Take Care to Ship Items Safely for the Holidays

Tools such as tracking deliveries or requiring signatures help safeguard the delivery process.

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Whether the gifts are delivered to The Villages or taken to another part of the country, it's important they arrive safe and whole.

Residents expecting deliveries can use several options to protect their packages and mail this holiday season.

Steve Renico, director of Seniors vs. Crime, Region 4, says general mail — envelopes, cards, postcards — in The Villages is less vulnerable than many places because of the locked communal mailboxes, which deter thieves.

Packages, however, are often delivered to and dropped off directly at a person's house, where they can remain outdoors for hours if a person isn't home or doesn't realize the item has been delivered.

Renico advised using tracking options, which let people know where their items are and what part of the shipping process their packages are in.

Tracking can let people know if the parcels are still in transit, at a facility or out for delivery.

"If you have a tracking number, use it," Renico said. "You really need to know when that package is going to be there and how to look out for it."

The owner of Safe Ship in Colony Plaza and Southern Trace Plaza, Tim Deregnaucourt, also advised people to use signature options as ways to keep their packages safe.

If a package needs to be signed for, it can't be left at a doorstep. Those items need to be signed for in person, so the carrier needs to either hand it to the recipient or the recipient needs to pick the package up at another location.

Beyond those options, neighbors can help look out for each other. If people see packages left on their neighbor's front doorstep or out in the open, they should try to make them aware of it.

"It's not that hard to be a good neighbor to somebody," Renico said.

For people shipping fragile items, Deregnaucourt had a few more tips to help their items arrive safely and in one piece. His biggest tip: Let professionals pack the fragile items.

The ways people pack materials for moving houses might not work for sending items through the mail system. Using scrunched or bundled paper, for example, will not be a sufficient protection for glass or china.

"If someone packed their own flat-screen TV and brought it in, the likelihood of it making it through in one piece is not great," Deregnaucourt said.

The holiday season is also a time when many people are mailing items to friends and loved ones across the country, which can often create backups and longer lines. Deregnaucourt recommended waiting until Tuesday or Wednesday to ship items, when lines are less likely to be busy.

But Deregnaucourt also recommended against waiting too long. With a higher volume of mail than usual, a late package may not get to its destination until after the holidays.