

# The

# FORUM



Editor: Cathie Carr  
Desktop Publishing: Krystina Evans

Escapees Mail Service Newsletter  
Volume 15, Number 1, January 2006

101 Rainbow Drive, Livingston, TX 77351 • 800-231-9896 • MailService@escapees.com

*Happy New Year* from the Escapees staff to the world's best members! Thanks to all of you who sent cards and thoughtful holiday remembrances. We hope that you find 2006 to be the most satisfying and adventure-filled year ever!

We're off to a busy start, and, unfortunately, some of the updates we have to share with you in this issue are not as pleasant as we'd like, beginning with the postal increases that you have all heard about in the news. Please take a few moments to read this *Forum* and feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

## Postal Rate Increase

Effective January 8, postal rates will increase by approximately 5.4 percent across the board. For instance, the single-piece rate for First-Class mail will increase from 37 cents to 39 cents, postcards will increase one cent bringing the new rate to 24 cents, and Priority mail (1 lb.) will jump from \$3.85 to \$4.05. For more information on rates, you can go to [www.USPS.com](http://www.USPS.com).

## FedEx Increases

The United States Postal Service is not the only mail delivery service raising its rates. Effective January 2, 2006, FedEx announced that its standard list rates for FedEx ground and FedEx home delivery will increase by an average of 3.9 percent. FedEx has also

tightened its signature policies as well. If you request that we forward your pharmaceutical drugs via FedEx, you will be required to sign for that package before it can be released to you. This could be an inconvenience if you do not plan to be home when your mail arrives or if your mail is being delivered in care of another individual or business.

## Clarifying the PMB Regulations

An Escapees member recently contacted us about the way we have our mail service application and instructions forms written. Thanks to Elaine Shelton #47813, we reviewed those forms and discovered that new subscribers might not realize the significance of their addressing options.

All of you should know that you have a choice between using either PMB or a # sign in conjunction with your individual mail service code. It is against postal regulations to use any other designators other than these two options. In other words, you may NOT use apt. or suite, for instance.

When choosing between these two insignias, it is important to realize that the PMB can create more problems for you than the #. Some businesses or departments may be reluctant to send mail to a PMB, but they seldom, if ever, question an address with a # sign.

It is unfortunate that sometimes folks using a PMB (private mail box) are stigmatized by the fact that they do not have a residential address tied to an individual house, but sometimes that is the case. Escapees fought a long, hard battle with the USPS to grant mailbox holders the option of a # sign in lieu of the PMB in an effort to reduce that stigmatism. We agree with Elaine that it is important that all mail service subscribers recognize and carefully review their options.

## CORRECTION: Priority Mail Flat-Rate Box

We received some incorrect information that was passed on to you in the November 2005 *Forum*. We announced that the "test period" for the USPS flat-rate boxes was over, that two new flat-rate priority boxes were available, and that we were in the process of integrating new software to provide those boxes at your request.

However, after checking with the mailing equipment manufacturer (Neo-Post), we discovered the test period was not over until December 2006, and, therefore, software had not been fully programmed. Our Neo-post agent agreed to do everything within his power to get the necessary program changes made so that we can begin offering flat-rate boxes. Please don't hesitate to ask about our progress.



## Q & A's—Medicare Part D and the Escapees Preferred Customer Card

By Bill Fisher #47366 (Pharmacist)

**A year ago, I got my Escapees Preferred Customer Card from Brookshire Brothers Food and Pharmacy in Livingston. I get a discount on my medicine and have it delivered to the mail service and you forward it to me. How will my Medicare Part D work now?**

*You will buy your Medicare Part D coverage from an insurance company, and part of the cost of your medicines will be subsidized by the Federal Government. If you select an insurance plan that uses Brookshire Brothers as a preferred pharmacy, you could continue to get your medicines there and have them delivered to the mail service for forwarding. If you select another plan, you may want to use that plan's mail order pharmacy and have your medicine sent to your mail service address to be forwarded. There are 26 regions nationwide for Medicare Part D. You must select a plan in the region where Medicare thinks you live, e.g. where your SS check gets delivered. If you travel extensively, be sure to pick one of the "national" plans that is likely to have preferred pharmacies nationwide. You never know when or where you will need an emergency prescription.*

### Will I still use my Escapees Preferred Customer Card?

*If you are eligible for the Medicare low-income subsidy, or if you use a lot of medicines (over \$5000 per year), you should use your Medicare Part D coverage as much as possible. Some categories of medicines are excluded from Medicare Part D. They include some nerve pills, some sleeping pills, and some cough medicines. You could use your EPCC discount card for those prescriptions. If you are sure you will use less than \$3,000 per year in medications and you use generics, cut pills in half, buy in large quantities, etc., you may want to use both. Medicare Part D offers good coverage up to \$2,250 in med cost, then no coverage until \$5,100, then excellent coverage after that. If you don't think you will get to the \$5,100 coverage, you may want to use your first \$2,250 of coverage for your expensive brand name drugs and use your EPCC for your generics and Medicare-excluded prescriptions.*

### How do I pick a Medicare Part D prescription drug plan?

*Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage is very confusing, but the Medicare website is excellent. Go to [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) and put in your zip code (for Medicare). You can then list your personal medications. Be sure to check that the dosage and quantities are correct for you. You can select your preferred pharmacy, e.g. Brookshire Brothers, Wal-Mart. The website will then list the plans by your annual cost for medications and premiums. Usually the first five or six give you a good choice with a small difference in costs. You want to make sure the plan covers your most important or most expensive drugs. You may have to use their mail order service to get the best prices. Try to pick a plan that has a "national" name if you travel.*

## Primary Election: March 7, 2006

It's hard to believe it is election time again, but, sure enough, the primary election is just around the corner. Since so many members are traveling, it is very important to keep the following dates in mind to avoid missing your opportunity to vote!

Jan 6, 2006	First day to apply for ballot
Feb 6, 2006	Last day to register to vote
Feb 20, 2006	First day of early voting
Feb 28, 2006	Last day to apply for ballot by mail
Mar 3, 2006	Last day of early voting
Mar 7, 2006	Primary election day

Remember, when you apply for a ballot by mail, you must first request an application. Applications for voting by mail will be accepted January 6 through February 28. Once your application is received by the County Clerk, a ballot will then be mailed to you. The ballot must be mailed to an address outside Polk County, unless you are 65 (or older) or disabled, and you must indicate your reason for applying for an absentee ballot, e.g. disabled, away traveling, etc.

We prefer that any members who are under 65 and are traveling out of state have their ballots sent directly to them at their temporary address; however, if you simply do not have a dependable temporary address to have it sent to, you may use the following address: Your Name, c/o Escapees RV Club, PO Box 1578, Shepherd, TX 77371. Remember, mail going to this box may be slightly delayed, so it is always best to ask the County Clerk to mail your items to you directly if at all possible!

Escapees Mail Service agents will collect these ballots from the PO box and forward them to you so that you may fill them out and send them directly to the County Clerk to be counted. They must arrive by March 7!

Mail application requests and return ballots to:

**Early Voting Clerk, PO Drawer 2119, Livingston, TX 77351-9401**, or save yourself some time and download an application from **[www.sos.state.tx.us](http://www.sos.state.tx.us)** or ask our mail service operators when you call, or e-mail us, to put an absentee ballot application in your mail for you!

**Polk Co. Voting Information: 936-327-6804**  
**Polk Co. Ballot Application Fax: 936-327-6874**

It is important to fill out your application for a ballot very carefully and completely. There are eight critical boxes that must be completed: **1)** Name, **2)** Residence Address, **3)** Type and Date of Election (example: Primary/March 06), **4)** Party Preference (you must select a party if voting in the primary), **5)** Reason for Voting by Mail, **6)** Special Instructions for Mailing Ballot (most of you would probably indicate "Address outside of the county"), **7)** Mail My Ballot To (When you are voting absentee you cannot have your BALLOT sent to any address in the county in which you are registered, unless you are 65 or older or disabled. **8)** Sign Here (make sure you sign your application). Including your phone number will allow the county clerk to contact you, if needed!

**Political Forum at Rainbow's End  
February 8, 2006 • All candidates invited.**