# Get Gephardt investigates secretive facility where USPS sends, sells your lost mail

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AXTELL, Utah ([KUTV](https://news4sanantonio.com/news/nation-world/get-gephardt-investigates-secretive-facility-where-usps-sends-sells-your-lost-mail)) - Angela Erickson spent the better part of last year lovingly sewing two quilts. One, meant for her uncle, depicts Utah artifacts. The other, displaying a brilliantly-intricate elephant, was for her dad.

She shipped them to Illinois just in time for Christmas.

They didn't make it.

"I can't remake these quilts,” she said fighting back tears. “They don't realize how much time goes into these, and to see that it's lost and they may never see it is really hard.”

Erickson says her local postmaster gave her the devastating news that her package had been declared "dead." The best case scenario is that it's on its way to a secretive facility known as the Mail Recovery Center (MRC).

Think of the MRC as the lost and found of the U.S. Postal Service (USPS).

It has a staff whose job it is to open packages and try to track down the owners. Anytime they don't find the rightful owner, within a few months, the USPS gets to auction it off and pocket the profits.

Pressing the USPS for specifics on how much they auction and profit from the auctions, Get Gephardt was stonewalled.

A spokesperson stated that USPS doesn’t want to give away "trade secrets," saying:

***The information requested is being withheld in its entirety.***

The USPS works with a private company called [GovDeals](https://www.govdeals.com/index.cfm?fa=Main.AdvSearchResultsNew&sortoption=ed&agency=4703&rowCount=10&StartRow=1" \o "https://www.govdeals.com/index.cfm?fa=Main.AdvSearchResultsNew&sortoption=ed&agency=4703&rowCount=10&StartRow=1" \t "_blank) to manage the auctions, which are conducted online. Online photos show large boxes stuffed with just about everything you can imagine.

The photos allow bidders to see what is on the surface of the boxes but not what is beneath.

[GovDeals](https://www.govdeals.com/index.cfm?fa=Main.AdvSearchResultsNew&sortoption=ed&agency=4703&rowCount=10&StartRow=1) declined to answer questions about the auctions, referring Get Gephardt to USPS for comment. In addition to refusing to provide records, USPS refused an interview for this story.

Unsatisfied, Get Gephardt traveled to Georgia, looking for answers and hoping to find Erickson’s quilts.

At the GovDeals warehouse, bidders are forced to make an appointment to inspect the merchandise. Upon arrival, Get Gephardt was told cell phone activity is prohibited.

Inside, Get Gephardt observed a huge warehouse with about a dozen bidders meandering among the 287 shipping boxes of lots actively being auctioned. That was only about half of the warehouse’s visible space. The rest of the warehouse was off limits.

*GovDeals conducts auctions of USPS lost mail, which profited the federal agency $11 million last year. (Photo: GovDeals)*

A warehouse manager stated that thousands of items that could be seen beyond temporary barriers are things that will be up for bid at future auctions.

GovDeals hosts auctions about every two weeks and everything up for bid comes from the USPS, a different manager said.

The GovDeals facility backs right up to the MRC. It is securely guarded, similarly to what you might see at a military base.

There were fences, barbed wire, lots of no trespassing signs that warned violators will be prosecuted and a guard who jumped out the front door when he saw Get Gephardt approaching.

Get Gephardt asked for an interview and was told that no one was available and that filming of the facility, even from the public street out front, is forbidden.

“You can't take pictures here,” said the guard, who identified himself as John. “Don't take pictures. It's totally off limits, no one is supposed to know we are here."

John stated the filming the facility “could be dangerous” but refused to elaborate.

While 2News photojournalist Mike Fessler filmed the facility from public property, USPS called the Fulton County police - which responded.

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An officer questioned Matt Gephardt then seized his and Fessler’s driver licenses, detaining both of them for about 30 minutes while he went into the MRC and then to his vehicle.

While the USPS seems to be going out of its way to avoid answering reporters’ questions, it was forced to answer when asked by the USPS’ inspector general.

In a scathing [2015 report](https://www.scribd.com/document/408094586/2015-IG-Audit), the MRC, "did not effectively handle customer inquiries or manage undeliverable items it received," the inspector general states.

[2015 IG Audit](https://www.scribd.com/document/408094586/2015-IG-Audit#from_embed) by on Scribd