

# Letter carriers as essential workers



**Paul  
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**“Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds.”** This phrase is chiseled in gray granite above the entrance of New York’s General Post Office Building, renamed in 1982 as the James A. Farley Building in recognition of the 53rd Postmaster General. This inscription has become the unofficial motto of Postal Service letter carriers due to its poignant description of the challenges letter carriers bear in delivering America’s mail. Visions of letter carriers trudging through snow, enduring extreme tempera-

tures and sloshing along waterlogged routes are somewhat commonplace. But then came the rapidly spreading and highly contagious COVID-19 pandemic, which very few could have predicted and which has caught the entire world off guard.

**From the first reports of the outbreak, society has** been consumed by the unprecedented devastation caused by this virus, resulting in the coining of terms like “essential businesses” and “social distancing.” Not surprisingly, it’s the labor community—the working, middle-class women and men—who make up a vast number of the industries that are considered “essential businesses” in this time of crisis. The backbone of our nation becomes crystal clear during times of devastation and attack. And it’s equally not surprising that the Postal Service, with its unmatched delivery network, is deemed one of these essential businesses.

Whether in the face of attacks from lethal biological agents such as anthrax and ricin, terrorism like that on 9/11 or Mother Nature’s destructive natural disasters, America can count on letter carriers to bind communities and the nation together, restoring predictability to an otherwise chaotic situation.

**Letter carriers are our unsung heroes during this** crisis, as they quietly go about their job each and every day without fanfare. We routinely hear about the other heroes in the media, and rightfully so: the medical professionals putting their personal safety on the line as we see the number of COVID-19 cases climb to new heights each day; those who keep us fed—including the grocery

clerks, delivery drivers and truckers who keep the supply lines moving; the teachers who tirelessly deliver distance learning to our kids; the law enforcement officials, firefighters and first responders who maintain order and rescue those in need; and of course, the women and men serving in the military who remain constantly ready to defend the nation both at home and abroad. But it’s our letter carriers who truly keep us all connected. Whether it’s delivering a child’s gift as they are quarantined on their birthday, delivering a new game to bond the family together and keep them entertained, delivering a care package or checking on the welfare of a vulnerable customer, each personal delivery by a letter carrier ensures that these small but vital connections are not lost in this new age of social distancing.

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**The importance of the letter carriers’ role to the** country during this crisis cannot be overstated. In a time where uncertainty, fear and change are the norm, our letter carriers provide comfort by continuing a part of our daily routine. They remind us to take a break, go outside, breath in the fresh air and check our mailbox like we did each day before the crisis. Maybe you’ll find a card from Grandma, a college acceptance letter, a necessary prescription, a monthly cable bill or a much-anticipated check. Regardless, seeing our letter carriers delivering their routes reminds us that life goes on, like it did before the crisis, and will continue afterwards. The promise of a routine brings comfort for many in a time when Americans desperately need this. Our letter carriers bravely come to our homes each day to deliver on this promise.

With this crisis, as in others, letter carriers have stepped up to the challenge, placing the needs of their country over their own. They should be proud of the mission they carry out, not only during times of national emergencies, but day in and day out. America can always count on letter carriers to rise up to any challenge.

To all those on the front lines of this crisis—thank you and stay safe!