

# BEST PRACTICES FOR CLOSING YOUR STORE

Sometimes, the best-laid plans need to be revamped, and, for whatever reason, you've decided to close your retail shipping center. Any other business could decide to close, clear out their inventory, change their address, turn in the keys to the landlord and split – at the end of the lease, or even before, sometimes. But our industry is unique, because we've got all of those boxholders to deal with. How can you best provide for a smooth transition to assure that customers don't lose their mail?

The ideal way, of course, is to let your boxholders dribble down to nothing before you close. This, of course, is not terribly realistic. Second best is to find a nearby competitor who would be happy to take your customers. The CMRA regs might make an operator leery of taking on a new batch of potentially problem customers, so this may be a harder sell than it would have been in the past. If your 1583s are up to date and rental records current, you' have a much easier time of finding your boxholders a new home.

The USPS will not allow your customers to file a Change of Address (COA) order – as long as you are still open. Once you have closed your doors however, they consider your CMRA "abandoned" and have implemented policies to allow customers to obtain their mail. During the 10 day period immediately following the closure of a CMRA, the USPS will allow the CMRA's customers to collect their mail at the post office and file a COA. This is also the time that you can file a batch of COAs for any customers who have agreed to transfer their service to another CMRA.

Customers can change their address at this time to any address they choose – their home or business, a PO Box, or another CMRA Address. The USPS will file a forced COA at the end of the 10 business days for any customer who doesn't appear to collect their mail and file their own COA.

Should your postmaster threaten to deliver (or carry out the threat) all of the mail to your home address, show him/her the revision to the POM that accompanies this article. Or, call the RSA office for help. The postmaster would be wrong, and just needs a little education as to proper procedures. RSA can provide that education.

Closing a store is not fun, but it needn't be a gut wrenching experience. With preparation and patience, you can get it done and move on to the next phase of your life.

# CLOSING A CMRA

- A. The Postal Service delivery unit must immediately post a notice at the CMRA location informing the CMRA customers of the location of their mail for pickup. The delivery unit will hold the mail for ten business days from the date of the posted notice.
- B. Provide a Mover's Guide when the CMRA customer pickups up the mail. Advise the CMRA customer to immediately notify all correspondents of their new mailing address and to file a Change of Address Order.
- C. c. Review the Change of Address Order and process per normal procedures and send the CMRA customer's mail to the Computerized Forwarding Service (CFS) for forwarding.
- D. d. At the end of ten business days, complete a Change of Address Order marked as "Moved, Left No Address" for any CMRA customers who have not filed a Change of Address Order. Send all former CMRA customer's mail (except unendorsed Standard Mail (A)) to CFS for processing.
- E. e. Permit the CMRA customer of the abandoned CMRA to file a Change of Address Order for a period not to exceed thirty business days after the ten business day hold period prescribed in subsection (a). Inform the customer that mail previously received was returned to sender as undeliverable mail. Advise the customer to immediately notify all correspondents of their new mailing address. The appropriate delivery person must complete a Forwarding Order Change notice, PS Form 3546, modifying the original "Moved, Left No Address" order to the forwarding order now filed.
- F. f. The above exceptions do not apply where a CMRA owner operates at more than one location and discontinues operations at some, but not all locations. In that instance, the owner is still responsible for mail addressed to customers at the discontinued location(s).

— Field Operations Support and Field Retail Operations, 3-25-99