

## Your Postal Podcast Version 22 Transcript

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**Watkins:** Welcome to Your Postal Podcast. This is Richard Watkins with the Postal Service's office of Corporate Communications. In this edition, you'll hear why a U.S. Postal Inspector traveled to Haiti after that country's devastating earthquake... we'll visit a 2.5 acre oasis that sits atop a mail processing facility in New York City... and we'll dig deep into the term "snail mail."

### (Haiti Segment)

Among the goodwill efforts reaching out to Haiti after its recent earthquake was a team of Postal Inspectors who visited to help the country begin to rebuild its postal services. Peter Hass spoke with one of the inspectors and files this report.

**Peter Hass:** In the aftermath of the recent, massive earthquake that shattered lives and buildings in Haiti, a group of Postal Inspectors was dispatched to assist the government and the Universal Postal Union with re-establishing postal services in the devastated nation. Frank Silva, an Inspector from Miami, Florida, was one of the six Inspectors who went to evaluate what Haiti would need to resume postal operations of any kind.

**Frank Silva:** Because the Inspection Service and the Postal Service have their leadership roles within the Universal Postal Union and these other posts are looking at the USPS to be a leader, that's how the Inspection Service was looked upon to come out to Haiti and make an initial assessment of the security conditions, which was the first concern when trying to reestablish, trying to get donations. The first worry of everybody was, was it safe to do that? Are things going to be able to make it to whoever has to receive it at Haiti Post? And then again, are there people at Haiti Post ready to receive them, and what are the conditions of their facilities?

**Hass:** Silva, who has worked in the Caribbean and visited Haiti in the past, said buildings were no longer recognizable -- or were already cleared away. But looking at collapsed residences brought his thoughts back home.

**Silva:** When I saw the houses, what shocked me is that at the time that this event occurred, I'm sure that a lot of families were in their homes and a lot of children were in their houses. And I thought about my daughter, my youngest daughter -- she feels, in my house, so safe. I'm sure most children feel like that, and for you to be so safe in the place that you feel sacred and for the roof to fall on you and die under those conditions, or some of them see their family members die -- It has to be very painful. That's one thought that stayed with me when I saw these buildings toppled and bent over, and some collapsed.

**Hass:** Silva said he believes some limited postal services may be established in Haiti soon.

**Silva:** If you want to know when I think that mail will start flowing into Haiti again, my best guess would be sometime in April. They're going to be running their post office from some tents in a secured industrial area.

(Green Roof Segment)

**Watkins:** Most people associate the United States Postal Service with the color blue, so they might not realize how green the USPS is. As Brian Sperry tells us in our next story, the Postal Service recently took sustainability to new heights in the Big Apple.

**Brian Sperry:** Seven stories above the hustle and bustle of the streets of New York City is a 2.5 acre park that doubles as the roof of the Morgan P&DC -- one of the largest mail processing facilities in the nation.

Filled with plants, trees and other vegetation, it's the largest green roof of its kind in New York City, and possibly the nation. It's a place where employees can take a break from the noisy environment of mail processing, and stretch their legs, or sit down and relax on one of the roof's 14 benches.

But the green roof is more than just a pretty space, says USPS Green Roof Project Facilities Manager Craig Sharp.

**Craig Sharp:** All those plants actually hold water and reduce the runoff into the New York City storm water system. Also, it adds installation value plus the life of the roof actually increases.

**Sperry:** Sharp says the Green Roof is part of the Postal Service's successful greener facilities strategy, which includes a goal to reduce energy use 30 percent by 2015.

**Sharp:** We expect to save about \$30,000 a year in air conditioning and heating costs.

**Sperry:** The idea for the green roof came from Manager Energy Program Management Robert McNiece, and Sustainability Vice President Sam Pulcrano. The Morgan facility needed a new roof, and building specs showed the facility, originally built back in the 1930s, was built with the future in mind.

**Sharp:** One of the things that a green roof requires is the structural capacity to hold the extra dirt, and extra plants and extra water that's held up there. On a new facility it requires extra money to do that. On the Morgan facility it was the perfect opportunity because it was already there, we didn't have to spend one dime on the structure.

**Sperry:** Sharp says there's less dirt than you'd think up on the roof.

**Sharp:** It's really not that deep, roughly four inches, and that four inches is over a mat that can hold water, plus the mat is on little chairs that allows the water to run underneath it because we still have roof drains up there.

**Sperry:** Mailhandler Janet Felix works one of the busiest floors in the Morgan facility. She uses a jeep to move equipment filled with mail around the workroom floor. She first visited the green roof after hearing rave reviews from a fellow employee.

**Janet Felix:** I like the Green Roof. I like the greenery, I like sitting up in the air, and in the winter okay granted it's a little bit cold, but in the spring and the fall, it is just beautiful. You can walk, some people power walk around. Some people just sit and

read, or have a cup of coffee and just look at the sky. It's a very calming nice effect up there.

**Sperry:** Sharp says the project has been worthwhile.

**Sharp:** To me it conveys an attitude the Postal Service has for going green, sustainable design, and they put their money where their mouth was on this one.

(Snail Mail Segment)

**Watkins:** The term "snail mail" has been used against the Postal Service for more than 25 years now. But maybe we shouldn't be insulted by the term. David Rupert has the details.

**David Rupert:** No doubt you've heard the expression. "Snail Mail"

For most postal employees, it's not always a term that makes us feel good. First of all, it's really not accurate.

We deliver 97 percent of our mail on time. Most of our mail is delivered within three days -- coast - to - coast. That's pretty good and far from a snail's pace.

The phrase arrived on the scene somewhere around 1982. It's stuck with us ever since.

Dr. Mary Jane Hurst, is a linguist and a Professor of English at Texas Tech University. She gives us a little insight.

**Mary Jane Hurst:** You know, I don't think any offense is meant by snail mail because the word is just in contrast with electronic mail that's instantaneous. And there's no way anything can compete with instantaneous. You can send your email and it's arrived on someone else's desktop in about a second. So, paper mail by definition is not going to be able to compete with that.

**Rupert:** What are the origins of the term?

**Hurst:** Well snail mail is probably a retronym. A retronym is a set of words that has meaning that have backformed on each other. So snail mail probably backformed from the original mail, after email was developed. So there was mail, and then there was email, and then to contrast with email the term snail mail came into use.

**Rupert:** Are there other examples of retronymns?

**Hurst:** For example, the words land line phone is a retronym.

**Rupert:** Dr. Hurst thinks we can turn it around:

**Hurst:** One approach would be just to embrace it and have to fun with it and accept it as it is because the language that's used to describe it is just a creative process that goes on in language all the time.

(Postal Service Headlines Segment):

**Watkins:** And now, here's a brief rundown of Postal Service headlines...

On March 2nd, Postmaster General John Potter unveiled an action plan to help ensure a viable Postal Service future.

USPS revenue and mail volume projections point to dramatic financial losses if the Postal Service takes no action.

To meet these challenges over the next decade and beyond, Mr. Potter and senior Postal Service executives presented the USPS action plan — “Delivering the Future: A Balanced Approach.”

The plan calls for the Postal Service to focus on areas where change is needed to become a flexible, agile agency able to respond to changes in mailing habits and customer preferences.

Many major daily newspapers published editorials supporting the Postal Service's proposal for greater flexibility, including the following excerpt taken from the March 9 edition of the Washington Post:

Quote "...federal law forbids closing post offices just because they operate at a deficit. That needs to change. So does the rule mandating service six days a week, though the USPS will have to find creative ways to serve those mailers for whom Saturday delivery is still a must." Unquote.

In other news, postal employees recently delivered more than 120 million census forms to mailboxes across America. In an exclusive interview following the official kickoff of that mailing, you can count U.S. Census Bureau Director Robert Groves among those who are impressed by the work of USPS employees.

**Robert Groves:** This Census, and in fact all Census' since 1960 would have been failures without this partnership we have with the U.S. Postal Service. So I thank you and your colleagues for what you are doing. This is a massive task. You guys come through. We give you this gigantic workload and you execute that workload in lightning speed.

**Watkins:** Thank you for listening to Your Postal Podcast. Now, we'd like to hear from you. Send your story ideas and feedback to [yourpostalpodcast@usps.com](mailto:yourpostalpodcast@usps.com). A production of Western Area Corporate Communications. Copyright 2010, all rights reserved.