

Revision to **Mailing Standards of the United States Postal Service**, Domestic Mail Manual

The number of ballots mailed back to election officials with insufficient postage is on the rise. Each election cycle presents a different set of parameters for ballot creation and for the size and weight of the return mail piece. As a result, many voters do not know the correct amount of postage required to return their ballot by mail.

Effective October 7, 2013, the Postal Service™ revised *Mailing Standards of the United States Postal Service*, Domestic Mail Manual (DMM®) (<http://pe.usps.com/text/dmm300/703.htm#1174014>) 703.8 to require that the balloting materials for all types of ballots, whether disseminated in hardcopy or electronically, must indicate in a prominent location the proper amount of First-Class Mail® postage that must be paid. This information must be included in the balloting materials (i.e., on the ballot, ballot instructions, mailing instructions, or the envelope) with the marking “First-Class Mail postage must be applied.”

Alternatively, the marking “Apply First-Class Mail postage here” could be printed in the upper-right corner of the address side of the envelope used by the voter to return the ballot to election officials. The Postal Service will also accept approved variations of the above markings.

Additionally, balloting materials must indicate, in a prominent location, the specific amount of First-Class Mail postage required for the return of the ballot to election officials. The marking requirements will not apply to balloting materials that meet one of the following exceptions:

- The balloting materials are qualified under the special exemption for military and overseas voting.
- The ballot is returned under Business Reply Mail® service.
- Return postage is guaranteed through a postage due account.
- Postage on the ballot is prepaid by stamps, meter, or Permit Reply Mail.

Implementation of New Rule

For mailers who submit Election Ballot mailings that are noncompliant with current return postage requirements, the following acceptance procedures are to be observed: The mailer can submit a written request to the manager, Business Mail Entry requesting a one-time-exception to allow the mailing to be accepted. The exception request will be submitted to the Pricing and Classification Service Center (PCSC) for consideration.