

United States Congress

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4504

October 31, 2023

The Honorable Louis DeJoy
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Room 10300
Washington, D.C. 20260-1000

Dear Postmaster General DeJoy:

We write regarding the unacceptable response by your agency to serious worker safety concerns and service disruptions following the closure of the Montpelier Post Office, caused by the devastating summer flooding in Vermont.

Since July, the Montpelier Post Office has been operating out of a series of temporary locations, which most recently consisted of two mobile units positioned on River Street in Montpelier. Despite messaging to the contrary, these mobile units remain inoperable, with no power to sustain air conditioning in the summer, heat in cold fall temperatures, or lighting needed to work inside. While these mobile units have been completely unacceptable in terms of providing a safe workplace for your postal employees, they allowed for continued service needed by Montpelier residents. Now, your agency intends to close these temporary mobile units by the end of this week with no stated plan to reopen services in Montpelier. This abandonment of your employees and customers is completely unacceptable and must be rectified immediately.

Therefore, we ask that you 1) provide workers, post office box owners/holders, retail customers, municipal leadership in Montpelier, and us with a firm timeline for reopening services in Montpelier that are safe, heated, electrified, and indoors by Friday, November 3; 2) immediately notify USPS employees of their options to be placed on paid administrative leave, reassigned to nearby post offices, or otherwise made whole; and 3) reopen retail and post office box operations in Montpelier no later than Monday, November 13 in a temporary location agreed upon with the American Postal Workers Union.

While these requests today center around the immediate crisis of the planned closure of the temporary location in Montpelier, our concerns do not end there. People are already suffering from so many other unavoidable tragedies stemming from Vermont's summer flooding. We urge you to take the necessary steps to restore Vermonters' faith in your agency and the critical federal government services you provide.

First, we ask that you work closely with the General Services Administration to move as expeditiously as possible to reopen the permanent post office facility in Montpelier. Next, we ask that you respond quickly and accurately to any requests from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regarding the official complaints filed by your employees regarding the unsafe working conditions they have been subjected to since July.

The problems in Montpelier reflect a failure of national management that has become a pattern in our state. For years, the Postal Service has left many of our rural communities unheard and underserved. We have consistently expressed our concerns over ongoing staffing shortages and extreme mail delays across Vermont, as well as the lack of proper resources for the USPS sorting

facility in White River Junction. Notably, this facility remains understaffed and under resourced and faces an uncertain future. Postal workers, and the Vermonters that rely on them, deserve better.

In order to assess the Postal Service's commitment to its mission, employees, customers, and Congress, we request responses to the following questions no later than November 17, 2023:

1. July's flooding exposed vulnerabilities in USPS' disaster mitigation, response and recovery.
 - a. Does the Postal Service have a plan to respond to major natural disasters? Please provide us with copies of any disaster mitigation, response, and recovery plans being used by the agency.
 - b. If USPS does not have a disaster response plan, is the agency in the process of creating one?
 - c. What steps is USPS taking to account for the Postal Service's response failures during recent disasters?
2. As detailed above, Montpelier's temporary facilities have been entirely unfit for postal workers and customers.
 - a. What is the process within USPS to ensure proper working order of mobile units before they are sent out to communities?
 - b. How does the USPS seek feedback from postal workers and customers on the safety and accessibility of temporary facilities, including mobile units, and what is the process for providing replacement locations or units to communities in need?
 - c. Please provide us with documentation of any and all complaints the USPS has received regarding the Montpelier Post Office, including all temporary facilities.
3. The unwillingness from USPS to communicate clearly and promptly with the Vermont delegation and our constituents is unacceptable.
 - a. How does the Postal Service go about gathering community input to inform its relocation decision-making, pursuant to 39 CFR § 241.4? What actions have been taken so far?

Under your leadership, we have seen a persistent deterioration of USPS service and an intentional undermining of the very mission of your agency, which has demoralized your workforce and undermined Americans' faith in your ability to meet their most basic needs. The City of Montpelier, the State of Vermont, and the United States as a whole need a functioning Postal Service.

We ask that you respond to each question included in this letter by the dates requested and appreciate your prompt attention to these urgent and important matters.

Sincerely,



Senator Bernie Sanders
United States Senator



Senator Peter Welch
United States Senator



Representative Becca Balint
Member of Congress

CC: Postal Board of Governors