

## CONTENTS

### RECEIVING MAIL AT POST

International Postal Service

APO/FPO Military Postal Service

DPO Postal Service

State Department Diplomatic Pouch and Mail Services

### SENDING MAIL TO THE UNITED STATES

International Postal Service

APO/FPO/DPO Postal Service

State Department Diplomatic Pouch and Mail Services

### DETERMINING YOUR ADDRESS

### TRACKING POUCH AND COURIER SHIPMENTS

### RESOURCES

### COMPARISON OF MAIL OPTIONS



## Chapter 2

# MAIL and DIPLOMATIC POUCH SERVICES

The Diplomatic Pouch and Mail Division (A/LM/PMP/DPM) is the directorate for all mail service issues and maintains all pouch and mail information available via numerous links on the Diplomatic Pouch and Mail Division (DPM) website: <http://pouch.a.state.gov/> (intranet only).

### RECEIVING MAIL AT POST

Mail may be sent overseas by international postal service, APO/FPO/DPO Postal Service, or by the U.S. Department of State Diplomatic Pouch and Mail Service.

#### *International Postal Service*

International mail service is available around the world. However, this service may not be reliable. Be sure to find out before giving out or using an international address.

#### *APO/FPO Military Postal Service*

Through partnerships with other agencies, the Military Postal Service provides mail service to various locations overseas based on Department of Defense program requirements. The Military Postal Service Agency (MPSA), acting on behalf of the service branches and the United States Postal Service (USPS), ensures that overseas APO/FPO postal facilities meet USPS operational standards. The MPSA, in coordination with the appropriate military service, grants Department of State and other agency personnel the use of its facilities on a reimbursable basis. APO/FPO mail service is not available at all overseas posts.

Employees assigned to a post with APO/FPO service must send and receive personal mail and packages via this system rather than through the personal pouch. Parcels or mail sent by FEDEX, UPS, Airborne, DHL or any other private carrier cannot be addressed to APO/FPO and will be refused. If a vendor will not send items via APO/FPO/DPO, then personal pouch may be used. The SA-32 Unclassified Pouch facility address can be found on DPM's intranet web page. Packages are usually limited to 70 pounds and 108 inches (length and girth combined).

However, some APO/FPO facilities have more stringent restrictions than others. For specific instructions, check at any U.S. post office or consult <http://www.usps.com/cpim/ftp/bulletin/pb.htm> to see the restrictions that apply to your APO/FPO. (Click on the HTML version of the current Postal Bulletin and then find the "Overseas Military Mail" section.)

All APO/FPO mail requires a customs declaration (PS Form 2976 or Form 2976-A) and appropriate U.S. postage from the point of origin to the point of entry into the military postal system. APO/FPO zip codes are geographically assigned by the Military Postal Service Agency and reference should be made to the appropriate code for your post: AA (Central/South America), AE (Europe), and AP (Pacific).

### ***DPO Postal Service***

Diplomatic Post Office (DPO) service began as a pilot program in 2003 and currently operates in 16 locations. DPO provides APO-like service with a considerable overhead and consequently is a little more restrictive than traditional APO/FPO locations. The U.S. Postal Service makes no distinction between APO and DPO, so address elements for DPO posts are written in the same form as APOs. Many of the APO/FPO services are available; however, in order to implement this program more stringent restrictions were necessary. The most significant are size limits; because DPO mail is being sent as pouch "via U.S. Mail," all items MUST fit in a USPS bag. DPO service requires the same customs forms as APO/FPO service.

The usual APO/FPO/DPO address format is as follows:

JOHN DOE  
PSC or Unit number, Box number  
APO AE 09080-Box number

NOTE: Be sure to verify each post's preferred address format. An additional line may be added below the person's name to help sort mail at large posts. Do not add job titles, embassy names, or locations unless directly instructed to do so; this information can cause confusion and delay arrival.

### ***State Department Diplomatic Pouch and Mail Services***

The term "diplomatic pouch" includes both the official pouch (which has a Washington, DC, zip code) and the personal pouch (which has a Dulles, VA, zip code). Materials sent through the official pouch do not require postage. The official pouch should not be used for personal correspondence or personal packages. The U.S. Postal Service irradiates mail sent via USPS to an official pouch address (meaning, items sent from outside the State Department with regular postage), causing both delays and possible damage.

In 2002, the Department of State obtained a new zip code for personal mail to support personnel assigned to non-APO/FPO posts overseas. Mail sent to this new address will not be irradiated. U.S. citizen direct hire members of the foreign affairs community and their family members may receive via the personal pouch letters and packages at a maximum size limit of 17x18x32 inches (no single dimension can exceed this limit) and maximum weight of 50 pounds. (Note: Some posts have special size and weight restrictions in effect because of host government decisions or aircraft size limitations. Check with your Information Management Officer or Information Programs Officer for clarification.)

The Diplomatic Pouch and Mail Division, Office of Logistics Management (A/LM/PMP/DPM) maintains a pouch dispatch schedule for each post: <http://pouch.a.state.gov/pouchsched2.asp> (intranet only). The frequency of pouch dispatches is determined by volume of mail and other material. Larger posts receive up to three dispatches per week. A small post will receive a minimum of one dispatch per week. Pouches are sent on commercial airlines as air cargo. Passenger baggage and critical supplies have priority when space is limited.

Postage must be paid at the applicable domestic rate for the class of mail and type of service desired, subject to zone rates (for parcel post) from point of origin to Dulles, Virginia. The USPS has a very intuitive postage calculator at <http://www.usps.com/tools/calculatepostage/welcome.htm?from=home&page=0061calculatepostage>.

Using express mail services does not get mail to a post any quicker because the express mail service is only from the point of origin to Dulles. Packages may be mailed at any post office in the United States or sent to the State Department by United Parcel Service, FedEx, DHL, or other non-postal means of transportation (although these also only speed the material to the Dulles starting point).

Please address this mail using the following address format example:

John Doe  
2010 Abidjan Place (or PL.)  
Dulles, VA 20189-2010

When using the Dulles, VA, zip code, for security reasons, nothing in the address field should reference in any way the mission, the office, your job title, or anything official about where you work.

Magazines and newspapers may also be sent via the personal diplomatic pouch. All parcels should be securely packed and sealed. Insured and registered mail services are not available for items sent through the pouch and the Department accepts no liability for loss or damage.

Articles prohibited by U.S. postal regulations may not be sent through State Department pouch facilities. Lists of such articles may be obtained from local postmasters or online. In addition, aerosols, alcoholic beverages, ammunition, items for resale, bulk supplies, corrosives (acids), currency, explosives, firearms, flammables, glass containers, illegal substances, incendiary materials, narcotics, plants, poisons, and radioactive substances are prohibited.

It is now permitted to send 16 ounces of liquid per box; liquids include anything that flows, such as syrup. Since it is forbidden to let the airlines know the contents of a Diplomatic Pouch, they must be assured that there is no hazardous material in any pouch under any circumstance. For more information regarding restricted materials consult: <http://www.usps.com/aviationsecurity/welcome.htm>.

The USPS guidelines and acceptance policy for Dulles personal pouch mail can be found at: <http://pe.usps.com/text/dmm300/703.htm#wp1113914>.

### **SENDING MAIL TO THE UNITED STATES FROM POSTS**

There are also three ways you may send mail to the United States from overseas: by international postal service, APO/FPO/DPO Postal Service, or Department of State Pouch and Mail Services.

#### ***International Postal Service***

Investigate the reliability of the service before using this option.

#### ***APO/FPO/DPO Postal Service***

If your post has these facilities, you may use them to send letters and packages to the United States. Customs declarations are required for all packages and letter-sized envelopes containing anything other than correspondence. Each letter or parcel must include your APO/FPO/DPO return address and appropriate U.S. postage. Information on special mail services may be obtained at post. Intra-theater mail, in most cases, (i.e., APO AE xxxx to another APO AE xxxx) may be sent from one APO to another without postage by putting the initials "MPS" in place of a stamp. However, there is NO intra-theater mail to or from DPO addresses at this time. The intention is to implement it at a later date when training and budget shortfalls are met. Your APO facility will know if postage is required for intra-theater MPS mail. If you are in doubt please ask the postal clerk to verify this service.

#### ***State Department Diplomatic Pouch and Mail Services***

When the post has no access to APO/FPO/DPO facilities, letters, exposed film, videocassettes, recorded cartridges, and voice tapes may be sent by diplomatic pouch services back to the United States. Items needed for health and welfare purposes may be sent by air pouch to the United States for replacement and/or repair. U.S. postage must be affixed at the appropriate domestic rate for the type of service desired from Dulles, Virginia, to the ultimate addressee.

The Department’s Commissary and Recreation Office has set up procedures for posts to use the pouch to send parcels back to the United States under the Homeward Bound Mail Program. This service is operated by Employee Associations and is paid for by the employees who use it. Not all locations have requested approval for this program, so please check with your post. Parcels being sent to the United States will require customs declarations. For more information, contact [foodandfun@state.gov](mailto:foodandfun@state.gov).

Foreign affairs personnel at posts without APO/FPO/DPO facilities may use the pouch to return wearing apparel and merchandise manufactured and purchased in the United States. Items must have been ordered from stores or mail order houses or received as gifts from friends and relatives. Items must have been received during the current tour of duty at the particular post and must not be items originally contained in shipment of effects.



Prepare return parcels for diplomatic pouch as follows:

- 1) Affix appropriate U.S. postage for transmission through the U.S. Postal Service from Dulles, Virginia, to the ultimate addressee.
- 2) Endorse the outside of the package with a statement that it contains merchandise purchased in and received from the United States which is being returned to addressee for exchange, such as, “Returned Merchandise.”

To avoid confusion and ensure proper handling by the store or mail order house where the item was purchased, it is recommended that you rewrap the package, address it clearly, and enclose a letter of explanation. Even if the package originated as a UPS delivery, it must be returned as a postal parcel and be prepared accordingly.

A return address must appear on all mail in the following format example:

Name of individual  
2010 Abidjan Place (or PL.)  
Dulles, VA 20189-2010

A/LM/PMP/DPM manages the Department of State Pouch and Mail System in the Department, domestic field offices, posts, and U.S. Missions to International Organizations. For additional information contact the Diplomatic Pouch and Mail Division (see “Resources,” below).

**DETERMINING YOUR ADDRESS**

To determine which posts receive and mail personal packages via the APO/FPO/DPO system as opposed to the State Department’s Diplomatic Pouch and Mail Service, consult the Post Welcome Cable in the Overseas Briefing Center or the Post Profiles via OpenNet.

Personal and official pouch addresses are posted and maintained on the intranet:

<http://pouch.a.state.gov>  
<http://pouch.a.state.gov/zip20189.htm>

Employees assigned to certain posts receive and mail personal packages through special U.S. addresses, rather than through the APO/FPO or the State Diplomatic Pouch and Mail Services. Consult the Post Welcome Cable (available in the Overseas Briefing Center) for the entire address and a description of the mail system.

**POST**

Ottawa  
Quebec  
Toronto  
Vancouver  
Mexico City  
Ciudad Juarez  
Guadalajara  
Monterrey  
Tijuana  
Hermosillo  
Matamoros  
Merida  
Nuevo Laredo  
Nogales

**US ZIP CODE**

Ogdensburg, NY 13669-0430  
Champlain, NY 12919-1547  
Lewiston, NY 14092-0135  
Point Roberts, WA 98281-5002  
Brownsville, TX 78520-0900  
El Paso, TX 79995-0545  
Brownsville, TX 78520-0901  
Brownsville, TX 78520-0902  
San Diego, CA 92143-9039  
Nogales, AZ 85628  
Brownsville, TX 78522-0633  
Brownsville, TX 78520-0903  
Laredo, TX 78044-3089  
Nogales, AZ 85628

## **TRACKING POUCH AND COURIER SHIPMENTS**

Track pouch and commercial courier shipments via two intranet sites: <http://pouch.a.state.gov/srchRegistry.htm> (for registered items sent via pouch) and <http://pouch.a.state.gov/tracking.htm> (for commercial courier shipments, including those that are sent via pouch).

## **RESOURCES**

*Useful Telephone Numbers*

Diplomatic Pouch and Mail Division  
Pouch and Mail Policy (202) 663-1850

SA-32 Unclassified Pouch Facility (703) 302-7752  
NO DROP-OFFS CURRENTLY PERMITTED

National Foreign Affairs Training Center Mailroom  
(Official Mail only) (703) 302-6817

**Diplomatic Pouch and Mail Division**  
(A/LM/PMP/DPM)  
<http://pouch.a.state.gov>

**Military Postal Service Agency**  
<http://hqdainet.army.mil/mpsa>, click on "Military Mail Info" for instructions on addressing mail, customs forms, and choosing the correct APO/FPO mail service.

<http://hqdainet.army.mil/mpsa/MailServ.pdf> is an illustrated PDF document explaining the various ways to send letters and packages to APO/FPO addresses, with measurements, weights, prices, time of delivery, and other information.

**Overseas Briefing Center** (M/FSI/TC/OBC)  
Foreign Service Institute Transition Center  
George P. Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center (SA-42)  
Room E2126  
Department of State  
Washington, DC 20522-4202  
Physical location: 4000 Arlington Blvd., Arlington, VA  
(do not send mail to this address)

Directions, maps, parking and other information  
<http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/c16687.htm>

Tel: (703) 302-7277  
Fax: (703) 302-7452  
Internet: [www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc](http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc)  
Intranet: <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc>  
E-mail: [FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov](mailto:FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov)

### **Post Profiles**

Available on the State Department intranet at: <http://www.a.state.gov/postprofiles>

### **Postal Bulletins**

<http://www.usps.com/cpim/ftp/bulletin/pb.htm>  
For APO/FPO/DPO information, select the HTML version of the current Postal Bulletin and then find the "Overseas Military Mail" section.

**USPS Guidelines for 20189 Mail** (Personal Pouch)  
<http://pe.usps.com/text/dmm300/703.htm#wp1113914>  
Checking these guidelines will eliminate the vast majority of the problems anyone might encounter with the Dulles, VA, addresses.

**COMPARISON OF MAIL OPTIONS**

APO=Army Post Office  
 FPO=Fleet Post Office  
 Both are military mail services.

DPO=Diplomatic Post Office  
 USPS=U.S. Postal Service

	Washington, DC Pouch OFFICIAL pouch 20521 zip code	Dulles, VA Pouch PERSONAL pouch 20189 zip code	APO/FPO (only available at certain posts)	DPO Diplomatic Post Office (pilot program)
Primary Use	Official letters and official packages.	Personal letters and packages for those who do not have APO/FPO/DPO.	Personal letters and packages. <b>Must</b> be used in place of personal pouch if available—unless a vendor will not send to an APO address.	Personal letters and packages.
U.S. Postage required	No, if originates inside the State Dept. Yes, if originates outside State Dept./embassy/ consulate. Postage amount is to or from Washington, DC.	Yes. Cost = U.S. domestic postage to or from Dulles.  Ex: Letter sent from CA via this address to person at U.S. Embassy Nairobi. Cost= U.S. first-class stamp.	Yes, to and from point of entry into military system.  Possibly not required if sending to another APO (ask at post).	Yes, to and from point of entry into DPO system.  Required if sending to another APO (ask at post).
Irradiated	Yes, if stamped (i.e., sent from outside the Dept.)	No	No	No
Size restrictions (from U.S. to post)	Check with post for larger items.	Yes, 17x18x32 inches (no single dimension can exceed this limit) and 50 pounds	Yes, usually limited to 70 pounds and 108 inches (length, width, and girth combined). May vary by post.	Yes, 66 lb. & must fit in a USPS mailbag. For the latest information, see APO "Articles Prohibited" below.
Customs Declaration Required	No	No	Yes	Yes
Can I use it to send mail to the U.S.?	Yes (official use only)	Yes, but limited to letters, exposed film, videocassettes, recorded cartridges, and voice tapes. Items for health and welfare purposes may be sent for replacement and/or repair. With certain restrictions, apparel and merchandise purchased in the U.S. may be returned. Some posts offer the "Homeward Bound" program and allow other parcels to be sent (cost paid for by employee).	Yes	Yes
Frequency	One to three shipments a week	One to three shipments a week	Varies by post	Varies by post
Articles prohibited	Same as USPS guidelines, plus no aerosols, alcoholic beverages, ammunition, items for resale, bulk supplies, corrosives (acids), currency, explosives, firearms, flammables, glass containers, illegal substances, incendiary materials, liquids, narcotics, plants, poisons,	Same as USPS guidelines, plus no aerosols, alcoholic beverages, ammunition, items for resale, bulk supplies, corrosives (acids), currency, explosives, firearms, flammables, glass containers, illegal substances, incendiary materials, narcotics, plants, poisons, or radioactive substances. 16 oz. of liquid	Varies by post. See <a href="http://www.usps.com/cpim/ftp/bulletin/pb.htm">http://www.usps.com/cpim/ftp/bulletin/pb.htm</a> . Click on the current issue in HTML format, on "Overseas Military Mail," then find your ZIP code. The letters describe the restrictions that apply.  Nothing related to a home business is permitted	Same as personal pouch.

## Chapter 2 Mail and Diplomatic Pouch Services

	Washington, DC Pouch OFFICIAL pouch 20521 zip code	Dulles, VA Pouch PERSONAL pouch 20189 zip code	APO/FPO (only available at certain posts)	DPO Diplomatic Post Office (pilot program)
	and radioactive substances. Guidelines at: <a href="http://pouch.a.state.gov">http://pouch.a.state.gov</a> .	(NOT in a glass container) is permitted per box. Liquids include anything that flows (syrup, tomato sauce). Home business use is prohibited (including selling items on eBay).	(including <i>selling</i> —not buying—on eBay).	
Address Change	Not relevant, since this should never be your personal address.	The USPS will forward mail TO but not FROM a 20189 zip code. Send individual address change cards. Post will forward items for a while.	The U.S. Postal Service will forward mail, but you cannot change your address over the Internet.	Same as APO (cannot be changed online).
UPS, DHL, FedEx Permitted	Yes, but these only get mail to the starting point.	Yes, but only get mail to the Dulles starting point. (Can be useful for online orders).	No, will be refused.	No, will be refused.
Other notes	No COD, insured mail, registered mail or special handling. Express mail can be used, but probably will not be quicker than regular mail. <a href="http://pe.usps.com/text/dmm300/703.htm">http://pe.usps.com/text/dmm300/703.htm</a> , click on "Department of State Mail"	No COD, insured mail, registered mail or special handling. Express mail can be used, but probably will not be quicker than regular mail. (It only gets items to Dulles).  <a href="http://pe.usps.com/text/dmm300/703.htm">http://pe.usps.com/text/dmm300/703.htm</a> , click on "Department of State Mail"	Many USPS services may be available, including certified mail, registered mail, insured mail, certificate of mailing, and return receipt. Priority mail IS faster than regular mail. No COD or delivery confirmation services.	No money orders, special delivery, express mail or registered mail.
Sample Address:	Charley Horse 2010 Abidjan Place (or PL) Washington, DC 20521-2010  Don't use a stamp or personal return address or mail will be delayed. Send from inside the Dept. for official business only.	Charley Horse 2010 Abidjan Place (or PL) Dulles, VA 20189-2010  Never add embassy name, official title or country.	Charley Horse Unit XXXX, Box YYYY APO AE 09080-YYYY  Verify address with post: some require an extra line. Never add embassy name, official title or country.	Same as APO  Never add embassy name, official title or country. Verify correct address with post.

- Some posts (particularly in Mexico and Canada) use other U.S. addresses. Always verify your address with post.
- International mail may be an option in some countries. You will have to pay international postage and fill out customs forms.
- UPS, DHL, FedEx or other companies may deliver directly to (or accept packages from) overseas locations at international rates.
- Ask your post which mail service to use for faster delivery. The slowest option by far is to send stamped mail to the OFFICIAL pouch address. (Don't do this!)

For more information, see the Diplomatic Pouch and Mail intranet site (<http://pouch.a.state.gov>), the Military Postal Service Agency website (<http://hqdainet.army.mil/mpsa>), and U.S. Postal Service information on State Department mail (<http://pe.usps.com/text/dmm300/703.htm#wp1113914>). By e-mail contact Diplomatic Pouch & Mail: [DPMAAnswers@state.gov](mailto:DPMAAnswers@state.gov) or the Overseas Briefing Center: [FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov](mailto:FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov).