zone Improvement Plan.

The what?

It was July 1, 1963, when the U.S. Postal Service introduced its “ZIP Code” – the Zone Improvement Plan – which since has become ubiquitous in mailing, locating, and shipping.

And now it’s used widely also for non-postal information such as determining auto insurance rates by zone, or pinpointing your local weather forecast, et cetera, all based on your ZIP Code.

In 1942, the U.S. Post Office had established only generalized area address zones, such as “Los Angeles 54, Calif.”

In 1962, a postal employee proposed a Zone Improvement Plan (ZIP) to direct mail to specific offices. For example, the Empire State Building has its own ZIP code. Today, there are more than 43,000 ZIP codes in the United States.



Historically, all South Tahoe mail was delivered only to P.O. boxes at six post offices: one at Stateline absorbed into what became the Crescent V Center; one at what was the main post office at the corner of Takela and Sandy Way in Bijou (now vacant); an Al Tahoe office where Denny’s Diner now stands; plus Tahoe Valley; Camp Richardson’ and Meyers stations.

The Al Tahoe P.O. wood-frame building (now the Denny’s site) was picked-up and replanted on Highway 50 opposite the Sno-Flake Drive In and it now houses the Tahoe Art League gallery.

A replacement Al Tahoe post office then opened in what is now The Cork & More.

In 1973 the current large main post office opened diagonally neighboring The Cork & More.

The historic Camp Richardson P.O. (now the "confectionery") was absorbed into the Tahoe Valley office about 1960.

South Lake Tahoe has had several ZIP code changes since 1963, prompted initially by the 1965 incorporation of the city which needed a ZIP Code. Over the years, we've had 95729, 95730, 95731, 95702, 95705 and more.

With the advent of local street delivery, today's South Lake Tahoe ZIP codes are 96150 (street delivery), then 96151, 96155 and 96158 for P.O. boxes at the Al Tahoe main, Meyers and Tahoe Valley stations, respectively. Nevada South Shore is P.O. Box addresses only.

In the mid-1980s, USPS opened Neighborhood Delivery Centers (NDCs) on Alameda Avenue, Eloise Avenue, and Black Bart Avenue to reduce auto travel. These were P.O. box-only satellites, no clerks nor window services. Those NDCs were closed in the early 2000s after the start of street delivery.

– *Bill Kingman*