455 Mail Preparation

Overview

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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

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 (e.g., automation, nonautomation carrier route, and other nonautomation) 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. [M011.1.4]

1.3 Terms for Presort Level

Terms used for presort levels are defined as follows:

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

b. *5-digit scheme (pallets and sacks) for Standard Mail parcels and Package Services 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.

c. *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).

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

e. *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 Parcel Post 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. 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.

e. 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.

f. *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.

g. An *overflow sack for Parcel Select (Parcel Post) DSCF rate mail* is a 5-digit scheme or 5-digit sack prepared with fewer than seven pieces after all other sacks for that same 5-digit scheme or 5-digit ZIP Code area are prepared with seven or more pieces per sack as required by 4.0, *Preparation for Parcel Post*. If all of the mail is sacked under 4.0, only one overflow sack is permitted for each 5-digit scheme or 5-digit ZIP Code. If a mailing is prepared on pallets, remaining pieces of Parcel Post mail may be prepared in one or more 5-digit scheme or 5-digit overflow sacks only after one or more 5-digit scheme or

5-digit pallets are prepared to meet the minimum pallet requirement specified in 705.8.0. Pieces in overflow sacks qualify for the Parcel Select (Parcel Post) DSCF rates.

h. An *overflow pallet in a Parcel Select (Parcel Post) DSCF rate mailing* is a 5-digit scheme or 5-digit pallet containing pieces that remain after one or more 5-digit scheme or 5-digit pallets have been prepared to meet the minimum pallet requirement specified in 705.8.0. Only one overflow pallet per 5-digit scheme or 5-digit ZIP Code area is permitted for Parcel Select (Parcel Post) DSCF rate mail palletized under 705.8.0. Pieces on overflow pallets qualify for the DBMC rates.

i. 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. [M011.1.3]

2.0 Sacks

2.1 Maximum Weight

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. [M033.1.1]

3.0 Sack Labels

3.1 Basic Standards

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

3.2 Physical Characteristics of a Sack Label

A sack label must meet these specifications:

a. Color: white or manila.

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

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

3.3 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]

3.4 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 or tray 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
Nonbarcoded	NON BC (sacks) NBC (pallets and cotrayed or cosacked mail under 705.9.0)
Package Services	PSVC
Parcels	PARCELS
Post Office Box Section	B
Rural Route	R
Scheme	SCH
Working	WKG

[M031.5.0]

3.5 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]

3.6 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]

3.7 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]

3.8 Barcoded Sack Labels

3.8.1 Basic Standards for Barcoded Sack Labels

Barcoded labels are not required for Parcel Post. 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]

3.8.2 Physical Characteristics of Barcoded Sack Labels

A barcoded sack label must meet these specifications:

a. Color: white or manila.

b. Reflectance: minimum reflectance requirements in 708.6.3.3i..

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]

4.0 Preparation for Parcel Post

4.1 Basic Standards

4.1.1 General

All mailings at Parcel Post rates are subject to these general standards:

a. Each mailing must meet the applicable standards in 401, 402, 453, 455 and 456.

b. All pieces that are palletized must be prepared under 705.8.0.

c. There are no presort, sacking, or labeling standards for single-piece rate Parcel Post. [M710.1.1]

4.1.2 Parcel Post Marking

Marking requirements for Parcel Post are as follows:

a. Destination Entry Rate Mail. Each piece mailed at a DBMC, DSCF, or DDU Parcel Post rate must bear the marking “Parcel Post” (or “PP”) or “Parcel Select” in the postage area as described under 402.2.2.1. If “Parcel Select” is shown in the postage area, then no other marking is required. If “Parcel Post” (or “PP”) is shown in the postage area, then the additional marking “Drop Ship” (or “D/S”), or “Parcel Select,” or both, must be placed on each piece in either the postage area or the address area (as described under 402.1.3) to indicate that the piece was entered at a destination entry rate.

b. Other Parcel Post Mail. Pieces must bear the marking “Parcel Post” (or “PP”) in the postage area as described under 402.2.2.1. [M710.1.2]

4.1.3 Separation

Except for mail entered at DSCF or DDU rates (which are not zoned rates), Parcel Post pieces must be separated by zones when presented for acceptance unless either the correct postage is affixed to each piece or the mailing is prepared under 4.1.4, *Commingled Zones*, or the mailing is presented under a special postage payment system under 705.2.0, *Manifest Mailing System (MMS)*, 705.3.0, *Optional Procedure (OP) Mailing System*, or 705.4.0, *Alternate Mailing System (AMS)*. If DSCF sacks prepared under 4.5.2 are included in the same mailing as DSCF pallets prepared under 705.8.19.1e., then at the time of acceptance the mailer must separate the sacks that are overflow from palletized mail from those sacks that were prepared under the provisions of 4.5.2. [M710.1.3]

4.1.4 Commingled Zones

Zoned Parcel Post pieces need not be separated by zones when presented for verification, other than as individual pieces or with full correct postage affixed to each piece, subject to this section. Nonidentical-weight pieces not bearing the full correct postage may not be commingled unless authorized by the BMS manager. The mail must be prepared and documented under either of the following:

a. 705.2.0, *Manifest Mailing System (MMS)*, or 705.4.0, *Alternate Mailing System (AMS)*; or

b. All of these conditions:

1. A unique number is assigned to each sack/pallet in the mailing and printed on a separate line at the top of the sack/pallet label (above the Line 1 information).

2. A detailed list accompanies each mailing or mailing segment, sequenced numerically by the numbers assigned to sacks/pallets in the mailing, that shows the post office where the mail is to be entered (entry post office), a unique identifier for the mailing or mailing segment that also appears on the corresponding postage statement(s), the name and address of the mailer, the permit number (if applicable), the date of mailing, individual line entries for each sack/pallet, and the total number of pieces to each zone and in the entire mailing or mailing segment. Line entries for sacks/pallets containing mail for only one zone must show the sack/pallet number, the sortation level, the zone for which the mail is destined, and the total number of pieces for the sack/pallet. Entries for sacks/pallets containing mail for more than one zone must also show (by zone) the number of pieces to each 3-digit ZIP Code area and the total number of pieces for that zone for the sack/pallet. Mailings are not accepted if there are discrepancies between the information in the detailed listing or on the postage statement and the results of USPS random verification of piece counts and postage. [M710.1.4]

4.2 Basic Standards for BMC Presort

The BMC Presort per piece discount applies to pieces of Inter-BMC Parcel Post sorted to BMC destinations under L601 for machinable pieces and sorted to BMC and ASF destinations for nonmachinable pieces under L605. To qualify, machinable pieces must be placed in pallet boxes on pallets, and nonmachinable pieces must be placed directly on pallets under 705.8.0. The mail must be entered at a postal facility that is not a BMC and must be part of a mailing containing 50 or more Parcel Post rate pieces. [E711.2.2]

4.3 Basic Standards for OBMC Presort

The origin bulk mail center (OBMC) Presort per piece discount applies to pieces of Inter-BMC Parcel Post sorted to BMC destinations under L601 for machinable pieces and sorted to BMC and ASF destinations for nonmachinable pieces under L605. To qualify, machinable pieces must be placed in pallet boxes on pallets; and nonmachinable pieces must be placed directly on pallets under 705.8.0. The mail must be entered at a BMC listed in L601 and must be part of a mailing containing 50 or more Parcel Post rate pieces. [E711.2.2]

4.4 Parcel Select—DBMC Rates

For DBMC rates, see 456.2.2.2, *DBMC Rates*. [E751.1.3]

4.5 Parcel Select—DSCF Rates

4.5.1 General

To qualify for DSCF rates, pieces must be for the same SCF area under L005 and must be prepared as follows:

a. Sorted to optional 5-digit scheme destinations under L606, Column B, and 5-digit destinations, either in sacks or directly on pallets or in pallet boxes. Pieces must be part of a mailing of at least 50 Parcel Post pieces. They must be entered at the designated SCF under L005 that serves the 5-digit ZIP Code destinations of the pieces except when palletized and entry is required at a BMC (see Exhibit 456.2.6, *BMC Deposit of DSCF Rate Pallets*). The DSCF rate is not available for palletized mail for facilities that are unable to handle palletized mailings. Refer to the Drop Shipment Product available from the National Customer Support Center (NCSC) (see 608.8.1) and Exhibits 456.2.7, *Delivery Facility Exceptions to the "Majority of City Carriers" Rule*, and 456.2.8, *Delivery Facilities Different From Those in the Drop Shipment Product*, to determine if the facility serving the 5-digit destination can handle pallets. There is a charge for the Drop Shipment Product.

b. Any remaining nonmachinable parcels (as defined in 401.2.3.2) sorted to 3-digit ZIP Code prefixes in L002, Column C. Machinable parcels may not be sorted to the 3-digit level. [M710.2.1]

4.5.2 Sacking and Labeling

Sacking requirements for DSCF rates are as follows:

a. Only 5-digit scheme and 5-digit sacks are permitted.

b. Each 5-digit scheme and 5-digit sack must contain a minimum of seven pieces. Machinable and nonmachinable pieces may be combined in the same sack to meet this requirement. One overflow sack per 5-digit ZIP Code is permitted (no piece minimum).

c. 5-digit scheme sack labeling: Line 1, use L606, Column B; for Line 2, "PSVC PARCELS 5D SCH."

d. 5-digit sack labeling: Line 1, use city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code on mail (see 3.3 for overseas military mail); for Line 2, "PSVC PARCELS 5D."

e. 3-digit nonmachinable sack labeling: Line 1, use L002, Column A; for Line 2, "PSVC IRREG 3D."

f. See 705.8.0 for option to place 5-digit scheme and 5-digit DSCF sacks and 3-digit nonmachinable sacks on an SCF pallet. [M710.2.2]

4.6 Parcel Select—DDU Rates

The requirements for DDU rates are as follows:

a. For the DDU rate, pieces must be part of a mailing of at least 50 Parcel Post pieces.

b. The pieces must be entered by the mailer at the postal facility where the carrier delivers the parcels (delivery unit) as defined in 456.2.1.

c. There are no minimum sacking or pallet preparation standards. DDU rate mailings may be bedloaded, sacked, placed directly on pallets, or placed in pallet boxes on pallets. Machinable and nonmachinable pieces may be combined in the same sack or on the same pallet (including pallet boxes on pallets).

d. If the delivery unit serves more than one 5-digit ZIP Code, the pieces must be separated by 5-digit ZIP Code when unloaded, unless prepared as optional 5-digit scheme sacks or pallets. Refer to the Drop Shipment Product available from the National Customer Support Center (see 608.8.1) and Exhibit 456.2.7, *Delivery Facility Exceptions to the "Majority of City Carriers" Rule*, and Exhibit 456.2.8, *Delivery Facilities Different From Those in the Drop Shipment Product*, to determine the location of the delivery unit, whether it serves more than one 5-digit ZIP Code, and whether it can handle pallets. There is a charge for the Drop Shipment Product.

e. Sacked mail must be labeled as follows:

1. 5-digit scheme: Line 1, L606; Line 2, "PSVC PARCELS 5D SCH."
2. 5-digit: Line 1, city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code on mail (see 3.3c for overseas military mail); Line 2, "PSVC PARCELS 5D." [M710.3.0]

4.7 Optional Machinable Parcel Preparation

4.7.1 Basic Standards

Mailers may opt to prepare Parcel Post machinable parcels in sacks under 4.7.2 or on pallets under 705.8.0. Pieces must be separated by zones when presented to the USPS unless either the correct postage is affixed to each piece or the mailing is prepared under 4.1.4, *Commingled Zones*. [M710.4.1]

4.7.2 Sack Preparation

Sack size, preparation sequence, and Line 1 labeling:

a. 5-digit scheme: optional (minimum of 10 pieces or 20 pounds); for Line 1, use L606, Column B.

b. 5-digit: required (minimum of 10 pieces or 20 pounds); for Line 1, use city, state and 5-digit ZIP Code destination of pieces (see 3.3c for military mail).

c. ASF: optional; allowed only for mail deposited at an ASF to claim the DBMC rate (minimum of 10 pieces or 20 pounds); for Line 1, use L602, Column B. Exhibit 456.2.2.2 determines DBMC rate eligibility.

d. BMC: required (minimum of 10 pieces or 20 pounds); for Line 1, use L601, Column B. Exhibit 456.2.2.2 determines DBMC rate eligibility.

e. Mixed BMC: required (no minimum); for Line 1, use "MXD" followed by the L601, Column B information for the BMC serving the 3-digit ZIP Code prefix of the entry post office. [M710.4.2]

4.7.3 Sack Line 2

Line 2:

a. 5-digit scheme: "PSVC MACH 5D SCHEME" or "PSVC MACH 5D SCH."

b. 5-digit: "PSVC MACH 5D."

c. ASF: “PSVC MACH ASF.”

d. BMC: “PSVC MACH BMC.”

e. Mixed BMC: “PSVC MACH WKG.” [M710.4.3]

5.0 Standards for Barcoded Discounts

5.1 Standards for Barcoded Mail

The barcoded discount applies to Parcel Post (including Parcel Select) machinable parcels (401.1.5) that bear a correct, readable barcode under 708.5.0 for the ZIP Code of the delivery address; are part of a mailing of 50 or more Parcel Post (including Parcel Select) rate pieces; are not mailed at the DSCF or DDU rates; and, if claiming the DBMC rates, are not entered at an ASF. An exception is that properly prepared machinable pieces of DBMC rate mail entered at the Phoenix, AZ, ASF may claim the barcoded discount because that facility uses barcode scanning equipment. [E711.2.2]