

## Your Postal Podcast 31st Edition Transcript

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**Richard Watkins:** Welcome to Your Postal Podcast. This is Richard Watkins with the Postal Service's Office of Corporate Communications. In this edition, we'll take you to a place where the sun doesn't shine, at least not much. And you'll hear from a soldier stationed in Kuwait about the joy that care packages shipped from home via Priority Mail bring to troops, especially at this time of year.

Staying warm in the sub-zero temperatures near the Arctic Circle can be a challenge. Brian Sperry reports on what it's like to deliver the mail in the freezing darkness.

### Arctic Delivery Segment

**Brian Sperry:** Jason Donald puts on his headlamp and leaves what warmth his four-wheel drive vehicle with dual heaters can provide to make some deliveries in temperatures 40 degrees below zero.

For the Fairbanks, Alaska, City Carrier, warmth is as elusive as the daylight.

When Donald transferred from Pennsylvania to Fairbanks back in 2003, it took him a while to acclimate to the dangerously cold temperatures and howling winds.

**Jason Donald:** The first year I was up here I was bundled up like a kid from *The Christmas Story* where he couldn't even move. But now I'm pretty used to it. The sun doesn't really come up until about 10 o'clock, that's when it actually starts getting light, and goes down right around 2:30 3 o'clock.

**Sperry:** The key to delivering in the Arctic dark?

**Donald:** Light (laughs). Definitely using the interior light and they give you headlamps, especially for delivering the NDCBUs, the boxes outside.

**Sperry:** So what does Donald wear when the temperatures get ridiculously cold? Less than you'd think.

**Donald:** The Post Office has this new, like kind of a Gore-Tex wind gear that comes in a suit. I just put some long johns underneath it and a pretty decent winter jacket, and I just wear the Under Armour underneath my shirt and a jacket and I'm pretty good. Just maybe a ski cap if it gets really bad.

**Sperry:** Donald also wears ice cleats on his boots for added traction, and has learned a healthy respect for Mother Nature.

**Donald:** Yeah, you definitely have to be careful. There are times, especially at 40 below, when I first came up here I did a walking route. You don't really have the park and loops like you have down there in the lower 48. You can't do that. You pretty much deliver like maybe you know a good 10 houses at a time and get in your vehicle and warm up for about 5 minutes. I mean it's gotten bad to where I couldn't feel my fingers all day.

**Sperry:** When the competition is grounded by weather the mail presses through.

**Donald:** We deliver no matter what. Cause we just happened to have this big ice storm for like three days. UPS, FedEx didn't deliver, but they've got a different motto up here. It's neither rain, sleet or snow or 50 below, but now we've got to add freezing rain to it.

**Sperry:** But, the motto doesn't say anything about moose.

**Donald:** It's kind of funny seeing them roam through Fairbanks. There's a couple of times where I couldn't make deliveries because the moose were right by the house. So I would keep driving. I wasn't about to get out.

**Sperry:** Once a moose chased Donald around his house.

**Donald:** I let the dog out and the dog went around the corner and all of a sudden she came tearing back around the corner and I was wondering what was going on, so I poked my head out and here comes this moose just charging. I just happened to get back around the side of the house so I didn't come face to face with it. It definitely woke me up. It was about 6 o'clock in the morning. So it was better than coffee.

**Sperry:** A 30 or 40 degree swing in sub-freezing temperatures can feel like a heat wave, says Donald.

**Donald:** Just the other day we had 30 below. And it got down to you know right around zero and it felt like it was summer outside. I wasn't even wearing a jacket. I was just wearing my shirt -- walking around delivering the mail.

**Sperry:** Donald's truck provides the shelter and heat he needs to survive on the route, but he has to be careful not to get too attached.

**Donald:** Sometimes I hate to get out of my vehicle (laughs), you know, it's like God, I don't want to get out again, especially when I have my lunch. That's why I don't even like taking my lunch until the end of the day. I hate taking that break to where I actually get really warm and I don't even want to get out of the vehicle. I take, and a lot of people take, their lunches late in the day and take their breaks just because of the fact that you don't want to get out. You don't want to stop because once you stop you get that lull, if it's cold it really hits you. I mean if you're cold and you all of a sudden warm up you get tired. It's like one big warm hug in that vehicle.

**Watkins:** It's the season of giving, and none are more appreciative of holiday parcels than members of our Armed Forces serving overseas. However, care packages sent from home via Priority Mail Flat-Rate boxes are popular year-round -- as Peter Hass learned from a soldier currently stationed in Kuwait.

#### Priority Mail Care Package Segment

**Peter Hass:** Priority Mail Flat-Rate boxes are a familiar sight to soldiers serving overseas, especially after the Postal Service began offering a two-dollar discount on the postage price for the Large Flat-Rate box when it's shipped to APO / FPO addresses.

Carlos Castro, is a Specialist with the Twenty-Two-Twentieth Transportation Company, a National Guard unit based out of Tucson, Arizona, and is spending the holidays serving in Kuwait. His unit provides transportation of equipment to other service members in Iraq.

Via a phone interview, Castro said he's noticed the Priority Mail parcels are very popular and has received some from his wife and parents over the past year.

Castro also said he and others in his unit have been the beneficiaries of a Priority Mail parcel shipped by a person he's never met, with an unusual gift inside:

**Carlos Castro:** One of my fellow soldiers here got a package from someone he didn't know. A bunch of pillows -- like 20 pillows -- so he handed them out to us. The pillows they sell here -- they aren't that good.

**Hass:** Castro summed up the emotions involved with getting a care package from home simply:

**Castro:** It makes me feel good. It feels like love coming from back home.

**Hass:** To order all the free shipping supplies needed to ship Priority Mail parcels to our servicemen and -women overseas, visit USPS dot com slash Supporting Our Troops -- or call 1-800-610-8734.

**Watkins:** And now, here's a roundup of recent Postal Service headlines: On December 6th, 35-year postal veteran Patrick R. Donahoe took over as Postmaster General and Chief Operating Officer of the U.S. Postal Service, replacing Jack Potter, who retired after nine years at the helm of the nation's second-largest employer. The *Washington Post* reported that in his initial letter to the Postal Service's 580,000 employees, Donahoe said he wants to QUOTE "build a more profitable, nimble organization that tries to win more of the competitive package business." END QUOTE.

Donahoe, in his first letter to employees as the nation's 73rd Postmaster General, said QUOTE "We are at the beginning of a new chapter in the history of our organization, and we will all help write it. Your good ideas, your engagement, and relentless dedication ensure we will make great strides as we create tomorrow's Postal Service together." END QUOTE.

In other news, the Postal Service announced this month that -- by popular demand -- Forever Stamps are now available in one-hundred-stamp coils, or rolls, for the first time. The new stamps feature images of the U.S. Flag and of the Statue of Liberty. FOREVER Stamps, once purchased, can be used to mail a First-Class letter anytime in the future.

Executive Director of Stamp Service David Failor said the coils are being issued in response to customer demand: QUOTE "Our business and residential customers have spoken and we have listened. This is a customer convenience that will last forever." END QUOTE

**Watkins:** Thank you for listening to Your Postal Podcast. Now we'd like to hear from you. Please send your feedback and story ideas to [YourPostalPodcast@usps.com](mailto:YourPostalPodcast@usps.com). A

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