

# PROVIDING SECURITY TO THE LETTER

Epoch Design introduces  
a high-security product  
designed to protect one  
of your customers' most  
vulnerable assets:  
their mail.

By Don Sadler



**N**ecessity, they say, is the mother of invention, and there's no better example of this than the Mail Boss, a locking security mailbox that was devised by entrepreneur David Bolles.

Bolles is the president of Epoch Design, a furniture design and manufacturing company that was established in 1987 in Redmond, Washington. In 2005, Bolles became one of the millions of victims of identity theft, the fastest-growing crime in the United States. He was victimized in a way that most people don't think about: Mail was stolen right out of his home mailbox — not once, but three times in just three months.

Enough was enough, he decided, so Bolles went to buy a locking mailbox to protect him and his family from any further mail and identity theft. Unfortunately — or fortunately, as fate would have it — he was unable to find an affordable, high-quality locking mailbox with true security at any of the local hardware stores or websites he visited.

That's when the proverbial light bulb went off: Bolles quickly realized that there was a need in the marketplace for a truly secure and affordable locking mailbox. Using the resources of his company, he set out to design one — and the Mail Boss line of locking mailboxes was introduced in 2006, just one year later.

"The Mail Boss provides customers with a secure and affordable solution to mail and identity theft prevention," says Tegen Boggs, the national sales manager for the Mail Boss.

**VULNERABLE ASSETS**

Statistics reveal some 90 percent of Americans shred or burn their personal documents, according to Boggs. "But what is it that we all so diligently shred? Most of what we shred comes from our mailboxes," he

says. "There are 60 million unlocked mailboxes in the United States that offer a treasure trove of sensitive documents for identity thieves to steal. Therefore, authorities from police departments to the U.S. Postal Service are recommending that homeowners switch to locking mailboxes to protect against mail-identity theft."

The statistics regarding identity theft — and mail-identity theft, in particular — are staggering: Approximately one in every 25 Americans is the victim of identity theft each year, and this number is rising. Most victims (about two out of every three) do not know how their information was compromised, but of those who do, most say it was via low-tech methods like stolen wallets and purses and stolen trash and mail.

"Most mail theft victims don't even realize that their mail has been stolen," says Boggs, "because thieves often leave the junk mail, taking only what's valuable to them." Therefore, the statistics on mail theft are probably grossly underestimated, he notes.

**A WELCOME SOLUTION**

Epoch Design has experienced year-over-year double-digit growth in sales of Mail Boss products since they were launched. That growth is "due to the increased prevalence of mail theft and the associated demand for quality, affordable locking mailboxes," says Boggs. "Therefore, we believe that increased consumer awareness of the prevalence of mail-identity theft represents a tremendous opportunity for Mail Boss."

According to Boggs, most locking mailboxes on the market can be fished by hand or pried open with a screwdriver

**"There are 60 million unlocked mailboxes in the United States that offer a treasure trove of sensitive documents for identity thieves to steal."**

in just seconds. "These faux-security locking mailboxes have serious security inadequacies that could be devastating for the homeowner," he says. "These so-called security mailboxes provide homeowners with a false sense of security, which may cause them to leave their mail vulnerable to thieves much longer than they would otherwise in an unlocked mailbox."

Each Mail Boss model features a patented anti-pry latch to prevent leveraged entry, in-



All of the curbside Mail Boss mailboxes have been approved by the U.S. Postmaster General, according to Epoch Design.

novative security lock design features, and welded commercial-grade galvanized steel construction. They cannot be opened with the flick of a screwdriver, Boggs says. “It would require upwards of 10 minutes and a crowbar to be able to violate the innovative, patented locking mechanism.”

Mail Boss mailboxes come with a high-security retained 7-pin brass core tube lock, stainless steel hinges and hardware, and a durable powder-coated finish. They include three keys, mounting hardware and reflective house numbers. “Our customers have responded to the product gratefully,” says Boggs. “They tell us that the affordable Mail Boss protects their mail and parcels and provides them with peace of mind.”

Boggs believes that in a few years, almost everyone will own a high-security locking mailbox. “Right now, we are focusing the

company’s efforts on the growth of Mail Boss,” he says. “Furniture is still the bloodline of our company, essentially allowing us to pursue the growth and expansion of the Mail Boss product line nationwide to consumers.”

**SALES AND DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS**

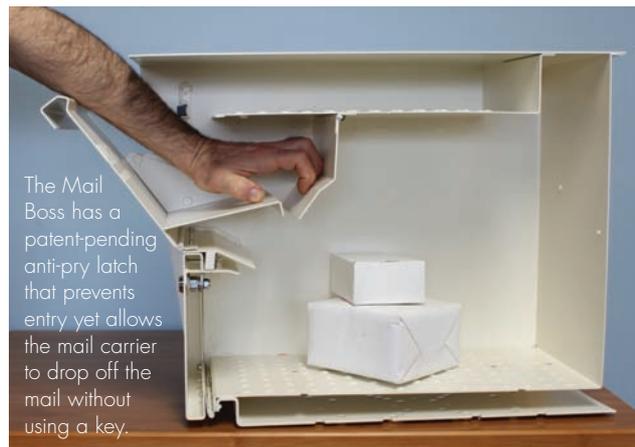
Epoch Design sells the Mail Boss wholesale as well as retail online at [www.mailboss.net](http://www.mailboss.net) and [www.epochbydesign.com](http://www.epochbydesign.com). It is sold wholesale to online retailers (like [mailboxexchange.com](http://mailboxexchange.com) and [securitymailbox.com](http://securitymailbox.com)), national hardware retailers (Ace Hardware and True Value hardware), independent hardware stores and independent locksmith shops.

Approximately 1,000 Ace, True Value and independent hardware stores carry the Mail Boss, according to Boggs, while several hundred other hardware stores do not stock them but special order Mail Boss mailboxes for their customers on a regular basis.

“Currently, about 10 percent of our accounts are independent locksmith shops, which tend to move product as well as if not better than independent hardware stores,” says Boggs. “We are constantly striving to increase our representation in hardware retailers and locksmith shops through targeted outside sales and regular attendance at tradeshows like the ALOA convention.

“We also continue to create significant growth from our advertising,” he continues. “Local television and radio and participation in coop ad circulars have all shown that the demand for mail theft prevention is high.”

The company believes that the long-term success of the Mail Boss lies in sales via retail hardware stores and locksmith shops, so it has priced the products accordingly. Consumers pay more for Mail Bosses online than



The Mail Boss has a patent-pending anti-pry latch that prevents entry yet allows the mail carrier to drop off the mail without using a key.

in a retail store: \$199 online for the curbside Mail Boss compared to \$159-\$179 in a retail store, even though the company’s profit is higher with a direct online sale.

“Our focus is on driving customer traffic to the retail stores,” says Boggs. “This is because ultimately, supporting the brick-and-mortar stores best aligns with our long-term goal of having Mail Bosses present in hardware stores and locksmith shops all across the country.”

**BENEFITS OF ALOA MEMBERSHIP**

Epoch Design is a new ALOA associate member, having joined the association just prior to the 2010 ALOA conference this summer. But Boggs says their membership has already paid huge dividends. “The benefits of our ALOA membership have been tremendous,” he says. “A third of our current lock and safe dealers jumped on board after meeting us at this year’s ALOA tradeshow.”

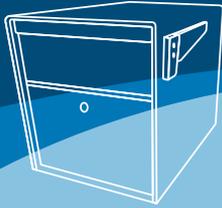
Boggs anticipates 30 to 50 percent growth per year with lock and safe dealers as direct a result of the company’s ALOA membership. “The Mail Boss is built like a safe and would be a nice compliment to any dealer showcasing safes and other security products,” he adds. ☺



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# MAIL BOSS™

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**11 Million Identity Theft Victims in 2009**  
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**60 Million People with 11 Million Reasons**  
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