

## 235 Mail Preparation

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### 1.0 General Definition of Terms

#### 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.

#### 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 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, automation carrier route, and 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.
- b. First-Class Mail. Cards and letters must be prepared as separate mailings except that they may be sorted together if each meets separate minimum volume requirements. The types of First-Class Mail listed below must not be part of the same mailing despite being in the same processing category:
  1. Automation rate and any other type of mail.
  2. Presorted rate and any other type of mail.
  3. Single-piece rate and any other type of mail.
  4. Machinable and nonmachinable pieces.

#### 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 (trays) for automation letters*: the ZIP Code in the delivery address on all pieces is one of the 5-digit ZIP Code areas processed by the USPS as a single scheme, as shown in the USPS City State Product.
- d. *3-digit*: the ZIP Code in the delivery address on all pieces begins with the same three digits (see [L002](#), Column A).
- e. *Unique 3-digit*: the ZIP Code in the delivery address on all pieces begins with the same three digits, and that the 3-digit prefix is so identified in [L002](#), Column A.
- f. *3-digit scheme*: the ZIP Code in the delivery address on all pieces begins with one of the 3-digit prefixes processed by the USPS as a single scheme, as shown in [L003](#).
- g. *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.
- h. *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.
- i. *ADC/AADC*: all pieces are addressed for delivery in the service area of the same area distribution center (ADC) or automated area distribution center (AADC) (see [L004](#) or [L801](#)).
- j. *Mixed [ADC, AADC, etc.]*: the pieces are for delivery in the service area of more than one ADC, AADC, 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.

#### 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* letter tray is one in which faced, upright pieces fill the length of the tray between 75% and 100% full.
- c. A *less-than-full* letter tray is one that contains mail for the same destination regardless of quantity or whether a full tray was previously prepared for that destination. Less-than-full trays may be prepared only if permitted by the standards for the rate claimed.

- d. An *overflow* letter tray is a less-than-full tray that contains all pieces remaining after preparation of full trays for the same destination. Overflow trays may be prepared only if permitted by the standards for the rate claimed.
- e. A *5-digit scheme sort for automation letters* yields 5-digit scheme trays for those 5-digit ZIP Codes identified in the USPS City State Product and 5-digit trays for other areas. Mail prepared using 5-digit scheme sort must be entered no later than 90 days after the release date of the City State Product used to obtain the scheme information (see [708.3.0, Coding Accuracy Support System \(CASS\)](#)). The 5-digit ZIP Codes in each scheme are treated as a single presort destination subject to a single minimum volume, with no further separation by 5-digit ZIP Code required. Trays 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; need not be used for all 5-digit ZIP Codes that are part of a scheme; and is available only for automation rate letter-size First-Class Mail.
- f. A *3-digit scheme sort* yields 3-digit scheme trays for those 3-digit ZIP Code prefixes listed in [L003](#) and 3-digit trays for other areas. The 3-digit ZIP Code prefixes in each scheme are treated as a single presort destination subject to a single minimum tray volume, with no further separation by 3-digit prefix required. Trays prepared for a 3-digit scheme destination that contain pieces for only one of the schemed 3-digit areas are still considered 3-digit scheme sorted and are labeled accordingly. The 3-digit scheme sort is required for automation rate letter-size First-Class Mail.
- g. An *origin 3-digit* (or *origin 3-digit scheme*) tray 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 must be prepared for each.
- h. 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.
- i. 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.



- j. *Entry [facility]* (or *origin [facility]*) refers to the USPS mail processing facility 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, the post office of entry determines the *entry* facility. *Entry SCF* includes both single-3-digit and multi-3-digit SCFs.
- k. 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.
- l. 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 (e.g., pieces prepared in trays and identified by separator cards or tic marks). Bundle preparation is described in [2.0, Bundles](#).
- m. A *tic mark* is defined as a solid black rectangle that must be printed on both the front side (extending over the top) and back side (flap side) of the envelope. Tic marks may be used in lieu of separator cards for First-Class Mail automation mailings. Tic marks must be printed on the top edge of the first mailpiece in each carrier route grouping during the mailpiece production process and must meet the following specifications:
  - 1. Color: black.
  - 2. Reflectance and Contrast Ratio: The tic mark must meet the reflectance and contrast ratio specifications in [708.4.4, Reflectance](#).
  - 3. Location: The tic mark must extend along the top edge of the envelope, to the left of center line of the envelope. Its location must be referenced to the center line. The right edge of the tic mark must be 0.5 inch (+ 0.125 inch) from the center line of the envelope.
  - 4. Size: The width of the tic mark must be 0.5 inch (+ 0.125 inch). The tic mark must extend over the top of the envelope, down each side a distance of 0.25 inch (+ 0.125 inch). When a second tic mark is used to indicate a tray break at the end of the tray, all specifications are the same as for one tick mark, except for the location on the envelope. When a second tic mark is used on the last piece in a tray to indicate a tray break, the right edge of the second tic mark must be 0.5 inch (+ 0.125 inch) from the left edge of the first tic mark.
- n. 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 due to applicable preparation requirements or the size of the individual pieces as described in [2.3](#).

## 2.0 Bundles

### 2.1 Definition of a Bundle

Mailers assemble pieces available for different presort destinations into groups. A *bundle* is a group of addressed pieces secured together as a unit. The term *bundle* does not apply to pieces grouped or prepared loose in trays.

### 2.2 Arranging Pieces in a Bundle (“Facing”)

All pieces in a bundle must be “faced” (arranged with the addresses in the same read direction), with an address visible on the top piece.

### 2.3 Preparing Bundles

Cards and letter-size pieces are subject to these bundling standards:

- a. The maximum thickness for bundles of carrier route rate mail is 4 inches. The maximum thickness for other bundles is 6 inches.
- b. Mailings consisting entirely of card-size pieces (i.e., pieces not larger than 4-1/4 by 6 by 0.016 inch) must always be prepared in bundles.
- c. Bundles must be prepared for mail in all less-than-full trays and 3-digit carrier routes trays; for nonmachinable Presorted First-Class Mail; and for First-Class Mail pieces where the mailer has requested “manual only” processing.
- d. Separator cards or tic marks *must* be used instead of bundling for letter-size pieces in full 5-digit trays of automation carrier route First-Class Mail. The cards must be of paper or card stock, at least 0.25 inch higher than the highest pieces in the mailing, and in front of the corresponding groups of mail. The tic mark must be applied during the mailpiece production process and be printed on the top edge of the envelope, to the left of the center line of the envelope. Each tic mark must have its location referenced to the center line. The right edge of the tic mark must be 0.5 inch (+ 0.125 inch) from the center line of the envelope. The width of the tic mark must be 0.5 inch (+ 0.125 inch). The tic mark must extend over the top of the envelope, down each side a distance of 0.25 inch (+ 0.125 inch). In trays of tic-marked mail, all mailpieces must be the same dimension so that the tic marks are visible.
- e. For mailings consisting entirely of card-size pieces and mail in less-than-full trays, mailers must secure bundles with rubber bands, elastic strapping, flat plastic strapping, or string. Elastic strapping must be approved by USPS Engineering. If requested, the mailer must be able to show such approval for the strapping material used for a mailing.
- f. Bundles up to 1 inch thick must be secured with appropriate banding placed once around the girth (narrow dimension). Bundles over 1 inch thick must be secured with at least two bands, one around the length and one around the girth.

### 2.4 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.



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- 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 [2.3f, Preparing Bundles](#), 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.

#### **2.5 Exception to Bundle Preparation—Full Single-Sort-Level Trays**

In mailings not entirely of card-size pieces (i.e., pieces not larger than 4-1/4 by 6 by 0.016 inch), mailers need not prepare bundles when placing mail in a full tray and none of the mail in that tray would have been more finely sorted if bundled. For example, the content of a full ADC tray need not be bundled if it would have all been prepared in ADC bundles to the same destination.

#### **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).

#### **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 if 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).

#### **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. On letter-size mail (including card-size pieces), the bundle label must be placed in the lower left corner of the address side of the top piece in the bundle. 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.

**2.9 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, Bundles](#), optional endorsement lines under [708.7.0](#), or carrier route information lines under [708.6.0](#). These standards apply to automation carrier route First-Class Mail. Carrier route information lines may be on all pieces in a mailing, regardless of presort level.

**2.10 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, followed by carrier route type and route number (e.g., “FCM LTRS CR R 012”).
- c. Line 3: City and two-letter state abbreviation of the origin post office.

**3.0 Letter Trays****3.1 Standard Containers**

Mailings must be prepared in letter trays with sleeves. However, 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.

**3.2 Letter Tray Sizes**

These approximate measurements define the tray sizes that apply to all letter-size mail preparation standards:

- a. 2-foot managed mail (MM) trays: 21 inches long by 10 inches wide (inside bottom dimensions) by 4-5/8 inches high.
- b. 1-foot MM trays: 10-1/4 inches long by 10 inches wide (inside bottom dimensions) by 4-5/8 inches high.
- c. 2-foot extended MM (EMM) trays: 21-3/4 inches long by 11-1/2 inches wide (inside bottom dimensions) by 6-1/8 inches high.

**3.3 Letter Tray Preparation**

Letter trays are prepared as follows:

- a. Subject to availability of equipment, standard MM trays must be used for all letter-size mail, except that EMM trays must be used when available for letter-size mail that exceeds the inside dimensions of MM trays defined in [3.2, Letter Tray Sizes](#). When EMM trays are not available for those larger pieces, they must be placed in MM trays, angled back, or placed upright perpendicular to the length of the tray in row(s) to preserve their orientation.
- b. Pieces must be “faced” (oriented with all addresses in the same direction with the postage area in the upper right).



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- c. Each tray prepared must be filled before filling the next tray, with the contents in multiple trays relatively balanced. When preparing full trays, mailers must fill all possible 2-foot trays first; if there is mail remaining for the presort destination, mailers must use a combination of 1-foot and 2-foot trays that results in the fewest total number of trays for that presort level. As an alternative, if there is mail remaining, mailers may move those pieces to the next higher presort level at which there is a minimum quantity (e.g., 150 pieces).
- d. For presort destinations that do not require full trays, pieces are placed in a less-than-full tray.
- e. Mailers must use as few trays as possible without jeopardizing rate eligibility. For instance, a mailer will never have two 1-foot trays to a single destination; instead, that mail must be placed in a single 2-foot tray. A 1-foot tray is prepared only if it is a full tray with no overflow; or if there is less than 1 foot of mail for that destination; or if the overflow from a full 2-foot tray is less than 1 foot of mail.
- f. Each tray must bear the correct tray label.
- g. Each tray must be sleeved and strapped under [3.4, Tray Sleevling and Strapping](#), and [3.5, Strapping Exception](#).
- h. If a mailing is prepared using an MLOCR/barcode sorter and is submitted with standardized documentation, then pieces do *not* have to be grouped by 3-digit ZIP Code prefix (or by 3-digit scheme, if applicable) in AADC trays, or by AADC in mixed AADC trays.

#### **3.4 Tray Sleevling and Strapping**

Letter trays are secured using USPS-provided sleeves. Each sleeved letter tray must then be secured with one plastic strap placed tightly around the length of the tray without crushing the tray or sleeve.

#### **3.5 Strapping Exception**

If the processing and distribution manager gives a written waiver, strapping is not required for any mixed AADC letter tray of First-Class Mail or for any letter tray that originates and destines in the same SCF (mail processing plant) service area.

#### **3.6 Origin/Entry 3-Digit/Scheme Trays**

After all finer sort levels are prepared, an origin/entry 3-digit tray (or, if applicable, origin/entry 3-digit scheme tray) must be prepared to contain any remaining mail for each 3-digit (or 3-digit scheme) area serviced by the SCF serving the post office where the mail is verified (origin), and may be prepared for each 3-digit (or 3-digit scheme) area served by the SCF/plant where mail is entered (if that is different from the SCF/plant serving the post office where the mail is verified). In all cases, only one less-than-full tray may be prepared for each 3-digit (or 3-digit scheme) area.

## 4.0 Tray Labels

### **4.1 Basic Standards**

Tray labels are subject to these basic standards:

- a. Use 2-inch labels.
- b. Illegible labels are not acceptable. Machine-printed labels (available from the USPS) ensure legibility. Legible hand-printed labels are acceptable.
- c. Tray labels for automation rate mailings are subject to [4.9.1, Basic Standards for Barcoded Tray Labels](#), and [708.6.0](#).

#### 4.2 Physical Characteristics of a Tray Label

A tray label must meet these specifications:

- a. Color: white or manila.
- b. Weight: minimum 70-pound stock (500 sheets, 24 by 36 inches).
- c. Height (perpendicular to printing): 1.860 inches minimum; 2.015 inches maximum.
- d. Length (parallel to printing): 3.250 inches minimum; 3.515 inches maximum.
- e. Thickness: 0.005 inch minimum.

#### 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 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 tray.

#### 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 tray and other information as specified by standards.



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

| CONTENT TYPE   | CODE              |
|--|-------------------|
| Barcoded   | BC                |
| Barcoded and Nonbarcoded   | BC/NBC            |
| Carrier Route  | C (type of route) |
| Carrier Routes   | CR-RT or CR-RTS   |
| Digit  | D                 |
| First-Class Mail   | FCM               |
| General Delivery Unit  | G                 |
| Highway Contract Route   | H                 |
| Letters  | LTR or LTRS       |
| Machinable   | MACH              |
| Manual (cannot be processed on automated equipment or mailer requests manual processing) | MAN or MANUAL     |
| Mixed  | MXD               |
| Nonmachinable  | NON MACH          |
| Post Office Box Section  | B                 |
| Rural Route  | R                 |
| Working  | WKG               |

**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.

**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.

**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.

#### 4.8 Placement of Tray Label

A tray label must be securely placed in an adhesive-backed label holder that is affixed to the specific location designated on the tray. Where no specific location is indicated the label must be securely placed in an adhesive-backed label holder that is affixed horizontally to the top left corner of one end of the tray. Do not use tape. Insert labels completely into the label holder to ensure that they do not fall out during processing. Do not insert labels upside down.

#### 4.9 Barcoded Tray Labels

##### 4.9.1 Basic Standards for Barcoded Tray Labels

Barcoded tray labels must be used for automation-rate letter-size mailings. Barcoded labels must meet these general standards:

- a. Use 2-inch labels.
- 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. Mailers must insert barcoded labels completely into the label holder on the tray to prevent their loss during transport and processing.

## 5.0 Preparation for Nonautomation Letters

### 5.1 Basic Standards

#### 5.1.1 All Mailpieces

Each Presorted First-Class mailing must meet the applicable standards in [233.4.0](#), [Additional Eligibility Standards for Nonautomation First-Class Mail Letters](#), and in [235, Mail Preparation](#); All pieces must be in the same processing category, subject to [5.1.4, Cards and Letters](#), and must be sorted together and prepared under [5.3, Machinable Preparation](#), or [5.4, Nonmachinable Preparation](#). Letter-size pieces (including card-size pieces) must be prepared in letter trays.

#### 5.1.2 Single-Piece Rate Pieces Presented With Presort Mailings

**[1-4-07]** Regardless of postage payment method, mailers may present single-piece rate First-Class Mail with pieces claimed at automation or presort rates and report all pieces on the same postage statement. The following standards apply:

- a. The mailer must prepare the single-piece rate pieces in separate trays from the automation and presort pieces. As an option, mailers may label the trays with barcoded or nonbarcoded tray labels. Create barcoded tray labels under [708.6.0](#) using content identifier numbers 246, 260, or 268, as appropriate. Label barcoded and nonbarcoded trays as follows:
  - 1. Line 1: Use [L201](#); for mail originating in ZIP Code areas in Column A, use “MXD” followed by city, state, and 3-digit ZIP Code prefix in Column C (use “MXD” instead of “OMX” in the destination line and ignore Column B).



2. Line 2: For barcoded labels use the human-readable content line corresponding to the content identifier number (see [Exhibit 708.6.1.4](#)); for nonbarcoded labels use “FCM SNGLP WKG.”
  3. Line 3: Office of mailing or mailer information.
- b. The single-piece rate pieces must bear no rate marking or be marked “First-Class” or, if not affixed with full single-piece rate postage, “Single-Piece” (or “SNGLP”). See [202.3.0, Placement and Content of Mail Markings](#).
  - c. The mailer must affix additional postage to the single-piece rate pieces to yield the correct amount on each piece, or (if prepared with a corrective rate marking) the mailer must pay all additional postage at the time of mailing.

#### 5.1.3 Marking

Subject to [202.3.0, Placement and Content of Mail Markings](#), all pieces must be marked “Presorted” (or “PRSRT”) and “First-Class.”

#### 5.1.4 Cards and Letters

Pieces claimed at card rates and pieces claimed at letter rates are each subject to a separate minimum volume criterion whether prepared as separate or combined mailings. Either way, card-size and letter-size pieces may be presented at the same time and reported on the same postage statement.

### 5.2 Manual Only Option

Mailers who prefer that the USPS not automate letter-size pieces (including cards) must use the preparation sequence and tray labeling for nonmachinable pieces in [5.4](#).

### 5.3 Machinable Preparation

#### 5.3.1 Machinable Bundling

Machinable pieces are not bundled, except for (see [2.0, Bundles](#)):

- a. Card-size pieces.
- b. All pieces in a less-than-full origin 3-digit tray.
- c. All pieces in a less-than-full mixed AADC tray.

#### 5.3.2 Traying and Labeling

[12-7-06] Preparation sequence, tray size, and labeling:

- a. 5-digit (optional); full trays (no overflow); labeling:
  1. Line 1: city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code on mail (see [4.0, Tray Labels](#), for overseas military mail).
  2. Line 2: “FCM LTR 5D MACH.”
- b. 3-digit (required); full trays (no overflow), except for one less-than-full tray for each origin 3-digit(s); labeling:
  1. Line 1: L002, Column A.
  2. Line 2: “FCM LTR 3D MACH.”
- c. AADC (required); full trays (no overflow), with pieces grouped by 3-digit ZIP Code prefix; labeling:

1. Line 1: L801.
2. Line 2: "FCM LTR AADC MACH."
- d. Mixed AADC (required); no minimum, with pieces grouped by AADC; labeling:
  1. Line 1: Use L201; for mail originating in ZIP Code areas in Column A, use "MXD" followed by city, state, and 3-digit ZIP Code prefix in Column C (use "MXD" instead of "OMX" in the destination line and ignore Column B).
  2. Line 2: "FCM LTR MACH WKG."

## 5.4 Nonmachinable Preparation

### 5.4.1 Nonmachinable Bundling

Except as provided in [2.5, Exception to Bundle Preparation—Full Single-Sort-Level Trays](#), bundling is required before traying. A bundle must be prepared when the quantity of addressed pieces for a required presort level reaches a minimum of 10 pieces. Smaller volumes are not permitted except for mixed ADC bundles. Mailers who prefer that the USPS not automate letter-size pieces must also identify each bundle with a facing slip marked "MANUAL ONLY" or use a "MANUAL ONLY" optional endorsement line (see [708.7.0](#)). Preparation sequence, bundle size, and labeling:

- a. 5-digit (required); 10-piece minimum; red Label 5 or optional endorsement line (OEL); labeling not required for pieces in full 5-digit trays.
- 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.

### 5.4.2 Traying and Labeling

[12-7-06] Preparation sequence, tray size, and labeling:

- a. 5-digit (required); full trays (no overflow); labeling:
  1. Line 1: city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code on mail (see [4.0, Tray Labels](#), for overseas military mail).
  2. Line 2: "FCM LTR 5D MANUAL."
- b. 3-digit (required); full trays (no overflow), except for one less-than-full tray for each origin 3-digit(s); labeling:
  1. Line 1: L002, Column A.
  2. Line 2: "FCM LTR 3D MANUAL."
- c. ADC (required); full trays (no overflow); labeling:
  1. Line 1: L004, Column B.
  2. Line 2: "FCM LTR ADC MANUAL."
- d. Mixed ADC (required); no minimum; labeling:
  1. Line 1: Use L201; for mail originating in ZIP Code areas in Column A, use "MXD" followed by city, state, and 3-digit ZIP Code prefix in Column C (use "MXD" instead of "OMX" in the destination line and ignore Column B).



2. Line 2: "FCM LTR MANUAL WKG."

## 6.0 Preparation for Automation Rate Letters

### 6.1 Basic Standards

Mailers must prepare letter-size automation rate First-Class Mail under 6.0. Bundle and tray preparation are subject to 235. Use barcoded tray labels under 4.9 and 708.6.0.

### 6.2 Mailings

The requirements for mailings are as follows:

- a. General. All pieces in a mailing must meet the standards in 201.3.0, *Physical Standards for Automation Letters and Cards*, and must be sorted together to the finest extent required for the rate claimed except under 6.2c. The definitions of a mailing and permissible combinations are in 1.0, *General Definition of Terms*.
- b. First-Class. A single automation rate First-Class Mail mailing may include pieces prepared at carrier route, 5-digit, 3-digit, AADC, and mixed AADC rates.
- c. Regardless of the method of postage payment, pieces of single-piece rate First-Class Mail may be presented with and reported on the same postage statement as pieces claimed at automation or presort rates if the single-piece rate pieces are physically separated from other pieces; bear no rate marking, or are marked only "First-Class," or (if not affixed with full single-piece rate postage) are marked "Single-Piece" or "SNGLP" under 202.3.0, *Placement and Content of Mail Markings*, in addition to any other marking; and either have additional postage affixed to yield the correct amount on each piece or (if prepared with a corrective rate marking) have all additional postage paid at the time of mailing.

### 6.3 Marking

All automation rate pieces must be marked under 202.3.0, *Placement and Content of Mail Markings*, and 202.4.0, *Endorsement Placement*. Pieces claimed at an automation rate must bear the appropriate class marking and, except as provided in 202.3.0, *Placement and Content of Mail Markings*, and 202.4.0, *Endorsement Placement*, "AUTO" (or "AUTOOCR" for carrier route rate). Pieces not claimed at an automation rate must not bear "AUTO" or "AUTOOCR" unless single-piece rate postage is affixed or the corrective single-piece rate marking ("SNGLP" or "Single-Piece") is applied.

### 6.4 General Preparation

Grouping, bundling, and labeling are not generally required or permitted, *except* bundling is required in any mailing consisting entirely of card-size pieces and for pieces in overflow, less-than-full, and 3-digit carrier routes trays.

**6.5 Cards**

Pieces claimed at First-Class card rates and pieces claimed at First-Class letter rates are each subject to a separate minimum volume criteria whether prepared as separate or combined mailings. Either way, card-size and letter-size pieces may be presented at the same time and reported on the same postage statement.

**6.6 Carrier Route Traying Standards**

Carrier route groups (or bundles, if applicable) may be placed only in carrier route, 5-digit carrier routes, or 3-digit carrier routes trays. Preparation of mail to qualify for automation carrier route rates is optional for First-Class Mail under [233.5.0, Additional Eligibility Standards for Automation Rate First-Class Mail \(and Carrier Route\) Letters](#).

**6.7 Carrier Route Pieces**

Grouping size, preparation sequence, and labeling: carrier route (only); required (10-piece minimum); use an optional endorsement line under [708.7.0](#) or carrier route information line under [708.6.0](#). Group pieces by carrier route in full 5-digit carrier routes trays, using separator cards or tic marks under [1.0, General Definition of Terms](#), not bundling. Bundle pieces by carrier route in less-than-full 5-digit carrier routes trays and in all 3-digit carrier routes trays.

**6.8 Tray Preparation**

[12-7-06] Preparation sequence, tray size, and Line 1 labeling:

- a. Carrier route: optional, but required for rate eligibility (full trays); no overflow; for Line 1, use city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code destination of pieces, preceded for military mail by the prefixes under [4.0, Tray Labels](#).
- b. 5-digit carrier routes (carrier route pieces/bundles only): required for rate eligibility if full tray, optional with minimum one 10-piece bundle; for Line 1, use city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code destination of bundles, preceded for military mail by the prefixes under [4.0, Tray Labels](#).
- c. 3-digit carrier routes (carrier route bundles only): optional with minimum one 10-piece bundle for each of two or more 5-digit areas; for Line 1, use the city, state, and ZIP shown in [L002](#), Column A, that corresponds to the 3-digit ZIP Code prefix of bundles.
- d. 5-digit/scheme: optional, but 5-digit trays required for rate eligibility (150-piece minimum); overflow allowed; for Line 1, for 5-digit trays, use city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code destination of pieces, preceded for military mail by the prefixes under [4.0, Tray Labels](#); for Line 1, for optional 5-digit scheme trays, use destination shown in the current USPS City State Product.
- e. 3-digit/scheme: required (150-piece minimum except no minimum for required origin/optional entry 3-digit(s)/scheme); overflow allowed; for Line 1, use [L002](#), Column B.
- f. AADC: required (150-piece minimum); overflow allowed; group pieces by 3-digit ZIP Code prefix (or 3-digit/scheme if applicable); for Line 1, use [L801](#), Column B.



235.6.9

- g. Mixed AADC: required (no minimum); group pieces by AADC. For Line 1 use [L201](#); for mail originating in ZIP Code areas in Column A, use “MXD” followed by city, state, and 3-digit ZIP Code prefix in Column C (use “MXD” instead of “OMX” in the destination line and ignore Column B).

### 6.9 Tray Line 2

Line 2: “FCM LTR” and:

- a. Carrier route: “CR BC,” followed by route type and number.
- b. 5-digit carrier routes: “5D CR-RT BC.”
- c. 3-digit carrier routes: “3D CR-RT BC.”
- d. 5-digit scheme: “BC 5D SCHEME.”
- e. 5-digit: “5D BC.”
- f. 3-digit scheme: “BC SCHEME” and, if applicable, as shown in [L002](#), Column B, followed by the letter “A,” “B,” or “C.”
- g. 3-digit: “3D BC.”
- h. AADC: “AADC BC.”
- i. Mixed AADC: “BC WKG.”

### 6.10 Presentation

Upon presentation of letter-size automation rate First-Class Mail mailings to USPS for verification, mailers must present all mixed AADC trays together, and such trays must either be adjacent to one another, or side by side, and must be placed as the top layer(s) on any given container. Containerization instructions for First-Class Mail letters and cards may be established by local USPS managers.