

Increased Security at Government Warehouses Can Hinder Timely Delivery

Frederic G. Antoun, Jr.

Following the tragedy on September 11, 2001 and the anthrax attacks through the mail, federal agencies have dramatically increased security. Not only are individuals being thoroughly checked, but packages are being examined and evaluated far more thoroughly than they ever were in the past.

Those of us who deal with agencies of the federal government have already been trained to arrive slightly earlier to go through the security check-ins at federal buildings. But what happens when packages are delivered either to federal buildings or warehouses?

Currently, most federal buildings are carefully evaluating and examining packages that are delivered to the building. In the printer's case, these might be proofs or prior to production samples. There is no question that this increased security is necessary. Unfortunately, it sometimes results in delaying the addressee's receipt of the package. Luckily for GPO vendors, the rule is that delivery is complete when the package is received by the agency – even if the mailroom takes a day to get it to the addressee. As a result, if a proof or sample is delivered to the agency mailroom on the January 10, GPO will count it as being delivered on the January 10, even though the addressee may not have received it from the agency's mailroom until the following day, due to delays resulting from package examination and heightened security. This creates a problem for agency print procurement personnel, because their sample or proof approval "hold time" can be diminished.

At the warehouses, package examination directly affects the printer, and its ability to complete timely deliveries, especially on tight schedules. In the past, palletized shipments or boxes were simply accepted at the dock, and the warehouse signed the printer's delivery receipt. Now, it is quite common for the driver (whether it is the printer's employee or a commercial carrier or delivery service) to have to wait at the dock while the boxes and pallets are carefully examined.

Not only does this create a potential delay in making the delivery, but it may eventually increase the cost charged by carriers for delivery to government buildings. As we all know, "time is money," and carriers that have to spend an hour making a delivery that used to take fifteen minutes may eventually adjust their rates.

For printers who make their own deliveries, security delays are causing substantial problems. A truck that used to be able to make ten deliveries in a day

without difficulty, may now be able to make only six or seven, and returns to the plant with undelivered jobs. These jobs will get delivered – but they will probably be one day late. With the already tight schedules on small and medium runs, getting the job done and out the door a day early is rarely an option. Nor is it reasonable to assume that the printer who makes its own deliveries will buy another truck and hire a driver, or that the printer that uses courier or delivery services will pay substantial increased fees for overnight or accelerated delivery. GPO the lowest prices in the marketplace for its agency customers, so there is no room for the printer to incur additional costs.

So, what is the solution? For agencies that are experiencing delays in receiving proofs or other materials due to security examinations within their agency, it would be a simple matter to increase the proof hold time. Doing so lets the printer know in advance what the schedule would be. It also prevents an unexpected delay in receiving the order, due to the automatic schedule extensions in GPO Contract Terms that give the printer a one day extension for each day the agency is late returning proofs or supplying government furnished materials *plus* one additional “grace day” (up to a total of three grace days). If the agency is late returning the proof by one day, the schedule is extended by two days.

To address the printer’s delivery problem, GPO and its agency Customers need to evaluate delays that may be caused at their receiving locations, and adjust the delivery schedules in the specifications. Alternatively, GPO could allow for a one-day schedule extension (no grace days) where the printer can verify that there was a delay or inability to make a delivery due to new security procedures. If both of these solutions can be used where appropriate, GPO will continue to obtain responsible, high-quality vendors, who treat their obligations to deliver on schedule seriously.

© Frederic G. Antoun Jr. 2001 All rights reserved