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LOGISTICS MANAGED

2026 PEAK SEASON

LJM's 2026 Peak Season Shipping Playbook

Comprehensive round-up of carrier rates and actions to protect your margins this peak season

UPS | FedEx | USPS

Rates and carrier rules current as of September 2, 2026.

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01 OVERVIEW

2026 Peak Season Surcharge Overview

Domestic and international pricing windows overlap, but they do not create the same exposure.

Peak season begins before the holiday rush. FedEx's newly announced international non-standard-package demand charges begin September 21, followed by UPS domestic demand charges and revised international Surge Emergency Fees on September 27, then FedEx domestic charges on September 28. USPS begins one uniform seasonal schedule on October 4. The highest carrier rates apply during the core holiday window, while some charges continue into January. FedEx's announced international non-standard fees remain in effect through February 7, 2027, and UPS maintains additional international lane-based fees that remain in effect until further notice.

Seven things matter most in 2026 peak season fees

- Every major comparable UPS and FedEx demand surcharge increased from 2025; every comparable USPS temporary surcharge also increased in its filing.
- Non-standard packages remain the largest per-piece risk. Core-peak demand add-ons reach $595 at FedEx and $590 at UPS for unauthorized or over-maximum packages, before underlying charges.
- Fixed residential and lower-cost services absorbed some of the sharpest percentage increases, including 25% increases for UPS Ground Residential/Ground Saver and FedEx Ground/Home Delivery outside the core peak.

- High-volume UPS and FedEx pricing depends on weekly volume relative to a baseline. The applicable tier can change as actual demand changes.
- Peak fees stack on base transportation, accessorial, fuel and other charges. USPS also enters peak after 2026 base-price, temporary-rate and dimensional-weight changes.
- Contract language determines the net result. A discount on an ordinary accessorial or residential charge may not protect the corresponding demand surcharge.
- International exposure extends the calendar and adds lane-based fees. Shippers need origin, destination, direction, service and billable-weight data in the model.

When Do 2026 Peak Season Demand Surcharges Start?

Carrier	Full seasonal window	Highest-rate / rate window	Structure
FedEx domestic	Sept. 28, 2026-Jan. 17, 2027	Nov. 23-Dec. 27	Two schedules; non-standard packages start first
FedEx international	Sept. 21, 2026-Feb. 7, 2027	Fixed announced window	Non-standard package fees; International Ground excluded
UPS domestic	Sept. 27, 2026-Jan. 16, 2027	Nov. 22-Dec. 26	Two schedules; non-standard packages start first
UPS international	Sept. 27, 2026-Jan. 16, 2027*	Nov. 22-Dec. 26	Seasonal and ongoing lane-based surge fees
USPS	Oct. 4, 2026-Jan. 17, 2027	One rate for full window	Pending favorable PRC review

*UPS also lists ongoing international lane fees that remain in effect until further notice.

02 PEAK SEASON PLANNING

How Do I Prepare for Peak Season?

7 analyses that will help you project costs, optimize your shipping network, and make better operational decisions this peak season.

Analysis	What it measures	Decision it enables
1. Historical re-rating	Reprice actual 2025 peak shipments under 2026 rules and effective periods.	Creates a defensible first estimate using the shipper's real package profile.

Analysis	What it measures	Decision it enables
2. Gross vs. net impact	Apply published charges first, then the incentives, waivers, caps and exclusions in the current agreement.	Shows whether strong-looking discounts still leave material dollar exposure.
3. Like-for-like comparison	Hold shipment volume constant and compare 2025 with 2026.	Separates carrier-driven inflation from business growth and mix changes.
4. Service, zone and lane mix	Model volume by domestic or international service, residential status, zone, origin, destination, direction and week.	Finds the categories where concentration turns small per-package or per-pound fees into large costs.
5. Package-characteristic audit	Identify packages that triggered Additional Handling, Oversize/Large Package, Unauthorized/Over Maximum, or higher DIM weight.	Targets repeat SKUs and packaging configurations that operations can change.
6. Peaking-factor model	Reproduce the carrier baseline, project weekly volume, map each week to a tier and account for any assessment lag.	Quantifies threshold risk and the cost of moving into a higher tier.
7. Contract and negotiation analysis	Map each charge to written protection and quantify the remaining exposure.	Prioritizes waiver, reduction, cap or language requests with the largest financial value.

Core modeling principle

A percentage discount is not a savings result. Actual exposure depends on the discounted rate, the number of eligible packages, the weeks in which they ship and whether the agreement protects the exact demand charge being assessed.

Peak Season Planning Data Checklist

- Package-level shipment history covering the 2025 peak period and the carrier's 2026 baseline period.
- Invoice detail showing domestic or international service, origin, destination, import or export direction, zone, billed weight, dimensions, residential status and accessorial assessments.
- The current carrier agreement, amendments and written demand-surcharge concessions.
- A weekly 2026 forecast aligned across finance, marketing, ecommerce, operations and parcel teams.
- SKU and packaging data for repeat non-standard or dimensionally rated shipments.

FedEx 2026 Peak Season Domestic Demand Surcharges

FedEx at a glance

Seasonal window	September 28, 2026–January 17, 2027
Core-peak window	November 23–December 27
Charges covered	Additional Handling, Oversize, Unauthorized, Express, residential Ground/Home Delivery and Ground Economy
Volume-based pricing	Enterprise customers shipping more than 20,000 qualifying residential and Ground Economy packages; June 1–28 baseline with a two-week assessment lag
Critical watchout	Ground Economy volume contributes to the peaking factor even though Ground Economy packages are not assessed the Demand Residential Delivery Charge. One Rate packages are excluded.

How did FedEx peak season surcharges change from 2025

Every major comparable surcharge increased. Residential Ground/Home Delivery rose 25% outside the core peak and 23.1% during it. Overnight Express rose 23.8% and 21.4%, while Ground Economy rose 15.9% and 14.1%. FedEx also split Overnight from deferred Express demand pricing.

FedEx Peak Season Additional Handling, Oversize and Unauthorized Surcharges

Surcharge	Sept. 28-Nov. 22	Nov. 23-Dec. 27	Dec. 28-Jan. 17
Demand Additional Handling	$8.80	$11.85	$8.80
Demand Oversize	$95.75	$117.25	$95.75
Demand—Unauthorized Charge	$535.00	$595.00	$535.00

These seasonal charges apply in addition to the corresponding underlying charge. At published 2026 rates, a package assessed the $1,875 Ground Unauthorized Package Charge during the core peak can also incur the $595 Demand—Unauthorized Charge, resulting in a combined published base-plus-demand charge of $2,470 before transportation, fuel and other applicable charges.

FedEx Peak Season Express, Residential and Ground Economy Surcharges

Service	Oct. 26-Nov. 22	Nov. 23-Dec. 27	Dec. 28-Jan. 17
First, Priority and Standard Overnight	$1.30	$2.55	$1.30
2Day A.M., 2Day and Express Saver	$1.20	$2.35	$1.20
Ground and Home Delivery residential	$0.50	$0.80	$0.50
Ground Economy	$2.55	$4.05	$2.55

FedEx Volume-Based Demand Residential Delivery Charge

FedEx applies this separate charge to enterprise customers shipping more than 20,000 qualifying residential and Ground Economy packages in a calculation week. The tier is based on weekly qualifying volume relative to a June baseline and is assessed after a two-week lag. FedEx One Rate packages are excluded from both the calculation-week volume and the June baseline. For any calculation week containing a holiday, FedEx adjusts volume for one fewer operating day by multiplying the packages tendered by five and dividing by four.

Peaking factor	Ground / Home Delivery	Express services
>105%-125%	$1.70	$3.05
>125%-150%	$2.40	$3.75
>150%-200%	$2.70	$4.05
>200%-300%	$3.35	$4.70
>300%-400%	$5.60	$6.95
>400%	$8.00	$9.35

How Should FedEx Shippers Prepare for Peak Season

- Model Overnight separately from deferred Express. FedEx created distinct demand pricing for those groups in 2026.
- Track weekly residential volume and account for the two-week assessment lag; a promotion can change the tier after the activity occurs.
- Run a package audit for Additional Handling, Oversize and Unauthorized exposure before September 28.
- Review demand protection charge by charge. Ordinary accessorial or residential discounts do not automatically carry over.

UPS 2026 Peak Season Domestic Demand Surcharges

UPS at a glance

Seasonal window	September 27, 2026–January 16, 2027; Air, Ground Residential and Ground Saver charges begin October 25
Core-peak window	November 22–December 26
Charges covered	Additional Handling, Large Package, Over Maximum Limits, Air, Ground Residential and Ground Saver
Volume-based pricing	Applies after combined qualifying volume has exceeded 20,000 packages in any week after October 2025; generally uses the May 31–June 27 service-level baseline
Critical watchout	Once a tier is reached, its rate applies to every package in that service level for the weekly invoice period—not only packages above 105% of baseline.

How did peak season surcharges change from 2025

Every comparable UPS demand surcharge increased. Fixed Ground Residential and Ground Saver charges rose 25%. Fixed Air charges rose 22.0% to 22.7%. Non-standard-package demand charges rose approximately 6% to 10%, and every higher-volume tier increased.

UPS Peak Season Additional Handling, Large Package and Over Maximum Limits Surcharges

Surcharge	Sept. 27-Nov. 21	Nov. 22-Dec. 26	Dec. 27-Jan. 16
Additional Handling	$8.75	$11.90	$8.75
Large Package	$96.25	$117.50	$96.25
Over Maximum Limits	$530.00	$590.00	$530.00

These are seasonal add-ons. UPS states that demand surcharges apply in addition to other applicable charges and may apply cumulatively when a package meets more than one specified criterion.

UPS Peak Season Fixed Air, Ground Residential and Ground Saver Surcharges

Service	Oct. 25-Nov. 21	Nov. 22-Dec. 26	Dec. 27-Jan. 16
UPS Ground Saver	$0.50	$0.75	$0.50
UPS Ground Residential	$0.50	$0.75	$0.50
UPS Next Day Air	$1.35	$2.50	$1.35
All Other UPS Air	$1.35	$2.50	$1.35

All Other UPS Air includes UPS 2nd Day Air A.M., UPS 2nd Day Air and UPS 3 Day Select. UPS Ground Saver was formerly UPS SurePost.

UPS Higher-Volume Residential Surcharge Tiers

The higher-volume schedule applies to customers whose combined qualifying volume has exceeded 20,000 packages in any week after October 2025. UPS generally uses average weekly service-level volume from May 31-June 27, 2026 as the baseline. If the August 30-September 26 average is below 80% of the June average, UPS uses the later, lower baseline.

Weekly volume vs. baseline	Ground Saver / Ground Residential	Air Residential
>105%-125%	$1.75	$3.00
>125%-150%	$2.35	$3.70
>150%-200%	$2.65	$4.00
>200%-300%	$3.35	$4.60
>300%-400%	$5.65	$6.90
>400%	$8.00	$9.35

The threshold is not the billable quantity

Once the shipper enters a tier, the highest applicable rate is assessed on every package in that service level for the weekly invoice period, not only on packages above 105% of baseline.

How Should UPS Shippers Prepare for Peak Season

- Reproduce the June baseline by service level and test whether UPS's August-September substitute will apply.

- Model tier-boundary scenarios. A small weekly forecast error can change the rate applied to the full service-level volume.
- Include qualifying volume across affiliated and related accounts where applicable.
- Request demand-surcharge protection in writing and with specific reference to the charge; do not rely on ordinary accessorial discounts.

05 USPS PEAK SEASON DEMAND SURCHARGES

USPS 2026 Temporary Peak Pricing

USPS at a glance

Seasonal window	October 4, 2026–January 17, 2027
Core-peak window	One pricing schedule applies throughout the entire period
Products covered	Priority Mail Express, Priority Mail, USPS Ground Advantage and Parcel Select
Volume-based pricing	None
Critical watchout	The holiday increases follow the separate temporary average 8% increase and July DIM changes, so forecasts created before those changes may materially understate cost.

How did USPS peak season pricing change from 2025

Every comparable filed surcharge increased; most commercial increases are approximately 40%, and the largest is 57.1% for commercial Ground Advantage, Zones 5-9, at 0-3 lbs. and Cubic Tiers 1-3. These holiday increases follow other 2026 pricing changes, including base-price adjustments, a separate temporary average 8% increase and a July dimensional-weight rule change that lowered the divisor from 166 to 139 and requires dimensions to be rounded up to the nearest whole inch for DIM-eligible parcels.

USPS Peak Season Retail: Priority Mail and Ground Advantage, Zones 1-4

Weight	2026 surcharge
0-3 lbs.	$0.50
4-10 lbs.	$0.80

Weight	2026 surcharge
11-25 lbs.	$1.25
26-70 lbs. and Oversized	$3.90

USPS Peak Season Retail: Zones 5-9

Service	Weight	2026 surcharge
Priority Mail	0-3 lbs.	$1.00
Priority Mail	4-10 lbs.	$2.10
Priority Mail	11-25 lbs.	$4.30
Priority Mail	26-70 lbs.	$9.10
Ground Advantage	0-3 lbs.	$0.75
Ground Advantage	4-10 lbs.	$1.40
Ground Advantage	11-25 lbs.	$2.75
Ground Advantage	26-70 lbs. and Oversized	$7.50

USPS Peak Season Retail: Priority Mail Express, Zones 1-9

Zone	Weight	2026 surcharge
Zones 1-4	0-3 lbs.	$1.40
Zones 5-9	0-3 lbs.	$2.35
Zones 1-4	4-10 lbs.	$2.45
Zones 5-9	4-10 lbs.	$6.30
Zones 1-4	11-25 lbs.	$5.05
Zones 5-9	11-25 lbs.	$11.70
Zones 1-4	26-70 lbs.	$12.70
Zones 5-9	26-70 lbs.	$20.80

Retail Flat Rate: Priority Mail Large Flat Rate Boxes $2.10; all other Priority Mail Flat Rate products $1.00; Priority Mail Express Flat Rate Envelopes $2.35.

USPS Commercial Temporary Surcharges

USPS Peak Season Priority Mail and Ground Advantage, Zones 1-4

Band	2026 surcharge
0-3 lbs.; Cubic Tiers 1-3	$0.40
4-10 lbs.; PM Cubic Tiers 4-5 / GA Tiers 4-9	$0.65
11-25 lbs.; GA Cubic Tier 10	$1.05
26-70 lbs. and Oversized	$3.15

USPS Peak Season Zones 5-9: Priority Mail and Ground Advantage

Service	Band	2026 surcharge
Priority Mail	0-3 lbs.; Cubic Tiers 1-3	$0.85
Priority Mail	4-10 lbs.; Cubic Tiers 4-5	$1.75
Priority Mail	11-25 lbs.	$3.85
Priority Mail	26-70 lbs.	$9.10
Ground Advantage	0-3 lbs.; Cubic Tiers 1-3	$0.55
Ground Advantage	4-10 lbs.; Cubic Tiers 4-9	$1.05
Ground Advantage	11-25 lbs.; Cubic Tier 10	$1.75
Ground Advantage	26-70 lbs. and Oversized	$7.70

USPS Peak Season Priority Mail Express, Zones 1-9

Zone	Weight	2026 surcharge
Zones 1-4	0-3 lbs.	$1.40
Zones 5-9	0-3 lbs.	$2.35
Zones 1-4	4-10 lbs.	$2.10
Zones 5-9	4-10 lbs.	$5.55
Zones 1-4	11-25 lbs.	$4.90
Zones 5-9	11-25 lbs.	$10.50
Zones 1-4	26-70 lbs.	$12.55
Zones 5-9	26-70 lbs.	$18.20

USPS Peak Season Parcel Select and Commercial Flat Rate

Parcel Select weight	2026 surcharge
0-3 lbs.	$0.40
4-10 lbs.	$0.50
11-25 lbs.	$0.80
26-70 lbs. and Oversized	$2.35

Commercial Flat Rate: Priority Mail Large Flat Rate Boxes $1.75; all other Priority Mail Flat Rate products $0.85; Priority Mail Express Flat Rate Envelopes $2.35.

How Should USPS Shippers Prepare for Peak Season

- Recalculate billed weight with the 139 divisor and rounded-up dimensions. Any pre-July forecast is stale.
- Model weight-band boundaries. A DIM change can increase billed weight and the applicable peak surcharge.
- Evaluate Parcel Select for realistically movable, less time-sensitive volume; its filed increases are materially lower in several bands.
- Confirm how temporary pricing, cubic tiers and base-rate discounts are treated under the agreement.
- Revalidate the filing before October 4. USPS revised its initial schedule during the prior peak cycle.

06 INTERNATIONAL PARCEL SHIPPING

International demand and surge fees

International at a glance

Seasonal window	New FedEx fees begin September 21; revised UPS holiday fees begin September 27
Longest announced window	FedEx international non-standard fees continue through February 7, 2027
Charges covered	Non-standard-package fees, cross-border per-package fees, Worldwide Economy per-pound fees and lane-based fees
Volume-based pricing	Charges generally depend on the shipment's lane, service and billable weight rather than a weekly baseline
Critical watchout	Multiple international fees may overlap and may also be subject to fuel surcharge.

FedEx U.S. international non-standard-package demand fees

From September 21, 2026 through February 7, 2027, FedEx will apply the following demand surcharges to U.S. International Package Services that trigger the corresponding charge. FedEx International Ground is excluded.

Trigger	Demand surcharge	Effective period
Additional Handling	$8.80	Sept. 21, 2026-Feb. 7, 2027
Oversize	$95.75	Sept. 21, 2026-Feb. 7, 2027
Unauthorized package	$200.00	Sept. 21, 2026-Feb. 7, 2027

More FedEx adjustments are expected

FedEx says it will make additional adjustments to its U.S. international Demand Surcharge during the holiday season, with details expected in early September. Revalidate this section before publication and before finalizing the cost model.

> **FedEx ongoing international lane-based demand surcharges**
> FedEx also maintains separate per-pound Demand Surcharges on certain U.S. export and import lanes. These fees began earlier in 2026 and remain in effect until further notice. Because they may overlap the newly announced international non-standard-package charges, applicable origin, destination, service and billable-weight data should also be included in the peak cost model.

UPS international non-standard-package surge fees

For U.S.-origin shipments to all destinations using the listed UPS international services, the following fees apply in addition to the underlying charge.

Charge	May 31-Sept. 26	Sept. 27-Nov. 21	Nov. 22-Dec. 26	Dec. 27-Jan. 16
Additional Handling	$8.75	$8.75	$11.90	$8.75
Large Package	$96.00	$96.25	$117.50	$96.25
Over Maximum Limits	$514.00	$530.00	$590.00	$530.00

Covered services include UPS Worldwide Express, UPS Worldwide Express Saver, UPS Worldwide Express Plus, UPS Worldwide Expedited, UPS Worldwide Saver Pallet, UPS Express Freight Time of Day, UPS Transborder Standard and UPS Worldwide Standard.

UPS seasonal cross-border and Worldwide Economy fees

Origin / destination	Service	Fee	Effective period
U.S. to Canada or Mexico	UPS Standard	$0.50 per package	Sept. 27, 2026-Jan. 16, 2027
Canada or Mexico to U.S.	UPS Standard	$0.50 per package	Sept. 27, 2026-Jan. 16, 2027
U.S. to all destinations	UPS Worldwide Economy DDP/DDU	$0.50 per lb.	Sept. 27, 2026-Jan. 16, 2027

UPS ongoing international lane fees

UPS also lists the following fees as effective until further notice. They are not limited to the holiday window, but they belong in the peak model because they can overlap seasonal charges.

Lane	Fee	Effective; duration
India to U.S.	$0.66 per lb.	June 14, 2026; until further notice
China or Hong Kong to U.S.	$0.32 per lb.	May 24, 2026; until further notice
U.S. to all destinations except separately covered lanes	$0.32 per lb.	May 3, 2026; until further notice
All origins to U.S. except separately covered lanes	$0.32 per lb.	May 3, 2026; until further notice
U.S. to Israel or United Arab Emirates	$1.50 per lb.	March 22, 2026; until further notice
United Arab Emirates to U.S.	$1.50 per lb.	March 22, 2026; until further notice
U.S. to Middle East	$1.34 per lb.	March 22, 2026; until further notice
Middle East to U.S.	$1.34 per lb.	March 22, 2026; until further notice

For these fees, UPS defines Middle East as Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Sri Lanka.

How UPS surge fees apply

UPS states that Surge Fees are subject to fuel surcharge, are based on billable weight where applicable, can change, and may apply cumulatively when a shipment meets more than one criterion. A waiver or discount applies only when UPS agrees in writing with specific reference to the fee.

How Should International Shippers Prepare for Peak Season Demand Surcharges

- Segment historical shipments by origin, destination, import or export direction, international service and billable weight.
- Identify international packages that repeatedly trigger Additional Handling, Oversize, Unauthorized, Large Package or Over Maximum charges.
- Model overlapping UPS seasonal and ongoing lane fees rather than treating each table in isolation.
- Keep FedEx's September update as an open assumption and rerun the model when the additional adjustments are published.

- Continue international invoice audits through February 7, 2027.

07 INTEGRATING SHIPPING

Operational Best Practices for Peak Season Shipping

Peak cost controls work best as a cross-functional operating process.

Owner	Before charges begin	During peak
Finance / parcel	Set gross and net peak budgets by carrier, week, service and international lane. Create alerts near high-volume tier boundaries.	Compare actual charges, volume and mix with forecast; explain variance before the next invoice cycle.
Procurement / legal	Map every demand charge to written discounts, waivers, caps, exclusions and commitments. Prioritize asks by dollar exposure.	Confirm carrier implementation and document any approved exception or temporary concession.
Operations / packaging	Identify repeat SKUs that trigger AHS, Oversize/Large Package, Unauthorized/Over Maximum or DIM weight. Test packaging alternatives.	Monitor dimensions, weights, carton substitutions and exception packages; correct recurring triggers quickly.
Marketing / ecommerce	Share promotion calendars and weekly demand forecasts. Quantify the surcharge cost of pushing volume into the most expensive weeks.	Adjust promotion timing, delivery promises or incentives when incremental margin no longer covers incremental shipping cost.
Fulfillment / network	Scenario-test carrier, service, node and BOPIS alternatives for defined parcel profiles, capacity limits and delivery promises.	Route only eligible volume; track cost, capacity, transit performance and customer experience together.

How to Decide When to Make Operational Changes for Better Peak Season Shipping Outcomes

- Packaging: change the box only when the all-in reduction in billed weight and accessorial exposure exceeds material, labor and fulfillment tradeoffs.
- Service shift: evaluate transportation, demand surcharge, transit commitment, capacity and customer promise together.

- Carrier diversification: route by parcel profile and lane economics, not by a broad carrier-average comparison.
- Demand shaping: compare the cost of an earlier promotion or incentive with the avoided peak charge and operational load.
- Negotiation: focus the request on the charges with the largest modeled net exposure and support it with package-level evidence.

08 GET A CUSTOM 2026 PEAK SEASON ANALYSIS

Get a 2026 Peak Season Cost Impact Analysis

LJM can translate the published schedules into a company-specific peak cost model.

Provide the current carrier agreement and historical shipment data. LJM will:

- Re-rate the historical domestic and international package profile under the 2026 carrier rules;
- Apply existing incentives, waivers, caps and exclusions;
- Identify the services, weeks and package characteristics driving the largest costs;
- Model high-volume and peaking-factor exposure; and
- Flag negotiation targets and operational changes that can reduce cost before or during peak.

A practical output, not a generic benchmark

The analysis separates carrier-driven increases from business growth, service mix, package characteristics and contract gaps. That gives finance, operations, marketing and procurement a shared view of what can still be changed.

Request A Free Peak Cost Impact Analysis

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