

Crime Prevention Newsletter

BNSF Headquarters Resource Operations Center
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Mail Theft

Stealing or tampering with another person's mail is a serious crime. Although it may seem harmless to take an envelope out of another person's mailbox, mail theft comes with serious punishments to deter criminals. Despite the ease of stealing mail, few people are ever charged with mail theft because of the harsh penalties involved.

In the United States, it is illegal to take another person's mail from a postal truck, a collection box, an apartment mailbox panel, a mailing rack or a neighborhood delivery. The United States Postal Service (USPS) is a federal entity, so stealing or tampering with another person's mail is a federal crime. Mail theft and subsequent identity theft is the top white-collar crime reported in the U.S.

Here are a few tips to help you protect your mail from thieves.

- Do not leave outgoing mail in your unlocked mail box.
- Deposit mail in a blue collection box or inside at your local post office. Use a collection box that is not full.
- Promptly pick up "incoming" mail once it is delivered to your mailbox.
- When you go out of town, ask a trusted neighbor to pick up your mail, or schedule a delivery stop with USPS. This service is available online at www.usps.com.
- If you don't receive a check or other valuable mail as expected, contact the issuing agency immediately.
- If you change your address, notify your post office and anyone you do business with via mail.

People send highly valuable goods, cash and confidential personal information through the mail. Because mailboxes contain documents with personal information, such as checks, financial statements and

pre-approved credit offers, they are prime targets of thieves who want to steal identities or commit credit card/check fraud. One way to keep track of your credit is to obtain a yearly credit report. These are generally free from the credit bureaus once a year. To obtain a free credit report, you visit www.annualcreditreport.com.

If you are a victim of mail fraud or mail theft, you may report this to U.S. Postal Inspection Service at www.usps.com/postalinspectors.com.

