

## New mail processing centre inaugurated in Port-au-Prince

**Six months after the earthquake, Haiti Post picks up pace as its new mail processing centre opens in the capital.**

Development cooperation

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The new mail processing centre is open for business (Photo: UPU taskforce. Building designed and built by Shelter Structures, Stuart, FL. See page 2 for details)

The new postal installation was built as part of an emergency aid project managed by the UPU and developed with the generous assistance of the United Nations agency's member countries. About 60 employees work at the 600-square metre mail processing centre, where they handle letter-post items, parcels and EMS items (Express Mail Service), the Post's fastest service. The facility also provides mail distribution through post boxes and acts as an office of exchange for international mail. All mail coming into Haiti and leaving the country goes through the centre, which houses Customs services.

The January 12 earthquake destroyed Port-au-Prince's main post office and the building housing the EMS service. Other post offices in outlying areas were also destroyed or severely damaged. Member countries responded to the UPU's call for assistance and contributed more than 500,000 US dollars to a special fund. They also offered human and material resources to help Haiti and its postal operator resume postal services as quickly as possible.

"This building is something concrete, tangible. The UPU kept its word and helped Haiti in its efforts to rebuild. On behalf of the president of the Republic, the government and the Haitian population, I thank you from the bottom of my heart," said Minister Josseline Colimon Féthière.

For his part, the UPU's Edouard Dayan said: "The Post, because of its omnipresence and the services it provides to people and businesses, must be a priority in the devastated country's reconstruction efforts. Within the United Nations, we will continue to highlight the importance of integrating postal services in plans designed to stimulate Haiti's economy. Haiti needed emergency assistance, and this assistance remains necessary. But today we must look to the future and develop the essential infrastructures the country needs, including postal services."

The new postal facility, which looks like an enormous tent, is designed to resist winds of up to 225 kilometres an hour and "zone 4" seismic activity (high risk of damages). For added security, the structure has been solidly anchored at the base.

Mail exchanges between Haiti and the 190 other UPU member countries officially resumed on 11 May. On 3 May, the country had started exchanging mail with France and the United States, when the post office in Delmas, located in the suburbs of the capital, was renovated to resume operations until the new mail processing centre was completed. Daily, Haiti receives an average of 100 mail bags from abroad.

Edvard Despeignes, acting director general of the Haitian Post, is optimistic for the future. "This new mail processing centre is a major step in helping the Haitian Post function more normally," he said. "Since the resumption of international mail services, volumes have been increasing. Because the earthquake had destroyed the Post's capacity to process mail at its main postal building, it was important and urgent to create an appropriate space to receive and expedite mail. The Haitian Post is now prepared to return to normal mail flows and anticipate an increase of local and international mail volumes."

The centre's equipment was purchased with donations from UPU member countries and the organization's normal budget. Some countries also donated sorting cases, work tables, bags, generators and postal vehicles.

The UPU will continue to work with the Haitian Post to strengthen its postal network and modernize its postal services, especially with the introduction of electronic postal money transfers.

## Haiti Post's new mail processing centre in Port-au-Prince

### What it is

- The new postal installation, located in the SONAPI Park, is a mail processing centre that also serves as the country's office of exchange for international mail. All incoming and outgoing international mail transits through the office of exchange, which also houses Customs.
- The new centre employs about 60 employees. Employees process letter-post items and parcels as well as Express Mail Service (EMS) items (EMS is the fastest postal service offered by Posts.). The installation also serves as a mail distribution point through on-site postal boxes.
- Haiti Post's new office of exchange was built by the Universal Postal Union thanks to the generous aid provided by its member countries. The installation cost about 300,000 US dollars.
- Many mail processing activities were previously performed in the main post office in Port-au-Prince, which was completely destroyed by the January 12 earthquake. The building that housed the EMS service was also completely destroyed.

### Technical information

Haiti's new office of exchange was designed by Shelter Structures, an experienced manufacturer of custom-designed, fabric-covered steel buildings. The company is based in Florida. The structure was fabricated in the United States and then transported by ship to Port-au-Prince, where it was mounted. Here are a few technical details regarding the structure:

- The structure measures 18 metres wide (60 feet) by 30 metres long (100 feet). It is close to 7 metres high (22.69 feet) and has 4.5-metre (15 foot) sidewalls.
- Shelter Structures utilized a unique hybrid building design that combines the benefits of a fabric-covered structure with solid metal sidewalls. The large structure is a gable-style frame of galvanized steel trusses. It is covered by a Teflon-coated, PVC fabric that is fireproof.
- The design was engineered to withstand winds of up to 225 kilometres per hour (140 miles per hour) in a tropical location prone to hurricanes. It is designed to withstand "zone 4" earthquakes (high risk of damage).
- The white fabric cover allows ambient light inside during the day.
- The building can be easily dismantled and relocated and is expected to last for more than 15 years.