

By Jan Rahn

Managing Editor

Beginning Jan. 22, postal patrons will be paying a penny more to mail letters within the United States when the cost of a first-class Forever stamp goes up to 45 cents.

The increase was announced last fall as the first price change for first-class postage stamps in more than two-and-a-half years.

Highlights of the new pricing include:

- Letters: 45 cents for one ounce.
- Additional ounce—unchanged at 20 cents.
- Postcards: 32 cents (a 3-cent increase).
- Letters to Canada or Mexico: (1 ounce) 5-cent increase to 85 cents.
- Letters to other international destinations: 7-cent increase to \$1.05.

Prices for standard mail, periodicals, package services and extra services will also change.

Express Mail and Priority Mail prices will not be affected.

While actual percentage price increases for various products and services varies, the overall average price increase across all mailing services is capped by law at 2.1 percent, the rate of inflation calculated based on the Consumer Price Index, according to a press release last fall.

The announcement did have good news for first-class mail presort mailers, however.

The second ounce for presorted letters will be free, which gives companies expanded opportunities to advertise new services and products to their customers as part of bill and statement mailings.

The postal service is also offering a new option to customers—a three-month pricing option to rent a post office box, which is perfect for people on the move and others who need a post office for only a short time.

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