



POSTAL NEWS

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POSTAL SERVICE PROPOSES NEW MAILING STANDARDS TO INCREASE EFFICIENCY

New standards would accompany proposed new prices in 2007

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Postal Service proposes to revise its mailing standards to encourage mail preparation that is compatible with the Postal Service's improved processing capabilities. When implemented, the standards would accompany the proposed price changes planned to take effect next spring.

The new standards give customers more choices in terms of shape, sorting, packaging and containers that encourage more efficient mail preparation. The proposal also increases worksharing opportunities for mailers, allows them to qualify for lower prices by permitting multiple classes of mail to be combined, and reduces the number of bundles, sacks, or trays in a mailing through scheme sorting for letters, flats, and parcels, when appropriate.

Highlights of the proposed changes include the following:

Letters

- 3.5-ounce maximum weight for all First-Class Mail letters.
- Fewer presort requirements for First-Class Mail and Standard Mail non-barcode machinable letters.
- Require full trays for most Enhanced Carrier Route (ECR) mail.

Flats

- All flats must be rectangular, flexible, and uniformly thick. Nonrectangular, non-uniform, or rigid pieces pay parcel or Not Flat-Machinable prices.
- Consistent size standards for all flats. For example, Standard Mail ECR flats will have the same maximum size as all other flats.
- Physical standards for automation flats adjusted to meet the current criteria for AFSM 100 pieces, with new standards for flexibility and deflection.

Not Flat-Machinable (NFM) Pieces

- New category for Standard Mail pieces with parcel-like characteristics, including rigid pieces. Today these pieces qualify as automation flats under UFSM 1000 guidelines or because flexibility is currently not required. These pieces are actually handled as parcels, especially at delivery. Under the new standards, these pieces will be presorted, entered, and processed as parcels.

- Qualify for 5-digit rates with minimum five-piece bundles on pallets for easier access to the lowest NFM price.

Parcels

- Minimum 10 pounds qualifies for presort rates.
- Simplify standards by eliminating almost all bundling of parcels.
- Enhanced discounts to encourage drop shipping parcels to destination delivery units (DDUs), with no minimum volume requirement for parcels sorted to the 5-digit level.
- Additional options to combine different classes of parcels in sacks and on pallets to achieve finer levels of presort as long as they are in the same processing category.
- Require barcoding of parcels unless prepared in 5-digit/scheme containers.

Comments on the proposal are being accepted through Nov. 13, 2006. Written comments should be sent to the Manager of Mailing Standards, U.S. Postal Service, 475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW, Room 3436, Washington DC 20260-3436. The complete Federal Register notice on the proposal is available, starting Sept. 27, 2006, at http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fedreg/a060927c.html.

Since 1775, the Postal Service and its predecessor, the Post Office Department, have connected friends, families, neighbors and businesses by mail. It is an independent federal agency that visits more than 144 million homes and businesses every day and is the only service provider delivering to every address in the nation. The Postal Service receives no taxpayer dollars for routine operations, but derives its operating revenues solely from the sale of postage, products and services. With annual revenues of \$70 billion, it is the world's leading provider of mailing and delivery services, offering some of the most affordable postage rates in the world. The U.S. Postal Service delivers more than 46 percent of the world's mail volume-some 212 billion letters, advertisements, periodicals and packages a year-and serves 7 million customers each day at its 37,000 retail locations nationwide.

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