International Post Corporation

Royal Mail says Christmas comes early as parcel volumes set to surge

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Royal Mail is predicting a record Black Friday period this year, as new data suggests UK consumers are taking advantage of earlier sales to snap up bargains and get ahead with their Christmas shopping.

Royal Mail expects parcel volumes to increase by around 40% over the Black Friday period compared with an average November week, and a 5% increase on last Black Friday, as retailers roll out promotions and millions of shoppers bring forward their festive spending.

The forecast follows a strong build-up throughout November, with volumes already more than 9% higher in November to date compared to the same period last year.

The figures suggest that Black Friday is increasingly becoming a month-long shopping event rather than a single day, with retailers launching offers from early November and consumers using the sales to get Christmas shopping wrapped up earlier.

Royal Mail expects next Wednesday (2 December) to be its busiest ever delivery day, with around 8 million parcels expected to be handled, equivalent to a parcel for one in every four UK addresses on that day alone.

Royal Mail data also reveals a clear 'payday parcel bounce', with parcel volumes rising as millions of people receive their monthly salaries. Analysis of the past 12 months shows volumes increase by an average of 8% on the Tuesday after payday as purchases made over the weekend are shipped. Royal Mail expects that effect to be particularly pronounced this month, as payday, Black Friday deals and Christmas shopping converge to create a bumper period for online retail.

Jamie Stephenson, Chief Operating Officer at Royal Mail, said: "Black Friday used to be a day. Now it's becoming Black November. Retailers are starting their promotions in the first weeks of the month and consumers aren't waiting until December to start Christmas shopping. They're spotting a bargain and getting Christmas wrapped up early.

"We know that when payday lands, parcels follow, and the combination of payday, Black Friday deals and Christmas shopping is putting us on track for a record number of

parcels over the coming weeks.

"We've been planning for Christmas since January, with 22,000 seasonal workers, 7,500 additional vans and five seasonal parcel sort centres helping us deliver the busiest weeks of the year."

Ready for Christmas

Royal Mail has been preparing for the festive period since January.

Alongside 22,000 seasonal workers, Royal Mail has opened five seasonal parcel sort centres, providing 152,300 sqm of additional sorting space, equivalent to almost 22 football pitches. Its fleet is being supplemented by 7,500 hire vans and more than 1,400 additional road-haulage contractors to move festive mail and parcels around the country.

Customers also have access to around 30,000 Royal Mail parcel points, including nearly 5,000 lockers, 8,500 Royal Mail Shops, 11,500 Post Office branches and 1,200 Customer Service Points.

In each of the last three years, more than 99% of items posted by Royal Mail's recommended final posting dates arrived in time for Christmas.

Source: International Distribution Services

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