

Mail volume plummets

BY DANA BRUXVOORT
Staff Reporter

The current economic crisis is threatening to stop what neither rain nor snow nor sleet ever could — the U.S. Postal Service.

U.S. Postmaster General John E. Potter asked Congress Jan 28 to alter the 1983 legislation that requires the Postal Service to deliver mail six days per week. He made this request because of the plummeting mail volume and revenue loss the Postal Service has experienced in the past year.

"It is possible that the cost of six-day delivery may simply prove to be unaffordable," Potter said in a presentation to the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs subcommittee.

Potter said that if it becomes necessary to temporarily eliminate a day of mail delivery, the Postal Service will suspend delivery on one of the lightest days, such as Tuesday.

Potter said total mail volume fell more than 9 billion pieces in 2008 — a 4.5 percent drop. It is anticipated that this number might plunge 12 to 15 billion pieces this year.

If the trend continues, the Postal Service could experience a \$6 billion net loss this fiscal year. Potter said that in 2008 it recorded a \$2.8 billion loss.

Kirkville Postmaster Greg Stiner said mail volume at the Kirkville Post Office has declined significantly. During the past four months, volume has decreased by 20 percent. He said this is because of the economic situation and changes in the ways people have been communicating.

Americans are using electronic communication more and more, Stiner said. This decreases their dependence on the Postal Service. People are pay-

Kirkville Post Office statistics

In 2007 there was a decrease of **79,000** mail pieces from the previous year.

In 2008 mail decreased by **270,000** pieces

ing bills electronically, communicating with relatives through instant messaging and even sending greeting cards online. Several years ago, these activities would have funneled through the local post office.

Stiner said eliminating a day of delivery could be a plausible option for dealing with mounting financial deficits.

"I think the five-day delivery is a good option for the post office, but we have other options that we need to look at as well," he said.

Stiner said other cost-saving plans have been proposed, but five-day delivery has gotten the most attention.

Another option would be lifting the government restriction requiring the Postal Service to pre-fund retirement benefits for all of its employees. As the second largest employer in the country, this adds up to billions of dollars annually.

The Postal Service is the only public or private entity required to prepay health benefit premiums at such high levels. Stiner also said the Postal Service doesn't operate from tax money but is run solely off the revenue it makes.

He said that Potter really is asking the government to lift some of the restrictions it has placed on the Postal Service.

"We really need to have the ability to make those kinds of business decisions without having to go to Congress

every time something needs to happen," Stiner said.

Stiner said the Kirkville Post Office has not had to lay off any workers, but as employees have retired, the Post Office has not hired replacements. This has resulted in consolidating some duties. He said he doesn't anticipate layoffs in the future.

Stiner said the way the Postal Service operates will have to change.

"As a company, we need to weigh all of our options for saving money," Stiner said. "We have to do something to save money and to be profitable."

Roger Marsh, director of campus mail services, said he agrees the Postal Service's operations need to change.

"Bottom line is, Americans are sending less mail than they used to send five ... 10 years ago," he said. "I think something's got to happen. To what extent, I don't know, but they're going to have to do something."

Even if five-day delivery went into effect at the post office, Marsh said that he doesn't foresee any major changes for Truman. Even on holidays when the post office is closed, such as Martin Luther King Jr. Day, campus mail services is allowed to retrieve University mail.

He said that if a day of delivery is eliminated, Truman students still will be able to receive incoming mail. Outgoing mail will have to wait until the following day.

Marsh said he has not seen a sig-



Amy Gleaves/Index
Roger Marsh, director of campus mail services said that even if the post office eliminates a delivery day, Truman students will not be affected.

nificant change in the volume of mail going through the campus mail services. The only notable difference he detected is a decline in packages from UPS Inc. and FedEx coming into the University.

Junior Megan Coburn said she relies heavily on the Postal Service. She uses it to send international mail and to

communicate with relatives across the United States who are older and use regular mail instead of e-mail.

"It's only one day less, but I guess I wouldn't really like it," Coburn said regarding the five-day delivery proposal. "It's nicer to know there's another day that [mail] can come when you need things in a hurry."

Sheriff's department plans for new hires

The Adair County sheriff's department plans to hire at least six new deputies this year

BY JARED YOUNG
Staff Reporter

Although economic times are tough, the Adair County sheriff's department is growing thanks to its newly finalized budget.

The department currently is in the process of making changes and additions to the county force. Plans to hire at least six new deputies and purchase at least three more patrol cars currently are in motion. They also will be hir-

ing a full time bookkeeper and a full time janitorial maintenance worker.

Currently, the sheriff's department consists of six road deputies and two bailiffs. Operations section chief Bill King said all the employees currently are working part time. The new hires, however, will all work full time.

Adair County Sheriff Robert Hardwick said he gives credit for the changes to local voters. "It was a law enforcement sales tax that was approved by the citizens of Adair County," Hardwick said. "By doing that, it generated approximately [\$500,000] to \$600,000."

Hardwick said he is glad the tax passed because additional funds mean that the sheriff's department will be better equipped to protect the citizens of Adair County and provide more

jobs to the community.

"I want to thank the folks for passing the sales tax," Hardwick said. "With that, we're able to put some folks back to work in this county."

Hardwick said the new funds will allow better protection for county citizens. Hardwick's new plan divides the county into four sections narrowing down areas that are prone to crime.

"We'll be patrolling the county more when I get my folks hired," Hardwick said. "We'll also be patrolling the smaller towns and villages."

Chief Deputy Registrar Melissa Hudson said the law enforcement sales tax was passed last April and went into effect in October. It passed with a 56 percent majority, with all

county officials in favor. The County Clerk's office expected a nine percent decrease in sales tax at the time the law enforcement tax was passed. The tax compensates for the decrease in sales tax and increases department revenue. Thus far, all the funds from the tax are being used in the department's new budget. Thanks to the funds, the department's expenses should not exceed its revenue this year.

County Commissioner Gary Jones said funding from the new sales tax isn't the only thing boosting the department's budget. Jones said that before the previous sheriff, Leonard Clark, left office, he set up the Adair County jail to hold up to 10 state prisoners. Those prisoners pay \$70 per day, which is additional income for the department.

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