

Royal Mail to Cut Saturday Second-Class Deliveries in Major Service Overhaul

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Royal Mail is set to cease Saturday deliveries of second-class letters as part of a significant cost-cutting reform approved by the UK's communications regulator, Ofcom. From 28 July, second-class letters will instead be delivered on alternating weekdays, in a move designed to reflect declining letter volumes and help safeguard the future of the Universal Service Obligation (USO).

Under the revised model, households will receive second-class post either on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday or Tuesday and Thursday, with the pattern reversing every fortnight. The change does not affect first-class deliveries, which Royal Mail will still be required to carry out six days a week under the existing USO, which mandates delivery across the UK at a uniform price.

Ofcom's decision comes in the wake of sustained declines in letter sending, which have driven up the cost of maintaining a nationwide postal service. Natalie Black, Ofcom's Group Director for Networks and Communications, stated, "Urgent reform of the postal service is necessary to give it the best chance of survival." However, she warned that success would also depend on Royal Mail's effective implementation of the new framework.

Royal Mail, whose parent company is International Distribution Services (IDS), welcomed the regulator's announcement. Chief Executive Martin Seidenberg called it "good news for customers" and said it would support a "reliable, efficient and financially sustainable Universal Service." The firm has already piloted the new delivery pattern in 37 of its 1,200 offices since February.

The reforms also revise Royal Mail's performance targets. The requirement to deliver 93% of first-class mail by the next working day has been reduced to 90%, while the target for second-class post to be delivered within three days is being cut from 98.5% to 95%. However, a new benchmark of 99% of mail being delivered within five days is being introduced to combat chronic delays.

Not everyone welcomed the announcement. Consumer watchdog Citizens Advice accused Royal Mail of “failing to meet delivery targets, all the while ramping up postage costs.” Its policy director, Tom MacInnes, argued that “slashing services and relaxing delivery targets in the name of savings won’t automatically make letter deliveries more reliable.”

The Liberal Democrats described the change as “deeply worrying,” with business spokesperson Sarah Olney demanding stronger regulatory oversight. The UK Greeting Card Association echoed concerns, warning that cuts to second-class services could drive reliance on costly, unregulated first-class mail.