445 Mail Preparation

Overview

1.0 General Information for Mail Preparation
2.0 Bundles
3.0 Sacks
4.0 Sack Labels
5.0 Preparation for Presorted Parcels
6.0 Preparation for Enhanced Carrier Route Parcels

1.0 General Information for Mail Preparation

1.1 Definition of Presort Process

Presort is the process by which a mailer prepares mail so that it is sorted to at least the finest extent required by the standards for the rate claimed. Generally, presort is performed sequentially, from the lowest (finest) level to the highest level, to those destinations specified by standard and is completed at each level before the next level is prepared. Not all presort levels are applicable in all situations. [M011.1.1]

1.2 Definition of Mailings

Mailings are defined as:

a. General. A mailing is a group of pieces within the same class of mail and, except for certain parcel rates, the same processing category that may be sorted together and/or presented under a single minimum volume mailing requirement under the applicable standards. Generally, types of mail that follow different flows through the postal processing system and mail for each separate class and subclass must be prepared as a separate mailing. Other specific standards may define whether separate mailings may be combined, palletized, reported, or deposited together.

b. Standard Mail. Except as provided in 443.3.4, *Residual Volume Requirement*, the types of Standard Mail listed below may not be part of the same mailing.

   1. Enhanced Carrier Route and any other type of mail.
   2. Enhanced Carrier Route letter rate pieces and Enhanced Carrier Route nonletter rate pieces.
   3. Presorted rate mail and any other type of mail.
   4. Machinable and nonmachinable pieces.
   5. Except as provided by standard, Regular mail may not be in the same mailing as Nonprofit mail, and Enhanced Carrier Route mail may not be in the same mailing as Nonprofit Enhanced Carrier Route mail.
   6. Customized MarketMail and any other type of mail. [M011.1.4]

1.3 Terms for Presort Levels

Terms used for presort levels are defined as follows:

a. *Carrier route:* all pieces for delivery to the same city route, rural route, highway contract route, post office box section, or general delivery unit.

b. *5-digit:* the delivery address on all pieces includes the same 5-digit ZIP Code.

c. *5-digit scheme (pallets and sacks) for Standard Mail parcels:* the ZIP Code in the delivery address on all pieces begins with one of the 5-digit ZIP Code zones processed by the USPS as a single scheme, as shown in L606.

d. *3-digit:* the ZIP Code in the delivery address on all pieces begins with the same three digits (see L002, Column A).

e. *Origin/optional entry 3-digit(s):* the ZIP Code in the delivery address on all pieces begins with one of the 3-digit prefixes processed at the sectional center facility (SCF) in whose service area the mail is verified/entered. Subject to standard, a separation is required for each such 3-digit area regardless of the volume of mail.

f. *SCF:* the separation includes pieces for two or more 3-digit areas served by the same sectional center facility (SCF) (see L005), *except that,* where required or permitted by standard, mail for a single 3-digit area may be prepared in an SCF separation when no mail for other 3-digit ZIP Code areas is available. For pallets, the SCF sort may include mail for a single 3-digit ZIP Code area.

g. *Origin/optional entry SCF:* the separation includes bundles for one or more 3-digit areas served by the same sectional center facility (SCF) (see L002, Column C, or L005) in whose service area the mail is verified/entered. Subject to standard, this separation is required regardless of the volume of mail.

h. *ADC:* all pieces are addressed for delivery in the service area of the same area distribution center (ADC) (see L004).

i. *ASF/BMC:* all pieces are addressed for delivery in the service area of the same auxiliary service facility (ASF) or bulk mail center (BMC) (see L601, L602, or L605).

j. *Mixed [BMC, ADC, etc.]:* the pieces are for delivery in the service area of more than one BMC, ADC, etc.

k. *Residual* pieces/bundles/sacks contain material remaining after completion of a presort sequence. Residual mail lacks the volume set by standard to require or allow bundle preparation to a particular destination, and usually does not qualify for a presort rate. Residual mail is also referred to as *nonqualifying* or *working* mail. [M011.1.2]

1.4 Preparation Definitions and Instructions

For purposes of preparing mail:

a. *Pieces* refers to individually addressed mailpieces. This definition also applies when *pieces* is used in eligibility standards. Quantities indicated for optional or required sortations always refer to pieces unless specifically excepted.

b. A *full* sack is defined in the standards for the class and rate claimed.

c. A *5-digit scheme sort for Standard Mail parcels* yields 5-digit scheme sacks or pallets for those 5-digit ZIP Codes listed in L606 and 5-digit sacks or pallets for other ZIP Codes. The 5-digit ZIP Codes in each scheme are treated as a single presort destination subject to a single minimum volume (if required), with no further separation by 5-digit ZIP Code required. Sacks or pallets prepared for a 5-digit scheme destination that contain pieces for only one of the schemed 5-digit ZIP Codes are still considered 5-digit scheme sorted and are labeled accordingly. The 5-digit scheme sort is always optional, including when 5-digit sortation is required for rate eligibility. The 5-digit scheme sort need not be used for all possible 5-digit scheme sorts.

d. An *origin 3-digit* (or *origin 3-digit scheme) sack* contains all mail (regardless of quantity) for a 3-digit ZIP Code (or 3-digit scheme) area processed by the SCF in whose service area the mail is verified. If more than one 3-digit (or 3-digit scheme) area is served, as indicated in L005, a separate tray/sack must be prepared for each.

e. The *required at [quantity]* instruction (e.g., "required at 10 pieces") means that the particular unit *must* be prepared for the corresponding presort level whenever the specified quantity of mail is reached or exceeded. Bundles and containers may contain more than the specified *required at* quantity up to the applicable maximum physical size. Subject to applicable rate eligibility standards, smaller quantities may be prepared only if permitted. Where specified by standard, required preparation applies only if the mailer chooses to qualify for the corresponding rate.

f. The *optional at [quantity]* instruction means that the particular unit *may* be prepared for the corresponding presort level whenever the specified quantity of mail is reached or exceeded. Bundles or containers may contain more than the specified *optional at* quantity up to the applicable maximum physical size. Smaller quantities may be prepared only if permitted by applicable rate eligibility standards. Standards for quantities with which preparation is optional are often followed by standards for larger quantities with which preparation is required.

g. *Entry [facility]* (or *origin [facility]*) refers to the USPS mail processing facility (e.g., "entry BMC") that serves the post office at which the mail is entered by the mailer. If the post office where the mail is entered is not the one serving the mailer's location (e.g., for plant-verified drop shipment), the post office of entry determines the *entry* facility. *Entry SCF* includes both single-3-digit and multi-3-digit SCFs. *Entry BMC* includes subordinate ASFs unless otherwise specified.

h. The *group pieces* instruction means the pieces are to be sorted together as if to be bundled but not actually secured into a bundle. Bundle labels and other bundle identification methods may be used for unsecured groups of pieces as permitted by standard.

i. A *bundle* is a group of addressed pieces secured together as a unit. The presort process considers the total number of pieces available for the particular presort destination and assembles them into groups meeting applicable volume and

size standards. When the standards for the rate claimed require securing the pieces in each group together, the result is a bundle. The term *bundle* does not apply to unsecured groups of pieces. Bundle preparation is described in 2.0.

j. A *"logical" presort destination* represents the total number of pieces that are eligible for a specific presort level based on the required sortation, but which might not be contained in a single bundle or in a single container (i.e., sack, pallet) due to applicable preparation requirements or the size of the individual pieces. For example, there may be 42 mailpieces for ZIP Code 43112 forming a Standard Mail "logical" 5-digit bundle, and they are prepared in three physical 5-digit bundles because of the applicable weight and height restrictions on bundles. For pallets, 2,800 pounds of mail may be destined to an SCF destination, and these would form the "logical" SCF pallet, but the mail is placed on two physical SCF pallets each weighing 1,400 pounds because of the 2,200 pound maximum pallet weight requirement. [M011.1.3]

2.0 Bundles

2.1 Definition of a Bundle

A *bundle* is a group of addressed pieces secured together as a unit. The presort process considers the total number of pieces available for the particular presort destination and assembles them into groups meeting applicable volume and size standards. When the standards for the rate claimed require securing the pieces in each group together, the result is a bundle. The term bundle does not apply to unsecured groups of pieces. Bundle preparation is described in 2.0. [M011.1.3z]

2.2 Arranging Pieces in a Bundle ("Facing")

Except as noted in 2.3, all pieces in a bundle must be "faced" (i.e., arranged with the addresses in the same read direction), with an address visible on the top piece. [M020.1.1]

2.3 Preparing Bundles of Pieces of Nonuniform Thickness ("Counterstacking")

Bundles of flats and other pieces of nonuniform thickness may be prepared by counter-stacking under these conditions:

a. Counter-stacking should be used only to create bundles of more uniform thickness that are more likely to maintain their integrity during transportation and processing.

b. Counter-stacking is appropriate for saddle-stitched mailpieces and pieces where one edge is thicker than other edges or one corner is thicker than other corners.

c. When counter-stacking, pieces must all have addresses facing up and be divided into no more than four approximately equal groups, with each group rotated 180 degrees from the preceding and succeeding group(s); prepare as few groups as possible to create a bundle of uniform thickness.

d. Counter-stacked groups within a bundle should be as thick as possible, generally at least 1 inch thick.

e. When pieces are nonuniform in thickness because they are thicker in the center instead of along an edge or corner, counter-stacking will generally not result in a bundle of uniform thickness (i.e., a football-shaped bundle would be created). Instead of counter-stacking such pieces, limit the height (thickness) of the bundle to 3 to 6 inches to ensure the bundle will stay together during normal transit and handling. [M020.1.2]

2.4 Preparing Bundles in Sacks

Standard Mail prepared in sacks must be secured in bundles as follows:

a. The maximum weight for all bundles is 20 pounds.

b. Bundles up to 1 inch in height (thickness) must be secured with appropriate banding, placed at least once around the girth (narrow dimension), or with shrinkwrap. Bundles over 1 inch in height must be secured with at least two bands (plastic bands, rubber bands, or twine/string), one around the length and one around the girth; or with shrinkwrap; or with shrinkwrap plus one or two bands.

c. Bundles should be measured at the lowest (thinnest) point to determine the bundle height.

d. A bundle that exceeds the maximum prescribed height by less than the thickness of a single piece meets the standard (e.g., if a glossy piece is 0.625 (5/8) of an inch thick, five pieces may be secured in a bundle 3.125 inches high; if a piece with uncoated cover stock is 0.75 (3/4) of an inch thick, 11 pieces may be secured in a bundle 8.25 inches high).

e. Bundles of pieces with covers of coated stock that are not individually enclosed in a mailing wrapper (e.g., magazines or catalogs with glossy covers not individually enclosed in an envelope, uncoated paper wrapper, or plastic wrapper (polybag)) are subject to these conditions:

1. Except as noted in 2.4e2, bundles must not exceed 3 inches in height (thickness).

2. Bundles of such pieces secured with shrinkwrap plus one or two plastic straps, or with at least two plastic straps, one around the length and one around the girth, must not exceed 6 inches in height (thickness).

f. Bundles containing pieces with outer surfaces of uncoated stock are subject to these conditions:

1. “Uncoated stock” also refers to pieces with coated covers that are individually enclosed in a cover or mailing wrapper of uncoated stock such as an envelope, sleeve, protective cover, partial wrapper, or polybag and pieces with outer surfaces composed of material other than paper (e.g., plastic, cloth, fiberboard, or metal).

2. Bundles must not exceed 8 inches in height (thickness); however, it is recommended that such bundles not exceed 6 inches in height (thickness). [M020.1.8]

2.5 Securing Bundles

Bundle preparation is subject to the following requirements:

a. Bundles must be able to withstand normal transit and handling without breakage or injury to USPS employees.

b. Bundles must be secured with banding, shrinkwrap, or shrinkwrap plus one or more bands. Banding includes plastic bands, rubber bands, twine/string, and similar material. Use of wire or metal banding is not permitted.

c. When one band is used, it must be placed tightly around the girth (narrow dimension).

d. Except under 705.8.5.11, *Bundles on Pallets*, bundles over 1 inch high (thick) must be secured with at least two bands or with shrinkwrap. When double banding is used to secure bundles, it must encircle the length and girth of the bundle at least once. Additional bands may be used if none lies within 1 inch of any bundle edge.

e. Banding tension must be sufficient to tighten and depress the edges of the bundle so pieces will not slip out of the banding during transit and processing. Loose banding is not allowed.

f. When twine/string is used to band bundles, the knot(s) must be secure so the banding does not come loose during transit and processing. [M020.1.4]

2.6 Pieces With Simplified Address

For mail prepared with a simplified address, all pieces for the same post office must be prepared in bundles of 50 when possible. If bundles of other quantities are prepared, the actual number of pieces must be shown on the facing slip attached to show distribution desired (e.g., rural route, city route, post office boxholder). Bundles must be secure and stable subject to specific weight limits in 705.8.0 if placed on pallets, and specific weight and height limits in 2.4 if placed in sacks. [M020.2.3]

2.7 Bundles With Fewer Than the Minimum Number of Pieces Required

An individual bundle may be prepared with fewer than the minimum number of pieces required by the standards for the rate claimed without loss of rate eligibility under either of these conditions:

a. A greater number of pieces would exceed the maximum physical size for a bundle and the total number of pieces for that presort destination meets the minimum volume standard (e.g., 30 pieces are available to meet a 10-piece minimum, but a bundle of eight pieces is 6 inches thick).

b. The pieces constitute the “last bundle” for a presort destination and previously prepared bundles met the applicable minimum volume standard (e.g., 505 pieces prepared in 10 50-piece bundles and one five-piece bundle). [M020.1.7]

2.8 Labeling Bundles

Unless excepted by standard, the presort level of each bundle (other than carrier route bundles) must be identified either with an optional endorsement line under 708.7.0 or with a barcoded pressure-sensitive bundle label. Bundle labels must not be obscured by banding or shrinkwrap. The following colors and presort characters apply to bundle labels:

a. Five-digit presort level, red Label 5.

b. Three-digit presort level, green Label 3.

c. ADC presort level, pink Label A.

d. Mixed ADC presort level, tan Label X. [M020.1.3]

2.9 Use of Optional Endorsement Lines (OEL)

An optional endorsement line (OEL) may be used to label bundles instead of applying pressure-sensitive bundle labels or facing slips to the top piece under 708.7.0. [M013.1.1]

2.10 Use of Carrier Route Information Lines

Bundles for individual carrier routes, rural routes, highway contract routes, post office box sections, or general delivery units must be prepared with facing slips under 2.0, optional endorsement lines under 708.7.0, or carrier route information lines under 708.6.0. These standards apply to Enhanced Carrier Route Standard Mail mailings. Carrier route information lines may be on all pieces in a mailing, regardless of presort level. [M014.1.0]

2.11 Facing Slips—All Carrier Route Mail

All facing slips used on carrier route bundles must show this information:

a. Line 1: Destination city, two-letter state abbreviation, and 5-digit ZIP Code.

b. Line 2: Content (as appropriate to the class), followed by carrier route type and route number (e.g., “STD IRREG LOT CR R 012”).

c. Line 3: City and two-letter state abbreviation of the origin post office. [M020.3.0]

3.0 Sacks

3.1 Standard Containers

Mailings must be prepared in white sacks. Containers for Customized MarketMail are specified in 705.1.0. The following additional standards apply:

a. Palletized mail is also subject to 705.8.0.

b. A postmaster may authorize nonpostal containers for a small-volume presorted mailing if the mailing weighs no more than 20 pounds, consists primarily of mail or bundles of mail for local ZIP Codes, and requires no USPS transportation for processing. [M033.1.2]

3.2 Sack Preparation

All sack preparation is subject to these standards:

a. Each sack must bear the correct sack label.

b. The weight of a sack and its content must not exceed 70 pounds. [M033.2.4]

4.0 Sack Labels

4.1 Basic Standards

Only sack labels may be used for sacks; only tray labels may be used for trays. Machine-printed labels (available from the USPS) ensure legibility. Legible hand-printed labels are acceptable. Illegible labels are not acceptable. [M031.1.1]

4.2 Physical Characteristics of a Sack Label

A sack label must meet these specifications:

a. Color: white or manila.

b. Weight: 70-pound or heavier stock (optional).

c. Length (parallel to printing): 3.250 inches minimum; 3.375 inches maximum.

d. Height (perpendicular to printing): 0.937 inch minimum; 0.980 inch maximum. [M031.2.1]

4.3 Line 1 (Destination Line)

Line 1 (destination line) must meet these standards:

a. *Placement.* Line 1 must be the first visible line on the label. It must be completely visible and legible when placed in the label holder. This visibility is ensured if the top of this line is no less than 1/8 (0.125) inch below the top of the label when the label is cut and prepared.

b. *Information.* Line 1 must contain only the information specified by standard, including the appropriate destination facility prefix (e.g., “ADC”). Two zeros may follow the 3-digit ZIP Code prefix required by labeling standards (e.g., 223 as 22300).

c. *Overseas Military Mail.* On 5-digit sacks and trays for overseas military destinations, Line 1 shows, from left to right, “APO” or “FPO,” followed by “AE” (for ZIP Codes within the ZIP Code prefix range 090-098), “AA” (for ZIP Codes within the 3-digit ZIP Code prefix 340), or “AP” (for ZIP Codes within the ZIP Code prefix range 962-966), followed by the destination 5-digit ZIP Code of the mail in the sack or tray. [M031.1.2]

4.4 Line 2 (Content Line)

Line 2 (content line) must meet these standards:

a. *Placement:* Line 2 must be the second visible line on the label. This line must show the class and processing category of the mail in the sack and other information as specified by standards. [M031.1.3]

b. *Codes:* The codes shown below must be used as appropriate on Line 2 of sack labels:

CONTENT TYPE	CODE
Carrier Route	C (type of route)
Carrier Routes	CR-RT or CR-RTS
Digit	D
General Delivery Unit	G
Highway Contract Route	H
Irregular Parcels	IRREG
Machinable	MACH
Mixed	MXD
Mixed Machinable and Irregular Parcels	MACH & IRREG
Post Office Box Section	B
Rural Route	R
Standard Mail	STD
Working	WKG

[M031.5.0]

4.5 Line 3 (Office of Mailing or Mailer Information Line)

Line 3 (office of mailing or mailer information line) must be the bottom line of required information and must show either the city and state of the entry post office or the mailer's name and the city and state of the mailer's location. It is recommended that the mailer's name also appear with the city and state of the entry post office. [M031.1.4]

4.6 Abbreviations for Lines 1 and 3

Lines 1 and 3 may contain abbreviated information if such abbreviations are those in the USPS City State Product or in Publication 65, *National Five-Digit ZIP Code and Post Office Directory*. [M031.1.6]

4.7 Placement of Extraneous Information

Extraneous information is not permitted on the destination and content lines. It may be placed away from required lines, subject to these conditions:

a. It may be placed above Line 1 in not more than 0.083 inch high type (6-point type).

b. It may appear to the right of required Line 3 information but it must not consist of numerals that resemble a ZIP Code or 3-digit ZIP Code prefix.

c. It must not appear between Lines 1 and 2 (a blank line is permitted), but may appear between Lines 2 and 3 if it does not consist of numerals that resemble a ZIP Code or 3-digit ZIP Code prefix.

d. It may appear below Line 3.

e. A mailer code assigned by the USPS or such words as “Mailer,” “From” (or “FR”), or “Entered at” may appear before the required information on Line 3. [M031.1.5]

4.8 Barcoded Sack Labels

4.8.1 Basic Standards for Barcoded Sack Labels

Barcoded sack labels are not required on Presorted Standard Mail parcel mailings. If used, they must meet these general standards:

a. Barcoded tray labels and sack labels must not be interchanged. Tray labels must be used only for trays, and sack labels must be used only for sacks.

b. Mailer-produced barcoded labels must meet the standards in 708.6.0.

c. All information on barcoded labels must be machine-printed. Alterations to preprinted barcoded labels (e.g., handwritten changes) may not be made.

d. Barcoded labels must be inserted completely into the label holder on the tray or sack to prevent their loss during transport and processing. [M032.1.1]

4.8.2 Physical Characteristics of a Barcoded Sack Label

A barcoded sack label must meet these specifications:

a. Color: white or manila.

b. Reflectance: minimum reflectance requirements in 708.6.3.3i., *Barcode*.

c. Weight: minimum 70-pound paper stock (500 sheets, 24 by 36 inches).

d. Height: 0.937 inch minimum; 0.980 inch maximum.

e. Length: 3.250 inches minimum; 3.375 inches maximum. [M032.3.1]

5.0 Preparation for Presorted Parcels

5.1 Basic Standards

All mailings and all pieces in each mailing at Regular Standard Mail and Nonprofit Standard Mail nonautomation rates are subject to specific preparation standards in 5.3, *Preparation of Machinable Parcels*, and 5.4, *Preparation for Irregular Parcels*, and to these general standards:

a. All pieces must meet the standards for basic eligibility in 443.2.0 through 443.4.0 in *Rates and Eligibility* and specific eligibility in 443.5.0. Nonprofit Standard Mail must meet the additional eligibility standards in 703.1.0.

b. Pieces in each mailing must be all machinable parcels or all irregular parcels as defined in 401.1.0, unless prepared under 5.3.1.

c. All pieces must meet the applicable general preparation standards in 1.0 through 4.0, 708.7.0, *Optional Endorsement Lines (OEL)*, 708.6.0, *Barcoding Standards for Container Labels*, and 708.6.0, *Barcoding Standards for Container Labels*.

d. All pieces in the mailing must meet the specific sortation and preparation standards in 5.0 or the palletization standards in 705.8.0.

e. Sortation determines rate eligibility as specified in 443.5.0, *Additional Eligibility Standards for Presorted Standard Mail Parcels*. [M610.1.1]

5.2 Markings

Subject to the marking standards in 402.2.0, *Placement and Content of Markings*, regular Standard Mail pieces must be marked "Presorted Standard" (or "PRSRT STD") and Nonprofit Standard Mail pieces must be marked "Nonprofit Organization" (or "Nonprofit Org." or "Nonprofit"). Regular and Nonprofit Standard Mail pieces must not be marked "ECRLOT," "ECRWSH," "ECRWSS," or "Single-Piece" (or "SNGLP"). [M610.1.1c1]

5.3 Preparation of Machinable Parcels

5.3.1 5-Digit Sacks

5-digit scheme (optional) and 5-digit sacks containing both machinable and irregular parcels must be prepared under 5.4.2, *Bundling and Labeling*. Any 5-digit scheme (optional) and all possible 5-digit sacks must be prepared in a mailing including pieces claimed at the 3/5 rate. If any 5-digit scheme (optional) and all possible 5-digit sacks are not prepared when there are 10 pounds or more of mail for that destination, the 3/5 rate may not be claimed for any part of the mailing. If the scheme sort is used, it need not be done for all 5-digit scheme destinations. [M610.6.1]

5.3.2 Sacking and Labeling

Preparation sequence, sack size, and labeling:

a. 5-digit scheme (optional); 10-pound minimum except under 5.3.1; labeling:

   1. Line 1: L606, Column B.
   2. Line 2: "STD MACH 5D SCHEME" or "STD MACH 5D SCH."

b. 5-digit (optional); 10-pound minimum except under 5.3.1; labeling:

   1. Line 1: city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code destination of pieces, preceded for military mail by correct prefix under 4.0, *Sack Labels*.
   2. Line 2: "STD MACH 5D."

c. ASF (optional), allowed only for mail deposited at an ASF to claim DBMC rate; 10-pound minimum; labeling:

   1. Line 1: L602, Column B. DBMC rate eligibility determined by Exhibit 446.3.1, *BMC/ASF—DMBC Rate Eligibility*.
   2. Line 2: "STD MACH ASF."

d. BMC (required); 10-pound minimum; labeling:

   1. Line 1: L601, Column B. DBMC rate eligibility determined by Exhibit 446.3.1, *BMC/ASF—DMBC Rate Eligibility*.
   2. Line 2: "STD MACH BMC."

e. Mixed BMC (required); no minimum; labeling:

   1. Line 1: "MXD" followed by L601, Column B information for BMC serving 3-digit ZIP Code prefix of entry post office.

2. Line 2: "STD MACH WKG." [M610.6.2]

5.4 Preparation for Irregular Parcels

5.4.1 Required Bundling

[02-03-05] Except as provided in 5.4.3, *Bundling Exceptions*, and 5.4.5, *Loose Packing*, bundling is required before sacking. A bundle must be prepared when the quantity of addressed irregular parcels for a required presort level reaches the required minimum bundle size. Irregular parcels of nonuniform thickness must be prepared in accordance with 5.4. Irregular parcels of uniform thickness (e.g., printed publications) and exceeding either 15 inches in length or 12 inches in height also must be bundled and sacked in accordance with 5.4 using the alternate labeling lists as specified in 5.4.8, *Sacking and Labeling*, or placed on pallets under 705.8.0. Smaller volumes are not permitted except for mixed ADC bundles and bundles prepared under 5.4.4, *Commingling Irregular Parcel Mailings*. [M610.5.1]

5.4.2 Bundling and Labeling

Preparation sequence, bundle size, and labeling:

a. 5-digit (required); 10-piece minimum; red Label 5 or optional endorsement line (OEL).

b. 3-digit (required); 10-piece minimum; green Label 3 or OEL.

c. ADC (required); 10-piece minimum; pink Label A or OEL.

d. Mixed ADC (required); no minimum; tan Label X or OEL. [M610.5.2]

5.4.3 Bundling Exceptions

Bundling is not required for irregular parcels under any of these conditions:

a. The parcels are 1/2 inch thick or greater and placed in a sack to the same destination to which they would otherwise be bundled (e.g., in a 3-digit sack rather than a 3-digit bundle).

b. The parcels are so large that 10 or fewer fill a sack.

c. The parcels are in a 5-digit scheme or 5-digit sack containing both machinable and irregular parcels. Sacks containing both machinable and irregular parcels may not be prepared to other presort levels. [M610.5.3]

5.4.4 Commingling Irregular Parcel Mailings

Business Mailer Support (BMS) (see 608.8.1 for address) may authorize the commingling of several permit imprint mailings of irregular parcels to achieve a finer presort if the payment of proper postage can be documented. BMS may waive minimum quantity standards for preparation of 5-digit and 3-digit presort destination bundles if doing so results in a finer preparation of at least 50% of the mail. [M610.5.4]

5.4.5 Loose Packing

District managers may authorize loose packing of unbundled irregular parcels to fill Number 3 sacks if no parcels in a sack would be more finely sorted if bundled. Parcels must be faced and packed to remain oriented in transit. The total weight of sacks containing such parcels may not exceed 70 pounds. Requests for loose packing must be made in advance through the post office of mailing. [M610.5.5]

5.4.6 Required Sacking

Except as provided in 5.4.7, *Drop Shipment*, a sack must be prepared when the quantity of mail for a required presort destination reaches either 125 pieces or 15 pounds of pieces, whichever occurs first, subject to these conditions:

a. For identical-weight pieces, mailers must apply these methods:

   1. Pieces weighing 1.92 ounces (0.12 pound) or less must be prepared using the 125-piece minimum.

   2. Pieces weighing more than 1.92 ounces must be prepared using the 15-pound minimum.

b. For nonidentical-weight pieces, mailers must apply either one of these methods:

   1. The minimum that applies to the average piece weight for the entire mailing is used. The net weight of the mailing is divided by the number of pieces, and the resulting average single-piece weight is used to determine whether the 125-piece or 15-pound minimum applies.

   2. The actual piece count or mail weight for each sack is used, if documentation can be provided with the mailing that shows for each sack the number of pieces and the total weight.

c. The accompanying postage statement must indicate whether the 125-piece minimum, the 15-pound minimum, or both minimums are applied. [M610.5.6]

5.4.7 Drop Shipment

A mailer using Priority Mail or Express Mail to drop ship Standard Mail irregular parcels may prepare sacks containing fewer than 125 pieces or less than 15 pounds of mail. [M610.5.7]

5.4.8 Sacking and Labeling

Preparation sequence, sack size, and labeling:

a. 5-digit scheme (optional), as applicable:

   1. Irregular parcels: 125-piece or 15-pound minimum; labeling for Line 1, L606, Column B; for Line 2, “STD IRREG 5D SCHEME” or “STD IRREG 5D SCH.”

   2. Commingled machinable and irregular parcels: no minimum; labeling for Line 1, L606, Column B; for Line 2, “STD MACH-IRREG 5D SCH.”

b. 5-digit (required), as applicable:

   1. Irregular parcels: 125-piece or 15-pound minimum; labeling for Line 1, city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code on mail (see 4.3 for overseas military mail); for Line 2, “STD IRREG 5D.”

   2. Commingled machinable and irregular parcels: 10-pound minimum; labeling for Line 1, city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code on mail (see 4.3 for overseas military mail); for Line 2, “STD MACH-IRREG 5D.”

c. 3-digit (required); 125-piece or 15-pound minimum; labeling:

   1. Line 1: L002, Column A.

2. Line 2: “STD IRREG 3D.”

d. Origin 3-digit(s) (required) and entry 3-digit(s) (optional); one-bundle minimum (for origin or entry); labeling:

1. Line 1: L002, Column A.
2. Line 2: “STD IRREG 3D.”

e. ADC (required); 125-piece or 15-pound minimum; labeling:

1. [02-03-05] Line 1: L603, Column B (recommended use of L004 when sacking pieces of uniform thickness; required use of L004 for such pieces effective May 15, 2005).
2. Line 2: “STD IRREG ADC.”

f. Mixed ADC (required); no minimum; labeling:

1. [02-03-05] Line 1: L604, Column B (recommended use of L009 when sacking pieces of uniform thickness; required use of L009 for such pieces effective May 15, 2005).
2. Line 2: “STD IRREG WKG.” [M610.5.8]

6.0 Preparation for Enhanced Carrier Route Parcels

6.1 Basic Standards

All mailings and all pieces in each mailing at Enhanced Carrier Route Standard Mail and Nonprofit Enhanced Carrier Route Standard Mail nonautomation rates are subject to specific preparation standards in 6.4, *Bundling*, and 6.5, *Preparation for Irregular Parcels*, and to these general standards:

a. All pieces must meet the standards for basic eligibility in 443.2.0 through 443.4.0 in *Rates and Eligibility* and specific eligibility in 443.6.0, *Additional Eligibility Standards for Enhanced Carrier Route Standard Mail Parcels*. Nonprofit Enhanced Carrier Route Standard Mail must meet the additional eligibility standards in 703.1.0.

b. All pieces in each mailing must be either all machinable parcels or all irregular parcels as defined in 401.1.0, unless excepted by standard.

c. All pieces must meet the applicable general preparation standards in 1.0 through 4.0, and the following:

1. Pieces must be sequenced according to 6.6 and 6.7.
2. Pieces with a simplified address format must meet the standards in 602.3.0, *Use of Alternative Addressing*.

d. All pieces in the mailing must meet the specific sortation and preparation standards in 6.0 or the palletization standards in 705.8.0.

e. Sortation determines rate eligibility as specified in 443.6.0. [M620.1.1]

6.2 Marking

Subject to the marking standards in 402.2.0, Enhanced Carrier Route Standard Mail pieces must be marked “Presorted Standard” (or “PRSRT STD”), and Nonprofit Enhanced Carrier Route Standard Mail pieces must be marked “Nonprofit Organization” (or “Nonprofit Org.” or “Nonprofit”). All pieces must also be marked “ECRLOT” for basic rate, “ECRWSH” for high density rate, or “ECRWSS” for saturation rate. [M620.1.1c1]

6.3 Residual Pieces

Pieces not sorted as a carrier route mailing must be prepared as a separate mailing at Standard Mail automation or Presorted rates. [M620.1.5]

6.4 Bundling

6.4.1 General Carrier Route Bundle Preparation

Only carrier route bundles are prepared. [M620.2.1]

6.4.2 Bundle Preparation

Bundle size: carrier route; required (10-piece minimum). Carrier route bundle labels are based on the sack level in which placed:

a. No label is required if the bundle is placed in a correctly labeled carrier route tray or sack.

b. Bundles in 5-digit carrier routes sacks must have a facing slip unless the pieces in the bundle show a carrier route information line or an optional endorsement line. [M620.2.2]

6.4.3 Bundles and Sacks With Fewer Than the Minimum Number of Pieces Required

A bundle with fewer than 10 pieces and a less-than-full a sack with fewer than 125 pieces *and* less than 15 pounds of pieces may be prepared to a carrier route when the saturation rate is claimed for the contents and the applicable density standard is met. [M620.1.3]

6.5 Preparation for Irregular Parcels

6.5.1 Sack Minimums

A sack must be prepared when the quantity of mail for a required presort destination reaches either 125 pieces or 15 pounds of pieces, whichever occurs first, subject to these conditions:

a. For identical-weight pieces, a single-piece weight of 1.92 ounces (0.12 pound) results in 125 pieces weighing 15 pounds. Identical-weight pieces weighing 1.92 ounces (0.12 pound) or less must be prepared using the 125-piece minimum; those that weigh more must be prepared using the 15-pound minimum.

b. For nonidentical-weight pieces, mailers must either use the minimum that applies to the average piece weight for the entire mailing (divide the net weight of the mailing by the number of pieces; the resulting average single-piece weight determines whether the 125-piece or 15-pound minimum applies) or

sack by the actual piece count or mail weight for each sack, if documentation can be provided with the mailing that shows (specifically for each sack) the number of pieces and their total weight.

c. Mailers must note on the accompanying postage statement whether they applied the 125-piece ("PCS") or 15-pound ("WT") threshold or the method in 6.5.1b ("BOTH"). [M620.5.1]

6.5.2 Sacking and Labeling

Preparation sequence, sack size, and labeling:

a. Carrier route: required (minimum of 125 pieces/15 pounds).

   1. Line 1: city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code on mail (see 4.3 for overseas military mail).

   2. Line 2: "STD IRREG WSS" or "STD IRREG WSH" or "STD IRREG LOT" as applicable, followed by the route type and number.

b. 5-digit carrier routes: required (no minimum).

   1. Line 1: city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code on mail (see 4.3 for overseas military mail).

   2. Line 2: "STD IRREG CR-RTS." [M620.5.2]

6.6 Delivery Sequence Standards

6.6.1 Basic Standards

Mailpieces for which a walk-sequence discount is claimed must be organized in the delivery sequence determined by the USPS and prepared as a carrier route mailing under 6.0 and the standards below. Pieces prepared with a simplified address must also meet the corresponding standards. [M050.1.1]

6.6.2 Missing Addresses

Some mailpieces cannot be sequenced because an exact match for a name or address cannot be obtained. These pieces may be included in a sequenced mailing only if they are placed behind or after the sequenced mail. Arrange these pieces:

a. Alphabetically by complete street name, then either in ascending order by ZIP+4 code sector segments or numerically in ascending order by primary address.

b. Numerically for numbered streets, then either in ascending order by ZIP+4 code sector segments or numerically in ascending order by primary address. [M050.1.2]

6.6.3 Updating Walk Sequence Information—General

Walk-sequence rate pieces prepared with other than a simplified address format under 6.6.4 must be sequenced using USPS data from one of the following sources, issued within 90 days before the mailing date:

a. The Computerized Delivery Sequence (CDS) file.

b. The Delivery Sequence File, Second Generation (DSF^2).

c. Delivery sequence information from USPS address sequencing services, as requested by the customer. [M050.2.2]

6.6.4 Updating Walk Sequence Information for Simplified Addressing

Walk-sequence rate pieces prepared with a simplified address must be based on delivery stop information obtained within 90 days before the mailing date, either from the Delivery Statistics File or from the postmaster of the destination office. [M050.2.1]

6.6.5 Out-of-Date Walk Sequence Information

Mailings prepared with out-of-date walk-sequencing information are not eligible for walk-sequence rates. [M050.2.3]

6.6.6 Updating Line-of-Travel Sequence Information

Unless the mail is prepared in carrier walk sequence, line-of-travel (LOT) sequence is required for mailings at Standard Mail Enhanced Carrier Route basic rates. LOT sequence is not an exact walk sequence but a sequence of ZIP+4 codes arranged in the order that the route is served by a carrier. (First the ZIP+4 groups are sequenced, then the addresses within each are identified as being in ascending or descending order.) The USPS eLOT product provides a list of the ZIP+4 codes each carrier route serves, identifies the order in which they are delivered, and provides an indicator specifying whether the addresses that share the same ZIP+4 code must be sorted in ascending or descending order. When a range of ZIP+4 codes on the same carrier route are assigned the same sequence number, the addresses bearing those ZIP+4 codes must be arranged in ascending ZIP+4 code order before the sequence number is assigned. LOT information must be updated within 90 days before the date of mailing. [M050.2.4]

6.7 Delivery Sequence Documentation

6.7.1 General Standards

The postage statement must be annotated in the “Carrier Route Sequencing Date” block on page 1. The mailer must annotate the postage statement to show the earliest (oldest) date of the method used to obtain sequencing information for the mailing. The mailer’s signature on the postage statement certifies that this standard has been met when the corresponding mail is presented to the USPS. The mailer must maintain documentation to substantiate compliance with the standards for carrier route sequencing. Unless submitted with each corresponding mailing, the mailer must be able to provide the USPS with documentation (if requested) of accurate sequencing or delivery statistics for each carrier route to which pieces are mailed. Acceptable forms of documentation are:

a. The invoice showing that the addresses came from CDS.

b. DSF^2 invoice or documentation.

c. Copies of the delivery unit summaries that served as the mailer's bills for address sequencing service charges.

d. Evidence of receipt of information from postmasters for simplified address mailings (see 509.1.0, *Address Information System Products*).

e. Form 3553 showing the date of the eLOT product used, or the date from the USPS Qualification report produced by presort software. [M050.3.1]

6.7.2 High Density

For each Standard Mail carrier route to which high density rate mail is addressed, the mailer must document the total number of addressed pieces to the route. If there are fewer than 125 addressed pieces for a given route, the documentation also must show the number of possible deliveries on the route. [M050.3.2]

6.7.3 Saturation Density—Simplified Address Mail

For each carrier route to which mail with a simplified address is sent at the saturation rate, the mailer must be able to document that the mailing meets the applicable density standard. This documentation must show the total number of active possible deliveries and the total number to which mailpieces in the mailing are being addressed, by 5-digit ZIP Code and, within each, by carrier route. It must be submitted with each applicable mailing. [M050.3.3]

6.7.4 Saturation Density—Other Mail

For each carrier route to which mail without a simplified address is sent at the saturation rate, the mailer must be able to document that the mailing meets the applicable density standards. This documentation must show either the total number of active possible *residential* deliveries and the number and percentage to which mailpieces are addressed, or the total number of *all* active possible deliveries and the number and percentage to which mailpieces are addressed, depending on whether qualification is based on the 90% or 75% criterion, respectively. The documentation must be listed by 5-digit ZIP Code and, within each, by carrier route. It must be submitted with each applicable mailing. [M050.3.4]

6.7.5 Both Rates

If a mailing contains pieces qualifying for high density and saturation walk-sequence rates, the documentation required may be combined. Entries for pieces at the high density rate must be so annotated on the documentation. For the entire mailing, a summary of the total number of pieces at each rate must be provided. This documentation must be submitted with each applicable mailing. [M050.3.5]

6.7.6 Carrier Route Rate

If a mailing includes high density and saturation rate and basic carrier route rate pieces, in addition to the applicable information required by 6.7.2 through 6.7.5, the documentation for the basic carrier route rate mail must show, by 5-digit ZIP Code and, within each, by carrier route, the total number of addressed pieces at each rate for each carrier route to which pieces are addressed. Pieces qualifying for the basic carrier route rate must be so annotated. For the entire mailing, a summary by 5-digit ZIP Code of the total number of pieces at each rate must be provided. This documentation must be submitted with each applicable mailing to meet the documentation standard for the carrier route rate. [M050.3.6]