OIG INTEGRITY TESTS

During the previous Holiday Seasons, we have reported that there have been Postal employees disciplined and even removed for using gift cards that they found in collection boxes, on the street, in waste baskets and in some cases given to them by customers saying they found the gift cards in front of the Post Office. In all of these instances, the gift cards were planted by the OIG. Our office has learned that the OIG is again planting gift cards to test Letter Carriers.

In the recent examples that we have heard of, the OIG are conducting “integrity tests”. In these tests, the OIG agents are placing gift cards that have values of $25 - $50 in the outgoing mail slots, collections boxes and even in single-family mailboxes. As Letter Carriers, it is common for our customers to leave gifts in their mailbox even outside of the holidays, and we normally accept those gifts.

Where a Letter Carrier may get into trouble is when they accept cash in any amount or gifts (including gift cards) valued above $20. That said, the rules are the rules and below is language from the Code of Federal Regulations 5 CFR 2635.204(a), which should be considered the next time one of your patrons, gives you a gift.

Gifts of $20 or less. An employee may accept unsolicited gifts having an aggregate market value of $20 or less per source per occasion, provided that the aggregate market value of individual gifts received from any one person under the authority of this paragraph shall not exceed $50 in a calendar year. This exception does not apply to gifts of cash or of investment interests such as stock, bonds, or certificates of deposit. Where the market value of a gift or the aggregate market value of gifts offered on any single occasion exceeds $20, the employee may not pay the excess value over $20 in order to accept that portion of the gift or those gifts worth $20. Where the aggregate value of tangible items offered on a single occasion exceeds $20, the employee may decline any distinct and separate item in order to accept those items aggregating $20 or less.

If you have any questions, regarding gifts from your customers contact your supervisor to get verification that it is acceptable to accept the gift in question. If you disagree with the supervisor’s opinion based on the language above, contact your steward for clarification. As always, feel free contact the Branch Office at 612.781.9858 for clarification.