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USPS to Start Weekly Barge Deliveries to Virgin Islands, Reducing Delays for Residents and Businesses

Following Plaskett's advocacy, USPS agrees to store packages in Puerto Rico and ensure timely weekly barge shipments to the territory.

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The office of Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett has announced new developments aimed at addressing USPS package delivery delays affecting the U.S. Virgin Islands, a situation that has resulted in widespread issues for local residents and businesses.

Following multiple discussions with USPS regional leadership, Plaskett's office provided updates on the postal service's internal process and outlined an agreement to address the persistent disruptions.

According to the release, USPS has identified that the average delivery timeframe for Ground Advantage Service, Parcel Select, and Priority Mail packages containing hazardous materials or nonstandard dimensions to the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico ranges from 14 to 21 days. This estimated timeframe is dependent on origin and destination zip codes, package volume, and weather conditions, but USPS does not guarantee it.

Additionally, a recent change in Amazon's shipping method has intensified the delays, according to Ms. Plaskett. She said Amazon altered its shipping preference from Ground Advantage to Parcel Select, a designation that requires surface mail transport rather than air. Previously, Amazon used air delivery to transport packages to San Juan, Puerto Rico, for further distribution to the Virgin Islands. Under the new Parcel Select designation, however, FAA regulations restrict such packages from being flown, forcing USPS to reroute packages back to Jacksonville, Florida, due to the lack of an available mail barge between Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Through Plaskett's advocacy, USPS has agreed not to send Parcel Select packages back to Jacksonville. Instead, these packages will be stored at a holding facility in Puerto Rico before being transported to the Virgin Islands by barge, with service commencing on Saturday, November 2, 2024, according to the release. The barge will depart Puerto Rico early on Saturday mornings, making its first stop in St. Thomas before continuing to St. Croix. This weekly barge service is expected to improve delivery times and provide greater consistency in package arrival.

Additionally, USPS confirmed that regular Priority Mail and Ground Advantage packages—those without robotic labeling issues—will continue to be flown or barged from Jacksonville to St. Thomas and St. Croix without delays.

Plaskett acknowledged the wide-ranging effects of the delays, noting the impact on residents awaiting essential deliveries. "My team and I realize that this USPS issue impacts a myriad of people in our community—business owners awaiting their products, individuals who need prescriptions, and so many others," she said. Plaskett expressed gratitude to USPS employees for their dedication and thanked community members who reached out to report concerns.

Her office has urged Virgin Islanders experiencing USPS issues to continue filing complaints. Virgin Islanders who wish to report additional USPS issues can contact Plaskett's office directly.