

## How to Reduce Junk Mail at Your Office

Much of the marketing mail that your office receives is discarded quickly. We receive a great deal of unsolicited mail, such as catalogs, and advertising mail for products and services of all kinds. USDA pays for recycling or disposal of this mail. There is also a cost associated with mail center employees who sort and deliver this mail. Even when these materials are wanted, there can be a tremendous amount of waste and duplication. Some of this mail includes:

- Mail for staff members who are long gone
- Multiple mailings for the same person, often with small inconsistencies – misspellings, abbreviations – that make them seem like unique records
- Poorly targeted mailings, such as office supply catalogs or training programs.

Cut down on the amount of unwanted mail by keeping your name off mailing lists or asking companies to delete your name from their mailing lists.

Facility Managers can help reduce mail by providing the means for employee to get off mailing lists. One means is to provide postcards employees can fill out to have their names removed from companies' mailing list. Copies of these postcards can be found here (link to word file.)

A second method is to collect unwanted mail in centralized containers and have a designated person who removes these names from the companies' mailing lists. At the USDA Headquarters Complex, an Office Manager in the Facilities Management Staff whose workload fluctuated found time to remove names from the mailing lists. A *Mailer's Memo* was sent out to USDA Headquarters employees explaining the program. A copy of the memo is found here (Mailer's Memo.)

We estimate that USDA employees receive hundreds of tons of unwanted mail year. The USDA Headquarters Mail Room estimates that it receives over 50 tons of unwanted mail each year. By reducing consumption of unwanted mail by 100 tons, we will preserve about 1,500 trees annually. Also, by reducing unwanted mail, our mail center staffs can improve the efficiency of their mail operations.

One lesson we learned was that the centralized containers used to collect unwanted mail had to be clearly identified as being collection points for unwanted mail. An Unwanted Mail Campaign Poster was used not only to advertise the effort, but also to clearly designate the containers purpose. A copy of the poster can be found here (link to poster.)

USDA Headquarters also found that though this waste minimization effort was environmentally responsible; it was going to impact our recycling rates. It is important, therefore, to estimate the amount of waste reduction that occurred so it could be reflected in our mandated Waste Minimization Rates (35%).