

# How to Get Started Sending Care Packages to Soldiers

## Assemble Soldier Supplies

Here is a list of items the Soldier Packing team at Prestoncrest Church of Christ suggests for their members:

### *Hygiene Items*

Shampoo, Soap, Body wash, Deodorant, Sunscreen, Toothpaste, Toothbrushes, Dental floss, Mouthwash, Shave gel, Baby wipes, Disposable razors, Moisturizing eye drops, Chapstick, Baby powder, Foot powder, Contact lens cleaner

### *Food Items*

Drink mixes (single serve for water bottles), Instant oatmeal, Nutrition bars (Nutrigrain, Granola, Trail Mix, Powerbars), Chex mix, Jerky, Slim Jims, Dried fruit, Gum, Hard candies, Breath mints, Single serve chips, Cereals, Nuts (Peanuts, Sunflower seeds), Instant Coffee or tea bags, Instant soup

### *Miscellaneous Items*

Stationary and envelopes, Paperback novels, Batteries, Facial tissues, Sewing kits, Clear nail polish, AT&T Phone cards, Small balls, Frisbees, Hand held games, Drink koozies, CDs

### *Other Ideas*

Calling cards (we provide these in boxes at Christmas so the soldiers can call home during the holidays); Christmas cards (our children make cards for our soldiers several times a year); Girl Scout cookies; and hand made items such as neck coolers, helmet liners, etc. (We have a local source of volunteers which makes these items for our soldiers each month along with countless other soldiers.)

## For Soldiers in Combat Areas

Prestoncrest sends care packages to soldiers in combat areas who are members, or who have family or friends who are members, of our congregation.

When our packing team meets each month, all the supplies received are sorted into two categories—snacks or toiletries. The next step is to assemble the packets we will put into the boxes. Through experience we have learned to pack all our supplies in quart or gallon size Ziploc/plastic bags which helps to eliminate contaminating everything in the box in the event that leakage occurs (the soldiers are also grateful to receive these plastic bags to protect their gear and personal items.)

We provide each soldier with one snack bag and one toiletries bag along with a scripture to inspire and encourage them. We have one member who is a prolific reader who provides us boxes of paperbacks each month – we usually include 2-3 of these each month also.

## For Soldiers in Non-combat Areas

We send a card of encouragement which has a scripture to inspire and encourage them. Our church members fill these cards with signatures.

## **Assemble Mailing Supplies**

The US Postal Service Shipping and Postage Systems website has useful information on shipping packages: <http://www.usps.com/postagesolutions/shippingsystems/welcome.htm>.

*Please note that the links in this document are current as of March 2007. As links and postal services can change without notice, should you have problems please go directly to the USPS website (<http://www.usps.com/>) for the latest updates and information.*

### **Boxes**

The USPS currently provides free of charge two sizes of flat rate Priority Mail boxes.

#### **Boxes-First Choice**

Priority Mail Box Flat Rate Box-O-FRB2 (size 11-7/8" x 3-3/8" x 13-5/8")  
<http://shop.usps.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/ProductDisplay?catalogId=10152&storeId=10001&categoryId=13359&productId=11699&langId=-1>

#### **Boxes-Second Choice**

Priority Mail Box Flat Rate Box-O-FRB1 (size 11" X 8.5" X 5.5")  
<http://shop.usps.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/ProductDisplay?catalogId=10152&storeId=10001&categoryId=13359&productId=11697&langId=-1>

### **Customs Forms & Customs Forms Envelope**

The USPS provides free of charge custom forms and custom form plastic sleeves:

*Note: In checking with the post office in March 2007, that although their website states that choosing a custom form is based upon the value of the contents (\$400) they informed us that weight was also a determining factor.*

#### **Customs Forms-Option 1: Software**

##### **Dazzle Software by Endicia:**

The USPS website recommends DAZZLE software by Endicia (<http://endicia.com/>), which allows users to automatically print a custom form for each mailing label that is printed.

*Note: As we never know in advance the weight of our boxes, we have found that it is easier to print Customs Form 2976-A from the software (a signature is required on all five pages of the form) than it is to weigh 100+ boxes individually.*

#### **Customs Forms-Option 2: For Boxes 4 Lbs and Over**

##### **Customs Declaration and Dispatch Note (2976-A):**

<http://shop.usps.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/ProductDisplay?catalogId=10152&storeId=10001&categoryId=13357&productId=11681&langId=-1>

*Note: A signature is required on this form*

#### **Customs Forms-Option 3: For Boxes Under 4 Lbs**

##### **Customs (2976):**

<https://shop.usps.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/ProductDisplay?catalogId=10152&storeId=10001&categoryId=13357&productId=11679&langId=-1>

## **Customs Forms-Option 4: Customs Forms Online**

<https://webapps.usps.com/customsforms/>

## **Customs Forms Envelope**

USPS requires that customs forms (excluding Customs 2976–Option 3: For Boxes Under 4 Lbs) be placed in **Customs Form Envelope 2976E**.

<http://shop.usps.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/ProductDisplay?langId=-1&storeId=10001&catalogId=10152&productId=11683>

## ***Additional USPS Information Regarding Shipping to Soldiers***

<http://www.usps.com/supportingourtroops/welcome.htm>

<http://www.usps.com/supportingourtroops/addressingtips.htm>

## ***Optional Software***

We have been utilizing Endicia software “DAZZLE” which allows us to print our mailing labels, postage (with appropriate barcodes) and custom forms which has greatly expedited our packing process and allows us to add soldiers at a moments notice. Endicia also verifies zip codes thus reducing the possibility of returned boxes

## ***Carrier pickup***

A free service provided by the post office which must be scheduled at <https://carrierpickup.usps.com/cgi-bin/WebObjects/CarrierPickup.woa>.