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U.S. Postal Service Again Honored as ‘Most Trusted’ *Ponemon Institute Asks Consumers to Rank 74 Government Agencies*

WASHINGTON, DC — The premier privacy trust study in America has named the U.S. Postal Service the “Most Trusted Government Agency” for the fourth year in a row.

More than 86 percent of the 9,000 Americans surveyed by the Ponemon Institute ranked the Postal Service first among 74 agencies as the one that is best able to keep their information safe and secure. The Postal Service has increased its privacy trust score every year since the survey began four years ago.

“We have a 230-year tradition of trust. Americans depend on the security of the mail and they trust the Postal Service to protect their privacy,” said Delores Killete, vice president and consumer advocate. “Our employees work hard to maintain that trust. They earned this honor and recognition for their contribution to the value that trust brings to the organization, and to the country.”

Killete attributed the number one ranking, in part, to the trusted relationship Americans have with letter carriers who deliver mail to every home and business six days a week. They know their letter carrier by name. Carriers are a welcomed and trusted member of the local community, she said.

“Because of this, the Postal Service truly is not a ‘faceless’ agency. Consumer confidence in the mail is a top priority for the Postal Service and its law enforcement agency, the Postal Inspection Service,” Killete said.

The survey asked 9,000 Americans, selected at random, to rank 74 federal agencies based on the agency’s ability to handle and protect personal information. Questions ranged from factors creating trust in the agency and the levels of confidence consumers have in the agency to protect their information, including information provided on websites, to limiting the amount of information collected.

“The government requires citizens provide detailed personal information in order to deliver many services. But this does not absolve public agencies of the responsibility to protect that information,” said Larry Ponemon, chairman and founder of the Ponemon Institute.

The survey shows that those agencies with the most public interaction – and demonstrate a healthy respect for maintaining public trust – have always scored well over the years, Dr. Ponemon said.

Survey respondents also listed worries they had about how the federal government uses their personal information. News items continue to influence consumers’ attitudes toward trust. Both Customs and Border Protection and the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration are among the five least trusted agencies in a year when political debate surrounding immigration policies made headlines, he said.

But the largest privacy concern, the study shows, is “loss of civil liberties and privacy rights,” with 57 percent of Americans listing this concern first. About 56 percent listed “surveillance into personal life” and almost half (47 percent) said “monitoring of email and Web activities” were their top privacy concerns.

More than 40 percent listed identity theft as their top concern, up from 29 percent in 2007, with most citing

concerns with the secure websites and the Internet. According to the Federal Trade Commission, mail accounts for only 2 percent of all identity theft. But for the Postal Service, even 2 percent is too much. In February the Postmaster General sent a letter to every address in America that included a brochure on preventing identity theft.

“Since we conducted the first privacy trust study in 2004, the results suggest that a large proportion of Americans do not trust the federal government’s privacy commitments,” Dr. Ponemon said. “Yet, the trust Americans have in the Postal Service continues to grow every year.”

Copies of the *2008 Privacy Trust Study of the United States Government* are available by contacting the Ponemon Institute at www.ponemon.org.

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An independent federal agency, the **U.S. Postal Service** is the only delivery service that visits every address in the nation – 146 million homes and businesses. It has 37,000 retail locations and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to pay for operating expenses, not tax dollars. The Postal Service has annual revenues of \$75 billion and delivers nearly half the world’s mail.

Ponemon Institute, LLC is dedicated to advancing responsible information and privacy management practices in business and government. To achieve this objective, the Institute conducts independent research, educates leaders from the private and public sectors and verifies the privacy data protection practices of organizations in a variety of industries.