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Recycling in Post Offices Expanding

WASHINGTON — More than 200,000 tons, and counting. That's how much paper, plastics and other waste the U.S. Postal Service recycled in 2009, representing a decrease in its greenhouse gas emissions of approximately 1.67 million barrels of oil.

An integral part of that undertaking is the Post Office Box Lobby Recycling program which is expanding to include an additional 2,435 Post Offices, including those in a number of U.S. national parks. That brings the total number of participating sites to more than 8,064, an increase of 150 percent from 2005, when the Post Office Lobby recycling effort started. This program is based on the success of similar mail recycling programs in the northeastern part of the United States, which began more than 10 years ago.

Postal customers are being encouraged to “read, respond, recycle” their P.O. Box mail in Post Office lobbies as a convenient and environmentally responsible alternative to taking it home to discard.

“Lobby recycling helps divert paper waste from landfills, eliminating greenhouse gas emissions from solid waste disposal,” said Deborah Giannoni-Jackson, vice president, Employee Resource Management. “In 2009, the Postal Service sold raw materials from recyclables, diverting them from landfills, making us greener and producing a positive impact on our bottom line.”

Secure recycling bins in Post Office lobbies are locked and the opening is slim — about the width of a magazine, so the mail, and customer privacy, are ensured. P.O. Box customers are encouraged to open their mail (read), take whatever action is necessary (respond) and place the rest of it in the bin (recycle). A complete list of participating “Read, Respond, Recycle” Post Offices can be found at usps.com/green on the recycle page by clicking on Earth911.com. Type the word “mail” in the search engine for a list by ZIP Code.

“This Post Office Box recycling program is part of a comprehensive approach to mail production, delivery and recycling that helps create a sustainable future for generations to come,” said Sam Pulcrano, vice president, Sustainability. “It makes it even easier for Post Office Box customers to go green by recycling their discarded P.O. Box mail right at the Post Office.”

Pulcrano added, another way customers can go green is with 100 percent recyclable Postal Service packaging supplies. The Postal Service is the only mailing and shipping company to earn Cradle to Cradle™ certification for the environmentally friendly design and health standards of Priority Mail and Express Mail supplies, and Ready Post envelopes, tape and labels. Priority Mail and Express Mail supplies are free to the customer and can be delivered at no charge. They can be ordered from the Post Office that's always open, 24 hours a day, at usps.com/green. Visit usps.com/green for the latest information about all the Postal Service's green initiatives, tools and products.

P.O. Box Lobby Recycling is one more way the Postal Service is demonstrating its commitment to environmental stewardship, Pulcrano said. The Postal Service has won more than 75 environmental awards, including 40 White House Closing the Circle, 10 Environmental Protection Agency WasteWise Partner of the Year, Climate Action Champion, Direct Marketing Association Green Echo, and the Postal Technology International Environmental Achievement of the Year, 2009.

The Postal Service receives no tax dollars for operating expenses, and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to fund its operations.

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An independent federal agency, the U.S. Postal Service is the only delivery service that visits every address in the nation – 146 million homes and businesses. It has 37,000 retail locations and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to pay for operating expenses, not tax dollars. The Postal Service has annual revenues of \$75 billion and delivers nearly half the world's mail.