

**U.S. Postal Service Los Angeles District
U.S. Postal Inspection Service**

Congressional Mail Theft Update and Crime Prevention Briefing

October 19, 2015

U.S. Postal Inspection Service, a federal law enforcement agency, shared that mail theft from collection boxes and customers' mailboxes is a big problem in Los Angeles and that these crimes are mainly being fueled by drug use. The Inspection Service is actively investigating all reports of mail theft and has made a number of arrests in the Los Angeles area this year. Investigations are on-going.

Most cases of mailbox theft from centralized mailbox units involve counterfeit master keys.

All reports of mail theft reported by the public are entered into a database to track this criminal activity and determine where law enforcement efforts should be focused. Any member of the public who witnesses mailbox theft or vandalism should immediately contact local police.

To reach the U.S. Postal Inspection Service by phone, call **1-877-876-2455**. To reach the U.S. Postal Service Customer Care Center, call 1-800-ASK-USPS (1-800-275-8777).

To report mail theft, identity theft, fraud or other crimes involving the U.S. Mail online 24/7, visit the Inspection Service website at <https://postalinspectors.uspis.gov> and select "contact us" and then "file a complaint." Under Inquiry Type, select Problem. Under Customer Service, select Support, and then Vandalism/Theft Problem. Select "continue" and provide requested information.

The Postal Service shared that it is modifying collection boxes in targeted areas. Drop down doors are being welded shut and a small letter slot installed. Some drive-up collection boxes with a mail chute are being capped off and locked after the final pick up of the day. The Postal Service regrets the loss of some customer convenience, but these efforts will greatly reduce nighttime theft out of these boxes.

The U.S. Postal Service is taking steps to replace master locks on centralized mailboxes with new high-security locks. Some replacement has already taken place, but a timeline and the exact locations are not available.

Some information regarding Inspection Service investigations and Postal Service actions is classified, as public release could compromise active law enforcement investigations and provide criminal elements intelligence that may support their illegal activities.

Mail theft prevention tips

Mail theft can occur anywhere and with any type of mailbox, but there are steps the public can take to protect themselves from this crime. Most mailbox and collection box theft takes place in the early morning hours under the cover of darkness.

- Collect your mail from your mailbox every day as soon as possible after it is delivered. Do not allow mail to accumulate, even in a locked mailbox.
- Deposit outgoing mail into blue collection boxes before the final pick up of the same day of deposit. Check pick up schedule posted on the box to ensure your mail will not sit in the box overnight or over the weekend.
- When expecting packages to be delivered, monitor tracking at www.usps.com so you know when to expect your shipment. A new U.S. Postal Service feature provides email and text alerts to notify customers of package delivery — sign up at www.myusps.com.

Immediately report any suspicious activity to local police.