



## SMS DROP BOXES

The Department of General Services' State Mail Services recently installed two Mail Drop Boxes inside the lobbies of the Monroe and Ninth Street Office Buildings. The boxes are for SMS customers to drop off any interagency or outgoing mail that requires metering after the SMS courier has made the final pick-up for the day.

**Pick-up times**  
**Monday - Friday**  
**4:30 pm**

Items placed in the boxes after 4:30 pm will not go out until the next business day.

State Mail Services  
1910 Darbytown Road  
Richmond VA 23231  
Phone: (804) 236-3592  
Fax: (804) 236-3595  
E-mail: [StateMail@dgs.virginia.gov](mailto:StateMail@dgs.virginia.gov)

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Department of General Services

## Postal Insider

An information paper by State Mail Services



The *Postal Insider* is a quarterly information paper designed to keep State Mail Services customers informed. It contains information about SMS mail operations and other general information related to postal operations that may have an internal or external effect on mail activities within agencies and SMS.



### Turn in your old "interagency envelopes"

State Mail Services is asking its customers to turn in their old interagency envelopes. SMS recently purchased 10,000 new interagency envelopes for its customers. These envelopes were designed to provide SMS customers with a standard process for submitting interagency mail. To turn in old or to receive new interagency envelopes, send a request to [StateMail@dgs.virginia.gov](mailto:StateMail@dgs.virginia.gov) or by phone at 804-236-3592.

## SMS celebrates one year anniversary

In August, the Department of General Services' (DGS) State Mail Services (SMS) celebrated its one year anniversary. After starting with only two customers besides the DGS to include the Department of Charitable Gaming and Military Affairs, SMS now serves 36 agencies. These agencies have reduced their incoming and outgoing mail operations by transferring some or all of their workload to the DGS consolidated mail operation.

State Mail Services (SMS) with the participation and support of these agencies has helped the Commonwealth eliminate 25 mail metering machines by merging their mail operations into SMS, reducing ownership or lease agreements to only 28 machines. By eliminating 25 machines, the Commonwealth is expected to save about \$150,000 a year in equipment leasing and contracts.

State Mail Services has focused its efforts on three major areas; security, efficiency, and customer satisfaction. SMS found one of the fastest ways for the Commonwealth to realize savings and maximize efficiencies would be the elimination of a contracted carrier service. By eliminating contracted carrier services the Commonwealth will save approximately \$39,000 annually in

courier fees.

All incoming mail processed through the SMS operation is scanned for explosives and some agency mail is scanned for biochemical hazards. SMS recently deployed five mobile x-ray machines to various agencies to help expand the mail scanning process and provide another method to enhance mail security at the seat of Government.

As the SMS customer base has increased, so have the number of mail stops. SMS has extended its services to agencies located outside the downtown area. SMS now covers 102 miles of ground daily. SMS now delivers as far south as Chester to the Virginia Information Technology Agency and east to Sandston to the Virginia Distribution Center. SMS recently began operating a satellite facility at the "Perimeter Center" in the West end and processes the mail for the six state agency tenants.

State Mail Services has increased its processing of mail from 17,000 pieces per month to 172,000 pieces. In July, SMS hit the million mark of the number of outgoing pieces of mail being processed. Out of the one million letters processed, 40 percent of that volume was a presort savings of

\$40,000 to SMS customers. The interagency mail piece count has also increased from 11,467 in the month of October 2006 to a high of 42,330 in July 2007. Each piece of interagency mail represents a minimum cost avoidance of 80 cents.

State Mail Services offers the following to its customers: carrier service, interagency mail services, drop boxes for outgoing interagency mail or other small mailings requiring metering. Also, SMS has incorporated a new automated process for sending certified letters, delivery confirmation, and express mailings. During the year SMS published two comprehensive guides; the "SMS Mail Services Guide" and the Commonwealth of Virginia Mail Security Guide" which provides policies and procedures for postal operations and mail security. In addition to the guides, SMS offers consulting services to all state agencies in the need of help or guidance with their current mail operations.

State Mail Services will continue to look for additional methods for improving mail security and operational efficiency. To find out more about SMS, visit <http://sms.dgs.virginia.gov> or call 804-236-3592.

## SMS Services

Security Screening

Inter-agency Mail

Postage Metering

Mail Consulting

Security Training

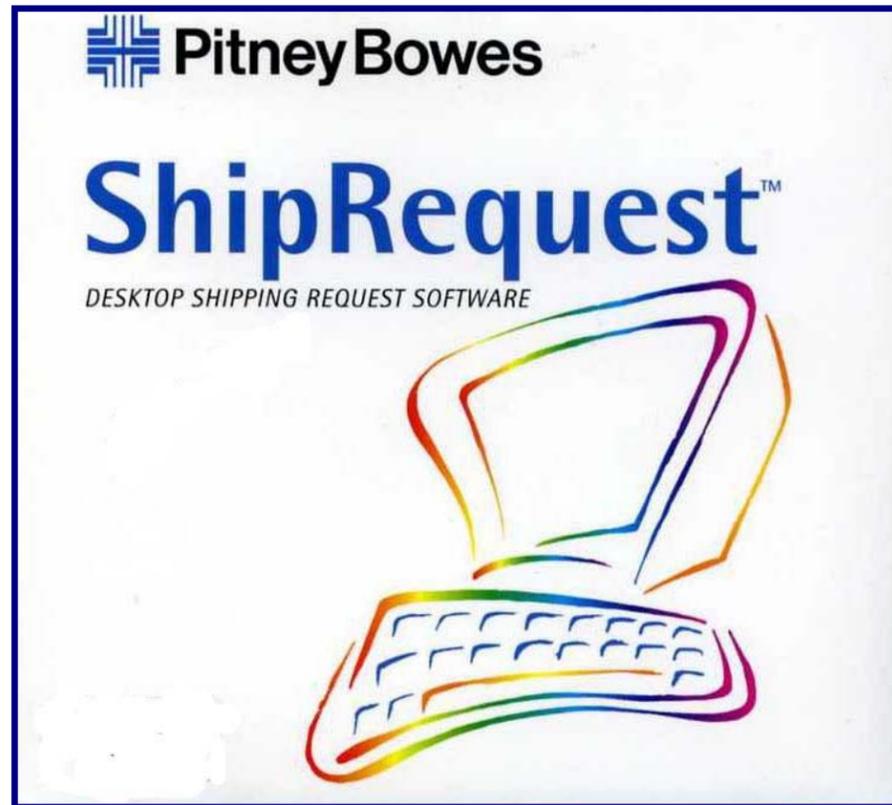
Express Mail and Package Pick-up

Business Reply

Mail Permits

E-Certified Mail

Security First. Customer Service. Efficiency Always.



## New e-Return software saves you time and money

Many of us work in a fast-paced environment with deadlines imposed by all levels of management. In a perfect world we would all love for our days to run smoothly. Spending time preparing and processing certified or registered mail can turn a perfect day into a troublesome day. Let's start by defining both certified and registered. Certified mail provides the sender with proof of delivery and registered mail provides a secure method of mailing.

State Mail Services is now offering a service to its customers that will allow them to process all outgoing certified and registered mail electronically. SMS recently purchased the E-Return Receipt Solution software called "Ship Request".

All of our customers process registered and certified mail manually. This two-step process begins with manually completing the United States Postal Service (USPS) cards or labels both front and back and then affixing the labels and/or green card to the outgoing envelopes. The sender must also take the time to calculate and account for postage, allot time

during their daily work schedule to make that unpredictable trip to the post office; a trip that can last anywhere from 15 minutes to 50 minutes. Even after the item is sent, the sender must still account for proof of receipt.

What are the benefits of the Ship Request software? The Ship Request software is much more efficient. It gives the SMS customer the option of electronically selecting registered and/or certified mail. With just a few strikes of the keyboard you can electronically key information and print to an envelope, and then place in a tray for the SMS carrier. SMS will handle the rest. Not only will you save time, but you will save at least \$.50 on each piece you send. You will have accurate postage with just one click of the button.

You will also be able to track items online and download your information electronically. For more information on Ship Request contact SMS at 804-236-3592 or by email at StateMail@dgs.virginia.gov.

## Receive discounts for properly prepared mail

Looking for a way to save money for your agency? It may be as simple as reducing the cost of your postage. Now, your agency can take advantage of postage savings by receiving a discount on properly prepared outgoing mail.

It's all in how you prepare your mail. The United States Postal Service (USPS) offers State Mail Services (SMS) and other large mail processing centers discounts for submitting mail for bulk distribution. Any mail can be considered bulk mail by the U.S. Postal Service as long as it is properly prepared and there is sufficient quantity to qualify for bulk mail postage discounts.

One of the main objectives for consolidating mail operations at the seat of government was to afford agencies the opportunity to take advantage of these cost saving measures. Mail consolidation allows the Commonwealth to receive the benefits of processing mail in large vol-

umes. Subsequently, this consolidation approach can reduce the cost of postage to participating agencies.

How can your agency take advantage of these postage savings? Bulk mail, often referred to as presort mail, requires mailers to do some of the work that otherwise would be completed by the Postal Service. This means if your agency takes time to properly prepare its mail, the cost can be as low as \$.36 cents for each item to be mailed. That is a \$.05 cent savings per piece. While it may be pennies, it certainly adds up and provides an agency substantial savings in the long-run.

So how does an agency properly prepare its mail in order to obtain these postage savings? Here are a few tips:  
- Send Standard Size Mail: When possible try to keep all outgoing mail at letter size. Odd-shaped mail is not eligible for discounts. Outgoing first

class letters must be rectangular in shape. Letters that are too thick or are an odd shape cannot be processed through a machine and may be subject to a surcharge. Some dimensions to keep in mind: length (5 1/2 inches - 11 1/2 inches), height (3 1/2 inches - 6 1/8 inches) and thickness (0.007 inch - 1/4 inch)  
- Properly Address Outgoing Mail

Make sure the letter is properly addressed. A large percentage of mail sent through the United States Postal Service normally contains some type of error. Simple errors such as misspelled names or street names or improper abbreviations can actually increase your postage costs. If a letter cannot be delivered due to a sender's error it may cost the agency a minimum of \$.50 cents per returned item. Many state agencies receive a lot of returned items due to bad addresses or misspellings. This can easily be remedied by proofreading your

mailing labels or by periodically verifying the addresses on your mailing list.

- Use the Proper Format for Addresses  
Type the addresses on your letters instead of handwriting them. Use machine printed type or computer generated black ink. Also, two letter state abbreviations is the industry standard. In addition, try and eliminate all punctuation except for the hyphen between the zip code and the plus four postal code. Also, keep in mind chances of receiving postage discounts can be maximized if you capitalize everything in the address column of the letter.

The illustration below is provided as an example to follow. Following these simple tips can help you properly prepare your outgoing mail and save your agency money in the long-run. For additional information go to <http://sms.dgs.virginia.gov>.

### How to properly prepare outgoing mail.

**You can lower your postage fees and receive faster delivery if you properly prepare your outgoing mail to be sorted by high speed mail sorting equipment.**

Address Area	
1	Attention: MR JOHN DOE
2	Department Name: OFFICE OF STATE SERVICES
3	*Firm Name: DEPARTMENT OF COMMONWEALTH SERVICES
4	Street Address: 2022 COMMONWEALTH ST
5	*Delivery Address: PO BOX 528
6	*City, State & Zip Code+4: RICHMOND VA 23219-3424

**Recommended Standards:**

- Machine-printed (type or computer-generated) in black ink
- Maintain uniform left margin
- All font size must be 10 or 12 points. The preferred font is Sans Serif (most commonly used are Arial and Helvetica). Gothic, italicized, highly stylized or script fonts should not be used
- Use all uppercase letters (capitalized)
- Use the standard abbreviation for states with the correct zip code
- Do not print on the bottom 5/8 inch of any letter-size envelope
- If using a window-style envelope, make sure the complete address is always visible
- All envelopes containing three or more sheets of paper must be sealed or taped shut