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This USPS facility in Utah does nothing but decipher your bad handwriting

by RON BIRD | KUTV Staff

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SALT LAKE CITY (KUTV) — Neither rain, nor snow, nor heat, nor terrible penmanship nor perfect cursive will keep the postal service from delivering your mail.

At least that's the goal of the USPS Encoding Center in Salt Lake City.

“So we are like the last line of defense in getting mail processed for the Postal Service,” said Danielle Bousha, an HR generalist at the center. “It's the one and only encoding center in the U.S., with more than 800 employees who work 24 hours a day deciphering sloppy or incomplete addresses.”

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If you walk into the massive work area, you won't hear a peep.

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Workers, actually called keyers, inspect images of letters or parcels on their computer screens.

"We process mail here that can't be processed by machines at the plant," Bousha said – and they do it at

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The Salt Lake City facility, built in 1994, is the first – and last – encoding center in the country.



Hundreds of US Postal Service workers in a Utah facility decipher bad handwriting, cursive, and otherwise illegible addresses on envelopes and packages every day so the mail can eventually get to its intended recipients. The Salt Lake City team is responsible for making the perpetually-unreadable cursive addresses as many workers who were never taught it in school have trouble reading it. (Photo: Tony Mikayelyan. KUTV)

Many others sprang up around the country through the years, but better technology eliminated all of them except for the one in Utah's capital city.

Newly-hired keyers go through 55 hours of training before they start the job, and it comes with a crash course on a form of writing that hasn't been taught in schools for more than a decade.

"It can be hard, especially when you first start," Bousha explained. "A lot of them are not used to reading cursive and interpreting what they see. But after 70 hours a week it becomes like second nature."

"You don't have to think about it anymore," she added.

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