

PO Box or Home Address

I am moving my office to my home by the end of the week and rethinking my practice. Right now, I only have a probate to finish. I'm considering just using my home address. As for security, I do have 2 chow chows - bad guys seem intimidated by them. Any thoughts? And thank you in advance.

PO Box, or a PMB (Private mail box) from places like the UPS store. A PMB may be better as then you can get Fed Ex, UPS, other delivered, cards signed for, often 24 hour access (not all post offices have that) so not limited to working hours.

You can also call the PMB and get an idea of what is in the box before going if needed.

Keep the home address somewhat private if you can.

Phil A. Taylor, Massachusetts

Depends on your practice area. If criminal, never use your home address. Probably not family law either. If business clients, I never hid my home office address. Listed it along with my real office address. Never had a problem. Even had clients to my home office.

Shell Bleiweiss, Illinois

Just a for what is is worth, I have used a P.O. Box for my office for the past 20 years, regardless of where my physical office is located. I prefer mail go to a truly secure location, not just a slot or box at my building.

I always put my address with my name, my street address, then PO Box, City, State zip as follows:

Randy Birch, Utah

I used to practice family law. I stopped about 5 years ago. I've only done a couple of uncontested divorces for long-term clients since then.

Thanks to all for the input.

Veronica M. Schnidrig

I'll note that if one uses a PMB, the US Postal Service will not forward mail from it to another address. I had a decedent who used a PMB which we had to keep open until we could notify each sender (whose mail we knew was coming or was being received) that the address changed to the client's address.

I'm still unsure what the postal service will do with a business post office box, as I use, if I want to change the address to a non-business address. I'm led to believe that it "cannot" be done, other than as with the PMB—alerting each sender of the new address. That does not stop me from using the POB for my law office (and, for my convenience, it's where I have my personal mail delivered).

Mark E. Peneguy, Louisiana

Go ahead and use your home address. Anyone with bad intentions is going to find out your address, no matter how carefully you think you might be concealing it with a PMB, only a PO Box, or a corner table at Starbucks.

And if a would-be client doesn't like your dogs, or if your dogs don't like the potential client, tell the client to find another lawyer. There's some money that's just not worth earning.

jennifer j. rose, Mexico

I prefer keeping my home address private at least as far as clients and court filed documents go. As for PO Box security, it may be different in different states but Hawaii is currently having a problem with PO box security. Just a couple of months ago, the Hawaii Justice Foundation (which administers IOLTA for the Bar) notified lawyers that the PO box HJF was using to collect IOLTA statements from participating financial institutions was broken into (along with something like 16 other PO boxes).

Naomi C. Fujimoto, Hawaii

I am over 60 and I've had at least three office locations, but always retained the same P.O. Box. All of my Wills and other legal documents have the P.O.Box on them. That way, when the will comes up for probate, there is an easy way to locate me. I also receive uninterrupted mail from desired sources of information.

There are three related issues I would like to add to the thread:

1. What do you do when the zip code of your P.O. Box and your office have changed? That is, how do you write your return address when your office is now located in a different zip code than the zip code of your P.O. Box?
2. How do you handle it when the municipality where the P.O. Box is located states that your office is located in that municipality, when in fact your only presence there is the Federal Post office Box. Is that sufficient contact for municipal taxation?
3. Conversely, can I get a P.O. Box in a place with little or no sales tax and does that qualify to avoid the sales taxes?

Bob Gasparro, Pennsylvania

Although I'm sure the answer varies somewhat by state, I suspect in most places merely maintaining a PO Box is not a sufficient business connection for taxation purposes. In a somewhat analogous situation, I used to get letters from the city of Norfolk's tax department every time I listed myself as a

registered agent for a corporation or LLC when I was practicing there. I basically had a form letter that I sent to the city explaining that the client was not physically located in the city, and they stopped bugging me after that.

Kevin Grierson, Virginia

I have been using a home-office since 1991. I took my mailbox off the wall about 10 - 15 years ago and got a post office box. One of the many benefits is that when I go on vacation, I don't have to think about the mail being mishandled. In addition, I don't have clients coming to my home unannounced.

Curtis Drew, Arizona

I use a UPS store to receive mail, as I work out of my house. No PO Box number. I never, ever, suggest a client come to my house. I tell people, if asked, that I do not have an office where I can meet them, but will meet somewhere convenient to them.

My advice is that you do not have people come to your house, ever.

Barry Kaufman

Thank you to all for your thoughts. I appreciate the input.

Veronica M. Schnidrig

Never, ever, would I use my home address professionally. Get a mail drop/answering service, or a PO box.

Scott I. Barer, California

Agreed - especially considering I have my wife and kids at home!

Eugene Lee, California