

**Editorial Notes**

## AMENDMENTS

1994—Pub. L. 103-322 substituted “fined under this title” for “fined not more than \$500” in subsec. (a) and “fined under this title” for “fined not more than \$100” in last par.

1970—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 91-375, §6(j)(16)(A), amended subsec. (a) generally, which prior to amendment read as follows: “Whoever, being a postmaster or Postal Service employee, unlawfully detains, delays, or opens any letter, postal card, package, bag, or mail intrusted to him or which shall come into his possession, and which was intended to be conveyed by mail, or carried or delivered by any carrier or other employee of the Postal Service, or forwarded through or delivered from any post office or station thereof established by authority of the Postmaster General; or secretes, or destroys any such letter, postal card, package, bag, or mail, shall be fined not more than \$500 or imprisoned not more than five years, or both.”

Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 91-375, §6(j)(16)(B), substituted “Postal Service officer or employee” for “postmaster or Postal Service employee”.

1949—Subsec. (a). Act May 24, 1949, §37(a), substituted “secretes” for “secrets”.

Subsec. (b). Act May 24, 1949, §37(b), substituted “newspapers” for “newspaper”.

**Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries**

## EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1970 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 91-375 effective within 1 year after Aug. 12, 1970, on date established therefor by Board of Governors of United States Postal Service and published by it in Federal Register, see section 15(a) of Pub. L. 91-375, set out as an Effective Date note preceding section 101 of Title 39, Postal Service.

**§ 1704. Keys or locks stolen or reproduced**

Whoever steals, purloins, embezzles, or obtains by false pretense any key suited to any lock adopted by the Post Office Department or the Postal Service and in use on any of the mails or bags thereof, or any key to any lock box, lock drawer, or other authorized receptacle for the deposit or delivery of mail matter; or

Whoever knowingly and unlawfully makes, forges, or counterfeits any such key, or possesses any such mail lock or key with the intent unlawfully or improperly to use, sell, or otherwise dispose of the same, or to cause the same to be unlawfully or improperly used, sold, or otherwise disposed of; or

Whoever, being engaged as a contractor or otherwise in the manufacture of any such mail lock or key, delivers any finished or unfinished lock or the interior part thereof, or key, used or designed for use by the department, to any person not duly authorized under the hand of the Postmaster General and the seal of the Post Office Department or the Postal Service, to receive the same, unless the person receiving it is the contractor for furnishing the same or engaged in the manufacture thereof in the manner authorized by the contract, or the agent of such manufacturer—

Shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than ten years, or both.

(June 25, 1948, ch. 645, 62 Stat. 778; Pub. L. 91-375, §6(j)(17), Aug. 12, 1970, 84 Stat. 778; Pub. L. 103-322, title XXXIII, §330016(1)(G), Sept. 13, 1994, 108 Stat. 2147.)

## HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

Based on title 18, U.S.C., 1940 ed., §314 (Mar. 4, 1909, ch. 321, §191, 35 Stat. 1125).

Reference to persons aiding, causing or assisting was omitted. Such persons are principals under section 2 of this title.

Mandatory punishment provision was rephrased in the alternative.

Minor changes were made in phraseology.

**Editorial Notes**

## AMENDMENTS

1994—Pub. L. 103-322 substituted “fined under this title” for “fined not more than \$500” in last par.

1970—Pub. L. 91-375 inserted “or the Postal Service” after “Post Office Department” in first and third pars.

**Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries**

## EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1970 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 91-375 effective within 1 year after Aug. 12, 1970, on date established therefor by Board of Governors of United States Postal Service and published by it in Federal Register, see section 15(a) of Pub. L. 91-375, set out as an Effective Date note preceding section 101 of Title 39, Postal Service.

**§ 1705. Destruction of letter boxes or mail**

Whoever willfully or maliciously injures, tears down or destroys any letter box or other receptacle intended or used for the receipt or delivery of mail on any mail route, or breaks open the same or willfully or maliciously injures, defaces or destroys any mail deposited therein, shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than three years, or both.

(June 25, 1948, ch. 645, 62 Stat. 779; May 24, 1949, ch. 139, §38, 63 Stat. 95; Pub. L. 103-322, title XXXIII, §330016(1)(H), Sept. 13, 1994, 108 Stat. 2147; Pub. L. 107-273, div. B, title III, §3002(a)(2), Nov. 2, 2002, 116 Stat. 1805.)

## HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

## 1948 ACT

Based on title 18, U.S.C., 1940 ed., §321 (Mar. 4, 1909, ch. 321, §198, 35 Stat. 1126; May 18, 1916, ch. 126, §10, 39 Stat. 162; July 28, 1916, ch. 261, §1, 39 Stat. 418; May 7, 1934, ch. 220, §1, 48 Stat. 667).

Words “or shall willfully take or steal such mail from or out of such letter box or other receptacle” were omitted as covered by section 1702 of this title. Prosecutions for theft of mail matter are invariably made under that section whereas this section is used as basis for prosecutions for malicious mischief to mail boxes or receptacles. By Postal Regulations (1928), section 700, paragraph 2, an ordinary letter box is within this section and also section 1702 of this title. *Huebner v. United States* (C.C.A. 1928, 28 F. 2d 929).

Reference to persons assisting or aiding was omitted. Such persons are principals under definitive section 2 of this title.

Minor changes were made in phraseology.

## 1949 ACT

As amended by this section [section 38] of the bill, section 1705 of title 18, U.S.C., is brought more closely into conformity with the original statute from which it was derived by eliminating an inadvertent reference to a “conveyance” which was not in the original statute. (See S. Rept. No. 133, 81st Cong.)

**Editorial Notes**

## AMENDMENTS

2002—Pub. L. 107-273 inserted “, or both” after “years”.

1994—Pub. L. 103-322 substituted “fined under this title” for “fined not more than \$1,000”.

1949—Act May 24, 1949, struck out reference to a “conveyance” which was not in original statute.

### § 1706. Injury to mail bags

Whoever tears, cuts, or otherwise injures any mail bag, pouch, or other thing used or designed for use in the conveyance of the mail, or draws or breaks any staple or loosens any part of any lock, chain, or strap attached thereto, with intent to rob or steal any such mail, or to render the same insecure, shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than three years, or both.

(June 25, 1948, ch. 645, 62 Stat. 779; Pub. L. 103-322, title XXXIII, § 330016(1)(H), Sept. 13, 1994, 108 Stat. 2147.)

#### HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

Based on title 18, U.S.C., 1940 ed., § 312 (Mar. 4, 1909, ch. 321, § 189, 35 Stat. 1124).

A fine of “\$1,000” was substituted for “\$500” thus increasing the maximum to correspond with other comparable sections. (See section 1705 of this title.)

Minor verbal changes were made.

#### Editorial Notes

##### AMENDMENTS

1994—Pub. L. 103-322 substituted “fined under this title” for “fined not more than \$1,000”.

### § 1707. Theft of property used by Postal Service

Whoever steals, purloins, or embezzles any property used by the Postal Service, or appropriates any such property to his own or any other than its proper use, or conveys away any such property to the hindrance or detriment of the public service, shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than three years, or both; but if the value of such property does not exceed \$1,000, he shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than one year, or both.

(June 25, 1948, ch. 645, 62 Stat. 779; Pub. L. 91-375, § 6(j)(18), Aug. 12, 1970, 84 Stat. 778; Pub. L. 103-322, title XXXIII, § 330016(1)(G), (H), Sept. 13, 1994, 108 Stat. 2147; Pub. L. 104-294, title VI, § 606(a), Oct. 11, 1996, 110 Stat. 3511.)

#### HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

Based on title 18, U.S.C., 1940 ed., § 313 (Mar. 4, 1909, ch. 321, § 190, 35 Stat. 1124).

The phrase “used by” was substituted for “in use by or belonging to” in order to limit the application of the section to property used by the Post Office Department. Theft of public property belonging to governmental departments is covered by section 641 of this title.

A fine of “\$1,000” was substituted for “\$200,” thus increasing the maximum to conform with other comparable sections. (See section 1705 of this title.)

The smaller penalty for an offense involving property valued at \$100 or less was added. (See reviser’s notes under sections 641 and 645 of this title.)

Minor changes in phraseology were made.

#### Editorial Notes

##### AMENDMENTS

1996—Pub. L. 104-294 substituted “\$1,000” for “\$100”.

1994—Pub. L. 103-322 substituted “fined under this title” for “fined not more than \$1,000” after “service,

shall be” and for “fined not more than \$500” after “he shall be”.

1970—Pub. L. 91-375 substituted “Postal Service” for “Post Office Department”.

### Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

#### EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1970 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 91-375 effective within 1 year after Aug. 12, 1970, on date established therefor by Board of Governors of United States Postal Service and published by it in Federal Register, see section 15(a) of Pub. L. 91-375, set out as an Effective Date note preceding section 101 of Title 39, Postal Service.

### § 1708. Theft or receipt of stolen mail matter generally

Whoever steals, takes, or abstracts, or by fraud or deception obtains, or attempts so to obtain, from or out of any mail, post office, or station thereof, letter box, mail receptacle, or any mail route or other authorized depository for mail matter, or from a letter or mail carrier, any letter, postal card, package, bag, or mail, or abstracts or removes from any such letter, package, bag, or mail, any article or thing contained therein, or secretes, embezzles, or destroys any such letter, postal card, package, bag, or mail, or any article or thing contained therein; or

Whoever steals, takes, or abstracts, or by fraud or deception obtains any letter, postal card, package, bag, or mail, or any article or thing contained therein which has been left for collection upon or adjacent to a collection box or other authorized depository of mail matter; or

Whoever buys, receives, or conceals, or unlawfully has in his possession, any letter, postal card, package, bag, or mail, or any article or thing contained therein, which has been so stolen, taken, embezzled, or abstracted, as herein described, knowing the same to have been stolen, taken, embezzled, or abstracted—

Shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than five years, or both.

(June 25, 1948, ch. 645, 62 Stat. 779; May 24, 1949, ch. 139, § 39, 63 Stat. 95; July 1, 1952, ch. 535, 66 Stat. 314; Pub. L. 103-322, title XXXIII, § 330016(1)(I), Sept. 13, 1994, 108 Stat. 2147.)

#### HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

##### 1948 ACT

Based on title 18, U.S.C., 1940 ed., §§ 317, 321 (Mar. 4, 1909, ch. 321, §§ 194, 198, 35 Stat. 1125, 1126; May 18, 1916, ch. 126, § 10, 39 Stat. 162; July 28, 1916, ch. 261, § 1, 39 Stat. 418; Feb. 25, 1925, ch. 318, 43 Stat. 977; May 7, 1934, ch. 220, § 1, 48 Stat. 667; Aug. 26, 1935, ch. 693, 49 Stat. 867; Aug. 7, 1939, ch. 557, 53 Stat. 1256).

Each of these two sections has been divided. Provisions relating to theft or larceny of mail were placed in this section.

Words “letter box, mail receptacle, or any mail route” are from section 321 of title 18, U.S.C., 1940 ed. Such receptacles are authorized depositories. (See *Rosen v. United States*, N.Y. 1917, 38 S.Ct. 148, 245 U.S. 467, 62 L.Ed. 406, and *Foster v. Biddle*, C.C.A. Kan. 1926, 14 F.2d 280, involving indictment under section 317 of title 18, U.S.C., 1940 ed.) No cases are reported of prosecutions for mail theft under section 321 of title 18, U.S.C., 1940 ed., which relates primarily to malicious mischief respecting letter boxes.

Language omitted from section 317 of title 18, U.S.C., 1940 ed., and all of section 321 of title 18, U.S.C., 1940 ed.,