Package Theft in the United States

RISC REPORT

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Executive Summary

Package theft poses a significant challenge for the logistics industry in the United States, with at least 58 million packages stolen and as much as $16 billion in financial losses reported in 2024. Beyond these financial impacts, theft erodes consumer trust and adds pressure on retailer and delivery provider customer service teams, diverting resources and increasing costs. The rapid growth of ecommerce, projected to increase from $1.22 trillion in 2024 to $1.88 trillion by 2029, is expected to amplify these challenges. Fragmented reporting practices and limited data complicate efforts to fully understand and address the problem.

While package theft can occur at any point in the shipping value chain between the sender and the recipient, in this paper we are focused on the unauthorized removal of packages from a delivery location, such as a residence or business, commonly referred to as "porch piracy."

In order to better understand the issue of last mile package theft, the US Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted research to estimate the scope of the problem, describe how it impacts retailers, delivery companies, and the Postal Service, and present strategies that these stakeholders—as well as consumers and federal, state, and local legislators—are implementing to combat package theft.

Implications for Stakeholders

Package theft affects all stakeholders in the delivery ecosystem. Retailers bear the cost of replacing stolen packages, face operational inefficiencies, and risk reputational harm. Delivery providers, including the Postal Service, must manage increased claims processing, higher expenses, and reputational damage, potentially impacting shipper loyalty and consumer trust. It is important that the Postal Service continues to identify and implement solutions that will benefit customers while preserving operational efficiency. Effectively tackling this challenge is central to the Postal Service maintaining public trust, supporting the continued growth of e-commerce, and fulfilling its broader public service mission.

Mitigating Package Theft Through Collaboration

Effectively combatting package theft requires collaboration among retailers, delivery providers, and consumers. Each stakeholder can play a role in lessening the risk imposed by package theft. Some of the collaborative strategies that help mitigate package theft include:

- Offering and making use of flexible and secure delivery options;
- Leveraging technology for enhanced tracking and theft prevention;
- Utilizing discreet packaging and package delivery placement; and
- Sharing data and analytics on package theft.

Policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels are doing their part, as well, by advancing stricter porch piracy laws and initiatives to enhance prevention and enforcement efforts.

There is the potential for significant progress in reducing package theft through greater collaboration between impacted parties, including delivery providers, shippers, government, and law enforcement. As a highly trusted government agency with a public service mission and a dedicated law enforcement presence, the Postal Service is uniquely positioned to be at the forefront of such future efforts. Collaboration on data sharing and solutions has been successful in other industries impacted by criminal activity, and similar initiatives could be undertaken to address package theft. The stakes are high — with impacts of between $5 billion and $16 billion annually, substantially reducing package theft would have significant and ongoing positive impacts for the U.S. economy.

Addressing package theft goes beyond mitigating financial losses — it is also about preserving trust and ensuring the resilience of the delivery ecosystem in an evolving marketplace. Through collective action and innovative strategies, stakeholders can foster a more secure future for e-commerce and package delivery.

Observations

Introduction

Package theft is a significant challenge for the entire parcel delivery industry, impacting consumers, retailers, and delivery providers alike. With at least 58 million packages stolen in 2024, theft creates substantial financial burdens and operational disruptions across the delivery and ecommerce ecosystems. The prevalence of theft may also erode consumer trust in ecommerce merchants, postal operators, and private delivery providers, particularly as these entities strategically navigate the rapid growth of ecommerce and its associated demands.

To highlight the impact of package theft in the United States and inform potential strategies to mitigate the problem, this report explores the multifaceted nature of package theft and its implications for key stakeholders in the ecommerce ecosystem. For the purposes of this paper, we are narrowing our focus to unauthorized removal of packages from a delivery location, such as a residence or business, where it has been commercially delivered or has been left to be received by the intended recipient, commonly referred to as "porch piracy."[1] Because this theft occurs at the intersection of multiple stakeholders, it is a more complex issue than theft that happens under the direct control of an individual value chain actor.

This paper examines the financial and operational challenges last mile package theft imposes upon retailers, delivery providers, and consumers, as well as the broader impact on public trust in delivery systems. It also highlights existing measures to combat package theft from customer premises, including technological innovations, collaborative initiatives, and regulatory efforts, while identifying opportunities for stakeholders to enhance the security and reliability of package delivery. See Appendix A for more details on this project's objectives, scope, and methodology.

Package Theft is a Prevalent Problem

Package theft is a substantial problem the extent of which is difficult to measure, and data limitations complicate understanding the scale of the problem (discussed further below). There is no single authoritative source for package theft data, and surveys vary in estimating the volume and costs associated with package theft. Security.org estimates that at least 58 million packages were stolen in 2024, while Safewise estimates 120 million packages were stolen in 2023, up from 119 million in 2022.[2] Surveys from 2023 and 2024 also indicate that package theft has affected up to 25 percent of Americans with the average cost per stolen package estimated to be between $50 and $204.[3] Overall, total estimated annual losses range from a low of $5.2 billion in 2023 to $16 billion in 2024 (see Figure 1).[4] As ecommerce continues its growth, the need for secure delivery systems, especially in urban populations, is likely to become more urgent.

1   For more on the defining aspects of package theft, see Melody Hicks, Ben Stickle, and Joshua Harms, "Assessing the Fear of Package Theft," American Journal of Criminal Justice, (2022) 47:3–22, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-020-09600-x.

2   See Security.org, Annual Package Theft Statistics, November 12, 2024, https://www.security.org/package-theft/annual-report/; Safewise, Worst Metro Cities for Package Theft for 2024, November 5, 2024, https://www.safewise.com/blog/metro-areas-porch-theft/; Capital One Shopping Research, Package Theft Statistics, February 23, 2025, https://capitaloneshopping.com/research/package-theft-statistics/.

3   According to Security.org, 25 percent of Americans have had a package stolen at some point in their lifetime. Security.org also estimates the average cost of a stolen package in 2024 to be $204, while Safewise noted that most stolen packages fall within the $50 to $100 dollar range. See Security.org, Annual Package Theft Statistics, November 12, 2024, https://www.security.org/package-theft/annual-report/; Safewise, Worst Metro Cities for Package Theft for 2024.

4   Finder estimates a $5.2 billion minimum in losses while Security.org estimates $12 billion and Safewise estimates losses to be up to $16 billion. See Finder, "Porch Pirate Statistics", November 7 2023, https://www.finder.com/credit-cards/porch-pirates-statistics; Security.Org, 2024 Package Theft Statistics; Safewise, Worst Metro Cities for Package Theft for 2024.

Figure 1: Varying Estimates of Package Theft

At least 58 million Packages
Are Estimated to Have Been Stolen in the U.S. in 2024

$5.2-16 BILLION in Estimated Annual Losses

Most Stolen Packages Cost Between **$50 - 204**

UP TO **25%** of Americans Have Been Affected

49-58 MILLON Victims of Package Theft

Source: OIG Analysis of National Surveys
Note: ranges across sources arise from variations in representative sample sizes and differing analytical methods.

Rising Incidents Pose Strategic Challenges

Package theft has become a growing issue tied to the surge in ecommerce. In 2024, the U.S. ecommerce market reached an estimated $1.22 trillion in revenue and is expected to increase over 50 percent to $1.88 trillion by 2029.[5] Pitney Bowes estimates a 25 percent increase in package volumes from 2024 to 2028 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: The Actual and Estimated Increase in the U.S. Package Volumes (2019-2028)
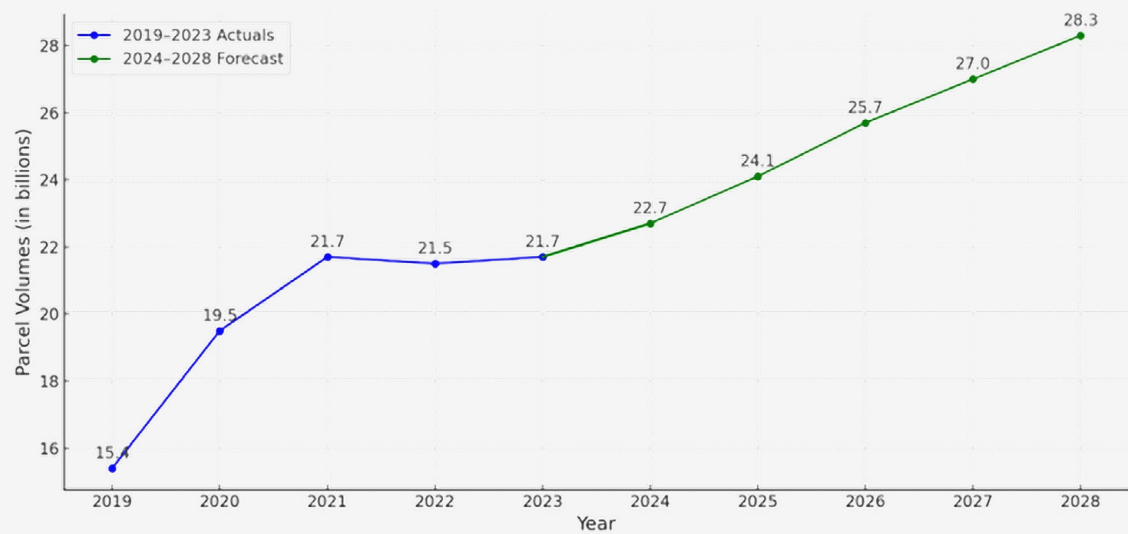
Source: Pitney Bowes, U.S. Parcel Index 2023

The Postal Service, through its Delivering for America plan, seeks to gain share in the package delivery sector by expanding package services and modernizing infrastructure to handle increasing package volumes efficiently. Revenue from package delivery is needed to help offset the impact of volume declines in Market Dominant mail. Consequently, better understanding the impacts of package theft could be relevant to the Postal Service's broader strategies.[6] It also presents an opportunity, as a secure network can bolster public trust, attract business from competitors, and improve financial sustainability.

Theft has a Disproportionate Impact

The impact of package theft is not evenly distributed, with urban areas and high-density neighborhoods reporting disproportionately higher rates of incidents, particularly during peak, or holiday, delivery seasons. According to research by home security and safety analysts SafeWise (see Figure 3), New York City leads with an estimated $945 million in losses due to stolen packages in 2024, followed by Philadelphia ($450 million), Chicago ($262 million), Washington, D.C. ($232 million), and Houston ($207 million).[7]

Figure 3: Estimated Package Theft Losses by City (2024)
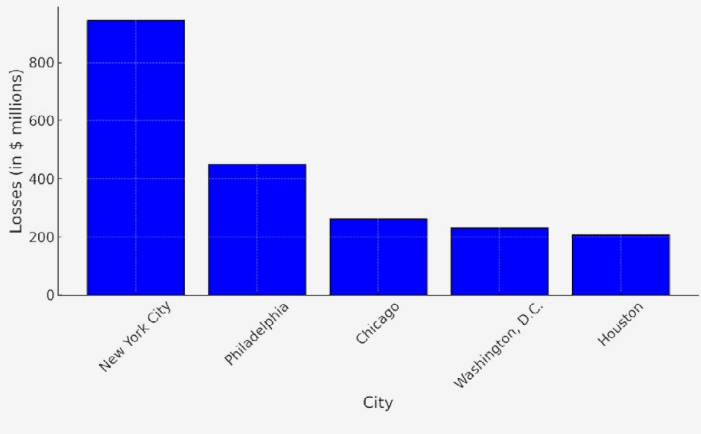
Source: Safewise

While anyone can be a victim, small businesses and lower-income individuals face a proportionally greater burden as they may struggle to replace stolen items. With an estimated average value of up to $204 per stolen package, such thefts can represent a considerable expense.[8]

Logistical vulnerabilities, such as close proximity to public walkways and the absence of obstacles to conceal packages, increase some individuals' chances of repeated thefts. Without physical barriers or concealment, packages become easy targets for thieves who can quickly spot and take them without much effort or risk of being noticed, and the high foot traffic near public walkways further increases the chances of theft by exposing deliveries to more potential opportunists.

Fragmented Reporting Practices Make the Scale of Package Theft Difficult to Assess

While the data presented above give an indication of the scale of the problem, fragmented reporting practices and verification issues complicate efforts to understand the full scope of package theft, underscoring the need for improved data collection and analysis to better develop effective mitigation strategies. The absence of an industry-wide reporting system makes it difficult to aggregate and analyze theft data comprehensively. The fragmented nature of package theft data has several implications (see Table 1).

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6   For many foreign posts, parcels and ecommerce operations are driving revenue growth. See International Postal Corporation, Global Postal Industry Report 2023, December 2023, https://www.ipc.be/services/markets-and-regulations/market-intelligence/global-postal-industry-report.
7   See Safewise, Worst Metro Cities for Package Theft for 2024, November 5, 2024, https://www.safewise.com/blog/metro-areas-porch-theft/.
8   At the higher end of our sample of studies, Security.org estimates the average value of a stolen package to be $204. Security.org, 2024 Package Theft Annual Report and Statistics, November 12, 2024, https://www.security.org/package-theft/annual-report/

Table 1: Challenges to Understanding the Scale of Package Theft

Challenges	Reporting Implications
Part of Broad Crime Classifications	Package theft is categorized as a broader crime, like petty theft or larceny, obscuring specific circumstances and preventing detailed analysis.
Consumer Uncertainty in Reporting	Fragmented victim incident reporting to different parties—including delivery companies, law enforcement, and retailers—leads to incomplete and inconsistent data.
Proprietary Data May Hinder Reporting	Reports of package theft received by retailers may be protected as sensitive and proprietary, impeding a unified approach to theft prevention.
Verification Challenges in Existing Data	Inaccurate claims due to misdeliveries, misplaced items, or consumer fraud distort the actual scale of package theft. Ambiguity in identifying whether packages are stolen or lost complicates efforts to assess the scope of theft.

Source: OIG Analysis

Package theft is often categorized and recorded under broad classifications, such as petty theft or larceny, rather than recognized as a distinct crime. For instance, the FBI Uniform Crime Statistics do not differentiate package theft from other types of theft, focusing solely on the monetary value of the crime. Similarly, the Postal Service consolidates mail theft and package theft into a single category in its reporting practices, such as "Mail & Package Theft." These generalized classifications limit the ability to identify trends in the specific circumstances of package theft, preventing a clear understanding of its prevalence and limiting use of data to inform the development of specific prevention and mitigation measures.

Another significant challenge stems from consumer uncertainty regarding where to report package theft.[9] Victims of theft may file complaints with delivery companies, law enforcement, or retail organizations, but these entities often do not share or aggregate data. Retailers and shippers may absorb these losses as business costs in order to maintain customer satisfaction and protect their reputations in competitive markets. This fragmented approach leads to incomplete and inconsistent data resources, making it difficult to develop a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

When consumers do report theft to retailers, data are likely protected as sensitive and proprietary. In such a competitive industry, delivery providers and retailers protect sensitive information, such as operational data and customer behaviors, to maintain a competitive advantage, ensure privacy, and reduce liability. These barriers impede a unified approach to theft prevention, leaving stakeholders to manage risks individually.

Finally, existing data on package theft face verification challenges, as not all reported incidents are genuine. Distinguishing package theft from loss remains a persistent difficulty. It is often unclear whether a package reported stolen was stolen, undelivered due to a delivery provider failure, or part of consumer fraud. These inaccuracies further complicate efforts to quantify the national scope of package theft.

Theft Impacts Retailers and Delivery Providers

Despite challenges with data reporting, package theft has undeniable and significant impacts on retailers and delivery providers. During the ecommerce boom of the COVID-19 pandemic, 58 percent of victims of package theft surveyed by Consumer Reports contacted the retailer for a refund or replacement, 40 percent notified the shipping company, and 12 percent reached out to credit card companies

9   The U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) handles external mail and package theft. They provide a webpage that allows customers to report stolen mail or packages, as well as offering tips on how to avoid becoming a victim. https://www.uspis.gov/tips-prevention/mail-theft.

(see Figure 4).[10] This trend has remained consistent with the retail industry often bearing the direct costs while delivery providers, like the Postal Service and its competitors, face operational burdens, potential reputational harm, or revenue loss.

Figure 4: Actions Taken by Victims of Package Theft During the COVID-19 Pandemic (2021)
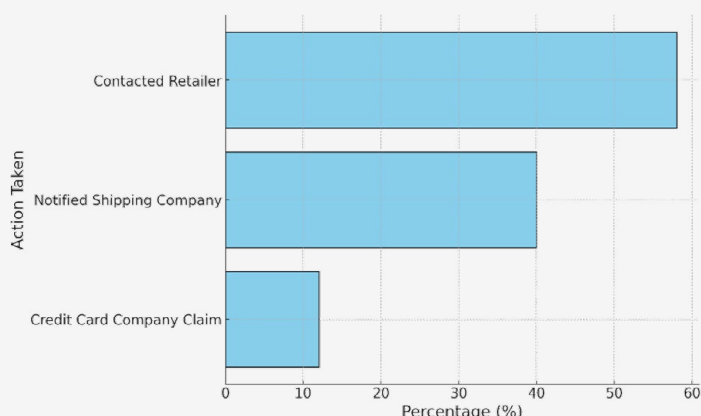
Source: Consumer Reports, September 2021 Omnibus Results Totals exceed 100% as respondents may have undertaken more than one course of action.

The Retail Industry Often Bears the Direct Costs of Replacing Stolen Packages

Financially, retailers often bear the direct cost of replacing stolen packages or issuing refunds to customers. Additional costs are also incurred when an order needs to be processed, packed, and shipped twice as a result of a theft.

> Theft-related frustrations due to the inability to provide a secure customer experience can lead to an erosion of brand loyalty.

Some companies mitigate losses by offering optional package insurance services to consumers.[11] However, a prominent online retailer told the OIG that their paying for insurance for all customers would be too costly. Adding insurance could result in higher prices that might discourage purchases and ultimately drive business to competitors.

For retailers, addressing theft that occurs after an item is delivered is challenging due to limited law enforcement resources and the relatively low return on investment in prevention efforts. Operational issues, such as misrouted packages or delivery inefficiencies, can be mitigated through improved logistics and coordination with delivery providers. Similarly, fraud-related concerns, like false claims or payment disputes, can be handled with data analytics and collaboration with financial institutions. In contrast, post-delivery theft is more difficult and costly to investigate and address.

Operationally, theft places a burden on customer service teams, impacting overall consumer satisfaction. Resolving theft-related complaints diverts resources from other support functions. Processing an order twice also reduces the efficiency of distribution centers. Reputationally, theft-related frustrations due to the inability to provide a secure customer experience can lead to an erosion of brand loyalty.

Theft Impacts an Increasingly Competitive Delivery Market

Package theft is more than a retailer problem — it can also strain financial resources, operational capacities, and customer relationships for delivery providers. While retailers primarily bear the direct costs of replacing stolen packages, package theft is a broader issue that affects both the Postal Service and its competitors.

> "We've actually pulled business completely away from delivery providers because the lost package claims have gone through the roof, and we can't afford to do business in their network."
>
> –National Retailer

10   See also Consumer Reports, American Experiences Survey: A Nationally Representative Multi-Mode Survey, September 2021 Omnibus Results, September 22, 2021, https://article.images.consumerreports.org/prod/content/dam/surveys/Consumer_Reports_AES_22_SEPT_2021#page=10.09. (Totals exceed 100% as respondents may have undertaken more than one course of action.)
11   Some retailers may offer shipping protection insurance policies, such as Route, in which consumers face additional expenses when choosing to insure their packages.

The investigation of theft-related complaints and the processing of claims increase operational costs for delivery providers. Addressing these incidents requires resources to verify claims and resolve disputes. This administrative burden adds to the operating expenses of both the Postal Service and its private competitors, diverting attention and funds away from other critical operations.

Customer perceptions amplify the impact of package theft. Some customers who report missing packages attribute these losses to theft, even when the cause may be unclear. Increases in package volume, such as during peak season, leave more customers vulnerable to package theft and may result in a higher number of theft-related complaints. This seasonal spike not only diverts resources but also highlights the potential benefits of enhanced delivery security measures.

Incidents of package theft may lead both consumers and retailers to reconsider their loyalty to specific delivery providers. Customers who lose trust in delivery systems may seek alternative methods, such as opting for in-store purchases to avoid theft risks. This shift in behavior can reduce the volume of ecommerce shipments, impacting delivery providers' revenue streams. Delivery providers face reputational damage when theft occurs, as customers may perceive their inability to ensure secure delivery as a sign of inefficiency or incompetency. This erosion of trust can deter future business. While we do not have the data to quantify the overall impact, a large national retailer told the OIG, "we've actually pulled business completely away from delivery providers because the lost package claims have gone through the roof, and we can't afford to do business in their network."

Alternatively, taking efforts to mitigate package theft, including working closely with retailers to address security concerns, can be a strong selling point for a delivery provider. Efforts to provide secure and reliable delivery services can help establish a reputation that attracts more customers, fosters loyalty, and differentiates the delivery provider in a competitive logistics market.

Collaborative Strategies for Retailers, Delivery Providers, and Consumers

Just as the package theft problem impacts retailers, delivery providers, and consumers, effectively mitigating its damage involves collaboration among these same stakeholders. Each stakeholder plays a role in reducing theft.

Offering Flexible Delivery Options

Flexible delivery options, such as giving customers varied, secure pickup points, help mitigate last mile package theft. When a customer knows that they will not be able to accept an incoming delivery, these alternative delivery solutions enable them to take steps to make sure their package will not sit unattended. For example, some retailers allow consumers to consolidate deliveries and schedule them to arrive when someone will be at home. Alternatively, they can arrange for a trusted neighbor to pick up packages and hold them or choose to have their packages delivered to their workplace.

Table 2: Collaborative Strategies for Securing the Last Mile

Offering Flexible Delivery Options	Secure pickup points, scheduled deliveries, secure lockers, P.O. boxes, requiring signatures and workplace deliveries help mitigate last-mile package theft.
Implementing Secure Front Porch Lock Boxes	Next-generation mailboxes and front porch lock boxes provide secure package storage.
Leveraging Technology for Tracking and Theft Prevention	AI-powered theft risk assessments, tracking systems, and theft pattern analysis helps inform delivery providers and retailers. Real-time notifications and security apps help customers retrieve packages quickly.
Discreet Packaging and Package Delivery Placement	Retailers use discreet packaging to reduce theft risks. Delivery personnel training on discreet placement and proper handling improves security.

Flexible options also include pick up from a secure locker (such as an Amazon parcel locker or a UPS mailbox) offering delivery to a physical retail location (either the retailer's brick and mortar store or another affiliated retail location), or offering the option to have the item held at the delivery provider's physical retail outlet. The Postal Service offers secure delivery to a P.O. box, parcel locker, or Smart Locker (see Figure 5). USPS Smart Lockers support direct-to-locker deliveries, redeliveries, and oversized PO Box packages. As of summer 2024, USPS offered more than 500 Smart Locker locations.[12]

While these options are more secure than front porch drops, they require the customer to trade off some degree of convenience. Retailers, in collaboration with delivery providers, also offer customers other options such as requiring a signature upon delivery, selecting a specific delivery day or rescheduling delivery, holding for delivery, or changing delivery address.

The challenge from a delivery provider's standpoint is balancing these delivery options with their financial and operations goals.

In some cases, however, retailer prioritization of convenience for customers does not align with reducing the risk of package theft. For example, some retailers issue explicit instructions to the delivery provider to leave the package at the delivery address without exception. This policy can conflict with delivery providers' concerns about leaving a package in a potentially risky area increasing the chances of theft. While allowing the delivery provider more flexibility in delivery decisions could reduce this risk, some retailers, in conversation with the OIG, stated that they would rather replace a stolen package than inconvenience their customer by requiring them to go pick up their package at the delivery provider's facility.

Figure 5: Postal Service Parcel Locker

Source: United States Postal Service

Shared Parcel Lockers

In a 2018 white paper,* the OIG looked at the possibility of USPS opening the use of its lockers to third parties, such as smaller, local, and crowdsourced delivery companies and retailers, for a fee. The report found that doing so could help USPS increase the lockers' current and future usage, as well as generate new revenues from an asset that is currently conceived as a cost-saving tool and a free-of-charge convenience option for recipients. The security aspect of the parcel lockers would enhance their value proposition for prospective users. The idea has been utilized in other countries, such as Belgium. Some European cities, as well as Seattle in the U.S., are encouraging shared lockers as part of their urban sustainability policies to alleviate congestion. The paper concluded that extending this convenience to other companies for a fee could allow USPS to extract value from a delivery experience that would otherwise take place outside the postal network.

*USPS Office of Inspector General, "Coordination and Optimization Technologies and Postal Applications," RARC-WP-18-014, September 6, 2018, https://www.uspsoig.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2023-01/RARC-WP-18-014.pdf, pp. 18-19.

Implementing Secure Front Porch Lock Boxes

A more convenient solution for consumers may be utilizing next-generation mailboxes or front porch lock boxes (see Figure 6). There are a growing number of options available to customers, in various sizes and degrees of security. While such solutions can greatly reduce the chances of package theft, there are downsides. Purchasing and installing these receptacles imposes a cost on consumers. They will need to consider the size of the box, balancing its ability to hold larger packages with the space it takes up on their front porch. Many lock boxes require a key or combination to open, however smart boxes provide solutions for the boxes to be opened without the delivery provider having keys or knowing codes.[13] Also, there is no obligation on the part of the delivery company to make use of customer-provided secure boxes, and some may choose not to due to requirements to complete delivery routes in a timely manner. Alternatively, a larger "next-generation mailbox" can fit more or larger packages than a traditional mailbox and keeps USPS packages shielded from thieves. However, items delivered by other delivery providers are not allowed to be placed inside a residential mailbox.[14]

Figure 6: Secure Mail and Parcel Receptacles
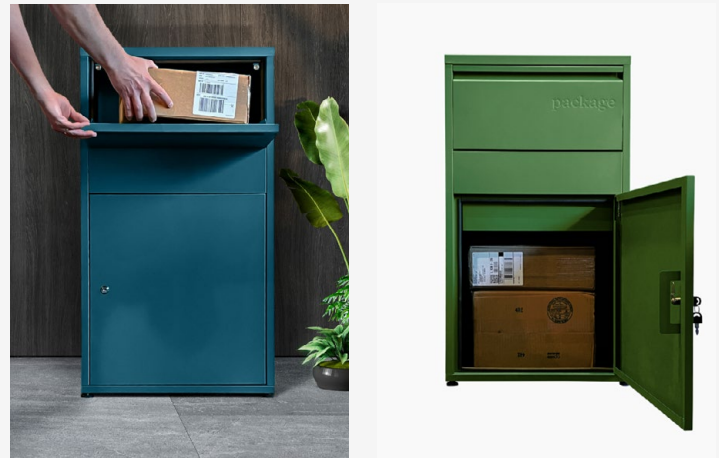
Source: Adoorn LLC

Leveraging Technology for Tracking and Theft Prevention

Delivery companies are making use of technology ranging from real-time tracking and photo proof of delivery to AI-powered package theft risk assessment to help consumers prevent theft. For example, UPS

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13 *See, for* example, Genie BenchSentry Connect Smart Package Delivery Lock Box, https://www.geniecompany.com/delivery-solutions/benchsentry-connect-smart-package-delivery-lock-box.

14 The U.S. Postal Service was granted a monopoly on residential mailboxes by Congress in 1934. *See,* 18 USC §1725, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2011-title18/pdf/USCODE-2011-title18-part1-chap83-sec1725.pdf.

is making use of AI to help combat package theft – their "DeliveryDefense" helps identify addresses that are likely targets for theft and allows customers to reroute packages sent to those addresses to a UPS Store or pick-up point. The Postal Service's "Informed Delivery" can also help mitigate theft by alerting customers to incoming packages well in advance, allowing them time to arrange for their secure receipt. Retailers — in collaboration with delivery providers — make their customers aware of tracking and notification options and ensure that they know how to use them.

Several delivery providers monitor and analyze data for theft incidents, identifying patterns and vulnerabilities. They have created "heat maps" showing areas more susceptible to package theft, shared these with law enforcement organizations, and collaborated on anti-theft initiatives (such as assisting in the use of dummy packages to catch thieves).

Other technologies are showing promise, as well. Small tracking devices have been developed which can be attached to packages, allowing their physical location to be known in real time at every step in the delivery process. The units are attached with an industrial strength adhesive, and any tampering or removal of the unit fully activates an audible alarm and visual illumination. In addition, the intended recipient is alerted of the tampering or removal via text, SMS, or email. In addition to discouraging porch pirates, these devices can also help locate packages that have been lost or misdelivered. While not yet commonly used, the tracking devices are relatively inexpensive and are becoming increasingly popular. Figure 7 provides an example of a package tracking device.

Figure 7. Package Tracking Device

Source: ZFLO Technologies Inc.

A Postal Service official told the OIG that time is a factor in package theft — the longer an item sits out on the customer's front steps, the greater the chance for theft. The sooner a customer is aware of a delivery, the quicker they may be able to retrieve it. The Postal Service is using analytics to develop delivery windows, allowing them to offer customers with as much advance notice and delivery notification as possible. Technology can make consumers aware of a delivery the moment it happens. Local online apps, such as NextDoor, allow individuals to warn neighbors about package theft issues. Many users upload video from their doorbell cameras to solicit help in identifying porch pirates, and to warn others about potential dangers.[15]

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15 NextDoor last released statistics that highlight the problems with porch pirates in 2018. The app surveyed 2,000 of its members across the United States from May 4-22, 2018, finding that 62 percent of respondents experienced package theft.

Discreet Packaging and Package Delivery Placement

Discreet packaging and tailored policies for high-risk, high-value items can make a package less of a target for thieves. However, retailers must balance any perceived marketing benefit resulting from placing their logo on shipping boxes with their increased exposure to risk of loss. For example, one loss prevention manager at a major retailer told the OIG that his company's logo is prominently displayed on his company's shipping boxes, despite his continued insistence that doing so increases chances that the package may be stolen.

Another strategy delivery providers employ is offering training to delivery personnel on methods of securely delivering packages. For example, the placement of a package — such as putting it in a location out-of-sight of the street — can reduce its chances of being stolen. Recognizing employees who consistently use this or other techniques (such as following a customer's request to place packages in a specific location, for example) will reinforce that behavior. While there are costs associated with formal training, some of the simplest, commonsense solutions may prove the most effective.

The Responsibility of Policymakers and Law Enforcement

Legal jurisdiction over package theft-related crimes is divided between local, state, and federal governments, depending on the specific circumstances. Whereas federal penalties are in place for theft related to Postal Service packages, the theft of commercial packages from private delivery providers is typically handled locally. Stricter laws, which lower thresholds and impose harsher penalties, may act as a deterrent to package theft.

Federal Legislation has been Introduced Seeking Stricter Porch Piracy Penalties

Recently, Congress has attempted to expand the federal government's jurisdiction over package theft. The Porch Pirates Act was introduced in 2022 and again in 2024. The bill sought to extend the federal penalties in place for the theft of Postal Service packages to the theft of commercial packages from private delivery providers. Despite having 27 bipartisan co-sponsors, the most recent version of the bill was not passed by the House. The effort may be taken up again in a future session of Congress.

> Legal jurisdiction over package theft-related crimes is divided between local, state, and federal governments, depending on the specific circumstances.

Several State Governments Have Implemented Stricter Porch Piracy Laws

At the state level, stealing items off of a porch is generally considered a crime of theft, with charges determined by the value of the stolen items. In the past several years, Texas, Michigan, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Arkansas, Tennessee, Georgia, Pennsylvania and Florida have passed laws increasing the penalties for package theft from a misdemeanor to a felony (See Appendix B). Texas was the first state to increase penalties specifically for porch piracy. In September 2019, House Bill 37 made stealing packages a felony offense under certain circumstances punishable by between six months and ten years in jail.[16] Most recently, Florida in 2024 enacted a law that reduces the threshold from $100 to $40 for a theft from "the unenclosed curtilage

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16   Texas House of Representatives, House Bill 37, June 10, 2019, §31.20(c)(2) and (c)(3), https://legiscan.com/TX/text/HB37/id/2026243, and Texas Penal Code, Chapter 12, Subchapter A, §12.34(a) and §12.35(a), https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/docs/PE/htm/PE.12.htm.

of a dwelling" (in other words, the yard or porch) to be considered a third-degree felony.[17] Other states are considering passing similar laws. Critics, however, have contended that harsher felony punishments are an overreaction to the problem, creating repercussions for defendants that far outweigh the harm caused, as felony convictions can prevent individuals from obtaining jobs, voting in elections, and receiving government benefits.

Local Law Enforcement Can Play an Active Role in Preventing and Combatting Package Theft

Local police departments disseminate information to consumers to inform them about the scope of package theft and strategies they can take to minimize the problem. Some departments release public service announcements during peak holiday season that outline tips to discourage package theft and provide instructions to the public as to what they should do if they believe they have fallen victim to package theft.

Some departments have taken a proactive role in preventing package theft by developing anti-porch pirate programs that utilize bait packages equipped with GPS trackers. When these flagged boxes are picked up, the perpetrators can be located. For example, USPIS officials told us they have worked with a retailer, who provides boxes and tape, to create decoy packages. They then work with local law enforcement to deploy the decoys.

In 2022, the District of Columbia became the first city to partner with Amazon to deter package theft by installing Amazon lockers at Metropolitan Police Department stations (see Figure 8). By mid-2024, Amazon package lockers were located at all seven DC district police stations and the Sixth District substation.

Figure 8. Amazon Locker Outside D.C. Police Station

Source: USPS OIG

Possible Collaborative Opportunities to Address the Problem

As noted above, fragmented theft reporting practices and data collection issues complicate efforts to understand the full scope of package theft and develop effective mitigation strategies. These challenges are further exacerbated by the lack of a structured collaboration framework among stakeholders. Significant progress in efforts to combat package theft could be made if stakeholders – including delivery providers, shippers, and law enforcement – worked more closely together in their efforts to safeguard consumers' property.

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17   Florida House of Representatives, House Bill 549, March 13, 2024, p. 5. https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2024/549/BillText/er/PDF.

The Postal Service currently plays an active role in combatting package theft. And, as a highly trusted government agency with a public service mission, the Postal Service can be at the forefront of future coordinated efforts to further address the problem. Notably, the Postal Service stands apart as the only delivery provider with a dedicated law enforcement arm, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS), which operates with a broader mission to protect the mail system and its users. Additionally, the OIG conducts investigations and audits to prevent internal mail and package theft by USPS employees (see Appendix A).

The Postal Service has already taken collaborative steps toward reducing theft at the national level. Project Safe Delivery, the Postal Service's joint initiative with USPIS, is working to address mail theft and related violent crimes against letter carriers. The program's goals are to protect postal employees and the mailstream, prevent incidents through education and awareness, and enforce the laws that protect our nation's mailstream. Between May 2023 and December 2024, the program was responsible for 2,053 arrests for mail theft (including package theft) and 378 arrests for mail carrier robberies.[18] In light of the program's success, the Postal Service and USPIS announced in August 2023 that they would be increasing rewards for information about postal crimes.[19]

Wider collaboration among industry stakeholders could foster even more significant solutions to address the nation's package theft problem. Industry collaboration to address crime is not unprecedented. Examples include:

- Industry associations. One example is in the insurance industry, where the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB), a trade association with more than a thousand member companies, works to deter fraud by providing resources and education to law enforcement, prosecutors, and other public agencies. The NICB's educational resources, fraud hot lines, and reports on trends in criminal activity and hot spots of insurance fraud are examples of the types of resources that could be useful in package theft prevention. Similarly, the Loss Prevention Research Council seeks to prevent and detect theft, fraud, and violence in retail establishments through evidence-based research and industry collaboration. Their members include international retailers, solution providers, manufacturers, and industry and law enforcement partners, along with an in-house team of researchers, all pursuing a common goal of total asset protection.

- Fusion centers. Another example of collaboration being utilized to address a specific problem, fusion centers are state owned and operated and collaborate with local, tribal, and territorial governments as well as federal agencies in order to facilitate information sharing between different levels of government and the private sector. While primarily established and managed by state and local agencies, they receive support and coordination from federal entities.[20]

- Task Forces/Initiatives: The federal government has created task forces and initiatives to foster collaboration between government agencies and other stakeholders on criminal justice and law enforcement efforts. One example is Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), created by the Justice Department in 2001. PSN is a nationwide initiative aimed at reducing violent crime through collaboration between law enforcement, prosecutors, and community leaders.

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18 US Postal Inspection Service, "Project Safe Delivery," https://www.uspis.gov/Project-Safe-Delivery.
19 Those providing information leading to an arrest and conviction in the robbery of a letter carrier will now be eligible for a reward of $150,000, up from $50,000. Information leading to the arrest and conviction of those stealing mail could result in a $100,000 reward, up from $10,000.
20 One example of a fusion center is the New York State Intelligence Center (NYSIC), which was created to address the absence of shared information and intelligence strategy throughout New York state.

Similar efforts to those listed above would bring together the Postal Service/USPIS and other delivery providers, along with impacted retailers, consumer groups, law enforcement, and federal, state, and local governments to focus on package theft solutions. Near-real time geographic data on package theft reports could allow faster and more accurate identification of hot spots and allow law enforcement and local governments to more effectively prevent further theft. Ideally, such an effort could be expanded to enable data sharing of data between delivery providers and other stakeholders across complicated delivery networks, facilitating more comprehensive insights and actions to prevent theft. The Postal Service could assume a leadership role in these efforts.

Establishing greater collaboration in the package delivery space would require overcoming hurdles, however. Entrenched reluctance toward data sharing and competitive, security, and liability concerns among competitors could create barriers to participation. Any decision to devote additional resources to enhanced data collection efforts would largely depend upon a cost-benefit analysis. Finally, as noted above, USPIS generally does not differentiate between mail and package theft data in its collection and reporting, and more disaggregated quantitative data would be a necessity in any future pursuit of a larger scale collaborative effort to address package theft.[21]

Despite these challenges, collaboration on solutions to package theft could have significant and ongoing positive impacts for the U.S. economy, including the potential for a reduction in the estimated $5 – $16 billion in annual losses. Bolstering consumer confidence in delivery will facilitate further growth in ecommerce, and retailers and delivery providers —

including USPS — could better ensure the security of their products and deliveries for customers.

Conclusion

Package theft is a growing problem that impacts consumers, retailers, and delivery providers. The increasing prevalence of theft not only erodes consumer trust but also jeopardizes the reputations of delivery providers as reliable delivery partners, potentially driving customers toward competitors or alternative delivery methods. Beyond reputational risks, package theft imposes substantial financial and operational burdens, such as investigating complaints, processing claims, and addressing customer dissatisfaction. Effective mitigation of the problem of package theft requires a coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach. It is important that all affected parties pursue collaborative solutions, where practicable. Retailers can offer secure delivery options, discreet packaging, and data-driven theft prevention initiatives, while delivery providers can invest in advanced technologies, enhance delivery practices, and share data to identify vulnerabilities. Consumers can leverage secure delivery solutions, employ home surveillance tools, and report thefts promptly. Public officials can and, in some cases, are stepping in with stricter penalties and initiatives to deter theft and improve accountability. Effective solutions to address package theft would involve collaborative efforts on the part of all affected parties. By uniting efforts across stakeholders, the delivery ecosystem can strengthen its resilience, ensuring a secure and reliable experience for all. For the Postal Service, effectively tackling this challenge is central to maintaining public trust, supporting the continued growth of e-commerce, and fulfilling its broader public service mission.

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21   When investigating and prosecuting external mail theft, the USPIS told the OIG that it collects metrics on what was stolen and its value, regardless of whether the crime committed is check theft and fraud or package theft. The recent trend of arrow key theft has led to an increase in check fraud, and as a result USPIS is dedicating more of its resources to combatting large scale mail theft. See, USPS OIG, U.S. Postal Service's Response to Mail Theft, September 23, 2023, https://www.uspsoig.gov/reports/audit-reports/us-postal-services-response-mail-theft.

Appendices

Appendix A: Additional Information

Objectives

The objectives of this research were to:

- Describe the scope of the package theft problem in the United States and provide relevant qualitative and quantitative evidence of the size of the problem.

- Identify how package theft impacts retailers, delivery companies, and the Postal Service.

- Present strategies that retailers, delivery companies, and other stakeholders (such as consumers and federal/state/local legislators) are implementing to combat package theft and their implications for the Postal Service.

The scope of this white paper was the scale of package theft in the United States and its impact on USPS, delivery companies, retailers, and consumers.

Methodology

To accomplish our objectives, the OIG conducted market research, surveys, and interviews. It also used information from research commissioned from an external contractor, Ben Stickle, Ph.D., a subject matter expert and Professor of Criminal Justice Administration at Middle Tennessee State University.

The project team worked with Dr. Stickle to analyze the scope and impact of package theft through data collection and crime script analysis. Prevention strategies and technologies used by stakeholders were reviewed and integrated to identify actionable solutions and best practices tailored to combating package theft effectively.

The project team also conducted interviews with USPS, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and an asset protection executive and investigator at a large national online retailer.

This research was conducted in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation. We discussed our observations and conclusions with management on April 16, 2025, and included their comments where appropriate.

Prior Coverage

Title	Objective	Report Number	Final Report Date	Monetary Impact
Mitigating Internal Mail Theft	To assess the Postal Service's efforts to prevent and detect internal mail theft in processing facilities.	24-076-R25	October 30, 2024	$0
Mail Theft Mitigation and Response – Chicago, IL	To address and mitigate mail theft incidents in Chicago	24-100-R24	September 18, 2024	$0
Mail Theft Mitigation and Response - San Francisco, CA	To address and mitigate mail theft incidents in San Francisco	24-099-R24	August 30, 2024	$0
Mail Theft Mitigation and Response - Queens, NY	To address and mitigate mail theft incidents in Queens	24-037-R24	May 21, 2024	$0
U.S. Postal Service's Response to Mail Theft	To evaluate USPS's overall response to mail theft	22-178-R23	September 28, 2023	$0
U.S. Postal Inspection Service Pandemic Response to Mail Fraud and Mail Theft	To assess mail theft and fraud during the pandemic	20-305-R21	May 20, 2021	$0

Appendix B: State Porch Piracy Laws

State	Law/Statute Number	Enacted	Provisions
Texas	House Bill 37	Sept. 2019	Elevates package theft to a felony, depending on the number of addresses targeted.
Michigan	Senate Bill 23	Dec. 2019	Implements a tiered penalty system for package theft: first offense is a misdemeanor with up to 1 year in jail or a $500 fine, or both; second and subsequent offenses are felonies with up to 5 years in prison or a $1,000 fine, or both.
New Jersey	S3496	Jan. 2020	Known as the "Defense Against Porch Pirates Act," it categorized the theft of delivered packages as a fourth-degree crime. A3870, also enacted in 2020, amended the statute making package theft a third-degree crime, potentially resulting in 3 - 5 years in prison, fines up to $15,000, or both.
Oklahoma	House Bill 2777	Nov. 2020	Known as the "Porch Piracy Act of 2020," it imposes a penalty of up to 1 year in jail or up to a $500 fine, or both for the first offense of stealing mail. If a person is convicted of three violations within a 60-day period, they face imprisonment for between 2 and 5 years, a fine of up to $5,000, or both.
Arkansas	Act 340	March 2021	Makes stealing a postal package from a residence a Class D felony. (A "postal package" is defined as "a letter, package, parcel, bag or container used to ship goods or a sealed article that is addressed to a person and has been left for the person by a common carrier or delivery service or has been left by a consumer at his or her residence to be collected by a common carrier or delivery service.")
Tennessee	Tennessee Code § 39-14-129	July 2021	It is an offense to take mail (defined as "a letter, postal card, package, bag, or other sealed article that is delivered by a common carrier or delivery service and not yet received by the addressee or has been left to be collected for delivery by a common carrier or delivery service") from a residential mailbox without the consent of the addressee and with the intent to deprive the addressee of the mail. The first offense is a misdemeanor; the second offense is a Class E felony with a potential jail term of up to six years and a fine of up to $3,000.
Georgia	Georgia Code §16-8-25	July 2021	Defines the crime of porch piracy as taking three or more packages from the immediate vicinity of any entrance or exit of a dwelling of three or more different mailboxes or addresses without permission. Classified as a felony, punishable by 1 to 5 years in prison, or, at the judge's discretion, as a misdemeanor.

State	Law/Statute Number	Enacted	Provisions
Kentucky	Senate Bill 23	April 2022	Added common carriers and delivery services to USPS in protection against theft of mail and packages. Classifies porch piracy as a Class D felony, punishable by up to 5 years in prison.
Pennsylvania	Senate Bill 527	Dec. 2023	Introduces a grading system that increases penalties for repeat offenders: first offense under $200 is a summary offense; second offense under $200 is a second-degree misdemeanor; first or second offense valued at $200 or more is a first-degree misdemeanor; third or subsequent offense or if the mail's value surpasses $2,000 is a third-degree felony.
Florida	House Bill 549	Oct. 2024	Increases penalties for package theft: stealing property valued at $40 or more is a third-degree felony (previous threshold was $100); lesser amounts are classified as first-degree misdemeanors.

Appendix C: Management's Comments

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

May 2, 2025

PAOLA PISCIONERI
RESERCH DIRECTOR
RESEARCH AND INSIGHTS SOLUTION CENTER

SUBJECT: Management Response: *Package Theft in the United States* – White Paper
(2025RISC003)

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Office of Inspector General's (OIG's) white paper: *Package Theft in the United States.*

Management agrees the United States Postal Service (USPS) stands apart as the only delivery provider with a dedicated law enforcement arm, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS), in playing a proactive role in combatting package theft.

To address the increase in package-related crimes, USPIS has taken steps to improve how mail theft incidents are reported and tracked. Victims can now more easily report these crimes through improved online forms that collect essential service and tracking data. This has enabled USPIS to better identify trends and coordinate efforts to respond in areas where package theft is most prevalent.

Moreover, we agree with the report's conclusion that it is a collaborative effort between all affected parties (i.e., retailers, public officials, delivery providers, customers, law enforcement) to address package theft. The USPS and USPIS recognize package theft is not a challenge that can be solved in isolation. As ecommerce grows and delivery volumes surge, last-mile theft has become a concern for a broader range of stakeholders, including consumers, retailers, and private delivery companies. Our response must reflect this complexity. We are pursuing enhanced partnerships and exploring models of cooperation, where cross-sector coordination has improved outcomes.

As such, the USPS and USPIS are uniquely positioned to lead such efforts due to our national scope, our role as a trusted public service provider, and the dedicated law enforcement capacity USPIS brings to this issue.

E-SIGNED by ELVIN MERCADO
on 2025-05-02 15:14:58 EDT

Elvin Mercado
Chief Retail & Delivery Officer

E-SIGNED by GARY.R BARKSDALE
on 2025-05-02 16:58:52 EDT

Gary R. Barksdale
Chief Postal Inspector

cc: *Corporate Audit Response Management*

Rick Schadelbauer, Aaron Anfinson, Matthew Fox, and John Althen contributed to this report.

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