

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FEDERAL REGISTER FINAL RULE

I understand that the Postal Service published a final rule in the *Federal Register* about closing Post Offices. What does it say?

The Postal Service has published a final rule in the *Federal Register* that revises the procedures for discontinuance of Postal Service-operated retail outlets. These revised procedures enhance transparency and public participation, increase efficiency of the discontinuance process and ensure sound business judgment in decisions affecting Postal Service retail operations.

Can you provide more specifics about the final rule?

The final rule has four key elements:

- 1) To assure consistency of approach across the retail network, the final rule calls for a top-down process whereby decisions to identify retail outlets for initial feasibility studies can be made by Postal Service headquarters management.
- 2) The final rule clarifies the factors that could be used to identify a retail unit for an initial feasibility study to include workload, customer demand and access to products and services through other channels.
- 3) The final rule provides for efficiencies in the discontinuance process.
- 4) The final rule also contains provisions to enhance public input and transparency in reviews of Postal Service-operated stations and branches, through use of public posting requirements and public input procedures.

Why did the Postal Service publish this *Federal Register* notice?

The Postal Service undertook a process review to streamline the discontinuance process and make improvements, including improved opportunities for public input in decision making, particularly with respect to stations and branches.

Aren't you just trying to close Post Offices because the Postal Service is losing money?

Cost saving is only one of many factors that must be considered at the local level in the Post Office discontinuance process. Federal law directs the Postal Service to consider a multitude of criteria before closing Post Offices, including the effect on communities, postal services and employees, along with economic savings.

Why is the Postal Service losing money?

In the past 5 years, mail volume declined by 43.1 billion pieces. Customer Post Office visits have declined by 200 million, and retail transactions have declined by \$2 billion. Reduced revenue, coupled with the unique burden of pre-funding retiree health benefits, is creating enormous financial pressure on the Postal Service.

How many Post Offices does the Postal Service currently operate?

The retail network consists of 31,871 facilities, including 27,077 Post Offices, 3,313 stations and 1,481 branches.

What criteria are considered when studying whether or not a Post Office should close?

The criteria include:

- a. The effect closing a Post Office would have on the community served.
- b. The effect closing a Post Office would have on the employees of the facility.
- c. Compliance with government policy established by law that the Postal Service must provide maximum degree of effective and regular postal services to rural areas, communities and small towns where Post Offices are not self-sustaining.
- d. Economic savings to the Postal Service.
- e. Other factors the Postal Services deems necessary.

Will affected communities be notified? What is the process?

Yes. The communities will be notified. The process is as follows:

- The residents and businesses served by the Postal Service-operated retail office will be given 60 days' notice of a proposed action so they can provide comments. The proposal is posted in affected offices and is accompanied by an invitation for comment.
- After public comments are received and taken into account, any final determination to close or consolidate a Postal Service-operated retail facility must be made in writing and must include findings covering all required study criteria.
- Residents and businesses must be notified at least 60 days before the closure takes effect.
- Within the first 30 days after a final determination to discontinue a Post Office is made available, any person regularly served by a Post Office subject to discontinuance may appeal the decision to the Postal Regulatory Commission.

What Postal Service-operated retail offices are going to close?

At this time, the Postal Service is only studying certain Post Offices, stations and branches. No decision has been made to close Post Offices as part of a centralized initiative led by Postal Service headquarters. Such decisions will be made later, after community input has been received.

Will these changes affect offices only in rural America?

The majority of offices to be studied would be in rural locations.

Will the communities be able to keep their existing ZIP Codes?

Yes. The town's name and ZIP Code will be retained.