

CONSUMER CORNER

New Postal Guide Could Save Time And Money

(NAPSA)—Do you know the difference between Express Mail, Priority Mail and Parcel Post? If you wanted to send a gift to a friend and receive confirmation that she received it, would you know how? If you're like many Americans, the answer to both questions is "no"—but understanding different mail services could save you time and money.

The USPS has been improving its service offerings for years and now has a number of different products that can meet almost any mailing need. Yet many consumers remain unaware of all their mailing options.

To help clarify, the USPS put out a free booklet called "*A Customer's Guide To Mailing.*" The publication provides clear, concise tips on measuring packages and ways to send important documents, as well as a list of the best ways mail services can be combined to meet specific needs.

In addition, the booklet gives advice on addressing mail (improperly addressing a letter or package can cause delivery delays) and it gives a list of postage rates.

The booklet is part of the USPS's efforts to make the mail service even more "user friendly." Additional efforts include making stamps easier to buy. Currently there are about 60,000 locations—17,000 ATMs and over 40,000 supermarkets and drug stores—that sell stamps. Consumers need only look for a "Buy Stamps Here" sign at participating locations.

The USPS booklet provides the following tips on preparing a package to be mailed.



Smooth Delivery—A new guide explains how consumers can use different post office services to their advantage.

- **The Box**—Choose a box with enough room for cushioning material around the contents. Sturdy paperboard or corrugated fiberboard boxes are best for weights up to 10 pounds. If you are reusing a box, cover all previous labels and markings with black marker or adhesive labels.

- **Cushioning**—Place the cushioning all around your item. You can use newspaper, styrofoam "peanuts," bubble wrap or shredded paper. Close and shake the box to see if you have enough cushioning. If you hear items shifting, add more cushioning.

- **Sealing**—Tape the opening of your box and reinforce all seams with two-inch wide tape. Use clear or brown packaging tape, reinforced packaging tape, or paper tape. Do not use cord, string or twine because they get caught in mail processing equipment.

For more information, visit www.usps.com.