

FTC Consumer Alert

Federal Trade Commission ■ Bureau of Consumer Protection ■ Division of Consumer & Business Education

Federal and Postal Job Scams: Tip-offs to Rip-offs

When it comes to federal and postal jobs, the word to remember is *free*. Information about job openings with the U.S. government or U.S. Postal Service is free and available to everyone. Applying for a federal or postal job also is free. Federal agencies and the U.S. Postal Service never charge application fees *or* guarantee that someone will be hired.

But that hasn't stopped scam artists from trying to make money off of people looking for federal or postal jobs. These scammers advertise in the classified sections of newspapers or online and offer — for a fee — to help job seekers find and apply for federal and postal jobs. Some even try to hoodwink people by using company names that sound like federal agencies, like the “U.S. Agency for Career Advancement” or the “Postal Employment Service.”

Some con artists trick people into paying money by falsely claiming that job openings are available in their area. For example, they may place an ad for a postal job in your town. You call and are told you qualify — you just need to pay for study materials to ensure a high score on the postal exam. They may even say the money is refundable if you don't pass the exam.

The reality? The company isn't part of the U.S. Postal Service, the materials may be worthless, and a passing score on a postal exam does not assure you'll get a postal job. There may not even be an available job in your area.

Getting a Job with the Postal Service

To learn about job openings with the U.S. Postal Service, visit usps.com/employment or click on “Careers” at the bottom of the usps.com home page.

The Postal Service has few vacancies. For many entry-level jobs — such as rural carrier associate, clerk, city carrier, mail handler, flat sorter machine operator, mail processor and markup clerk jobs — you need to take a written examination. But it's deceptive for anyone to guarantee you a high score on the postal entrance exams. These exams test your general aptitude, something you can't necessarily increase by studying. Attending workshops, studying exam techniques and taking practice questions won't assure you of a top score on the exam — and even a top score doesn't guarantee that you'll be hired. You must meet other requirements, including passing a background check and a drug test. Some veterans receive hiring preferences.

If someone tells you that postal jobs are available, check with the Postal Service at usps.com/employment to find out if hiring is taking place and if an exam is required for eligibility.

If federal or postal positions require a competitive exam — and many don't — hiring agencies typically offer free sample questions to people who sign up for the exam.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the U.S. Office of Personnel Management urge job hunters to be aware of the following tip-offs to federal and postal job rip-offs:

- classified ads, online ads or telephone sales pitches that imply an affiliation with the federal government, guarantee high test scores or state that “no experience is necessary”
- ads that offer information about “hidden” or unadvertised federal jobs
- ads that refer you to a toll-free phone number. Often, in these cases, an operator encourages you to buy a “valuable” booklet of job listings, practice test questions and tips for entrance exams.
- toll-free numbers that direct you to other pay-per-call numbers (like 900 numbers) for more information. Under federal law, any solicitations for pay-per-call numbers must include full disclosures about the cost of the call. The solicitation must make clear if there is an affiliation with the federal government, and give you a chance to hang up before you incur any charges.

If you have concerns about a company's advertisement for employment services, contact:

- The Federal Trade Commission at ftc.gov/complaint, or by calling 1-877-FTC-HELP (382-4357).
- The U.S. Postal Inspection Service. Find your local office at postalinspectors.uspis.gov or in the blue (government) pages of your telephone directory.
- Your state attorney general at naag.org, or your local Better Business Bureau at bbb.org.

Federal job information is available through the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's USAJOBS at usajobs.gov. Information on postal jobs is available at usps.com/employment.

For More Information

The FTC works for the consumer to prevent fraudulent, deceptive and unfair business practices in the marketplace and to provide information to help consumers spot, stop and avoid them. To file a complaint or to get free information on consumer issues, visit ftc.gov or call toll-free, 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357); TTY: 1-866-653-4261. The FTC enters consumer complaints into the Consumer Sentinel Network, a secure online database and investigative tool used by hundreds of civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad.

