233 Rates and Eligibility

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1.0 Rates and Fees for First-Class Mail

1.1 Rate Application

Postage is based on the letter rate that applies to the weight of each addressed piece.

1.2 Rate Computation for First-Class Mail Letters

First-Class Mail letter rates are charged per ounce or fraction thereof; any fraction of an ounce is considered a whole ounce. For example, if a piece weighs 1.2 ounces, the weight (postage) increment is 2 ounces. The minimum postage per addressed piece is that for a piece weighing 1 ounce.

1.3 Presorted and Automation Rates for Cards and Letters

Weight Not Over (ounces)	Automation				Nonautomation
	5-Digit	3-Digit	AADC	Mixed AADC	Presorted[1]
1	$0.312	$0.334	$0.341	$0.360	$0.373
2	0.437	0.459	0.466	0.485	0.543
3	0.562	0.584	0.591	0.610	0.713
3.5	0.687	0.709	0.716	0.735	0.883[2]
Card Rate[3]	0.191	0.204	0.208	0.220	0.241

1. Letters that meet one or more of the nonmachinable characteristics in DMM 201.1.2 are subject to the nonmachinable surcharge.
2. The maximum weight for machinable letter preparation is 3.3 ounces.
3. The card rate applies to each single or double postcard when originally mailed; reply half of double postcard must be designed for reply mail purposes only.

1.4 Nonmachinable Surcharge

Surcharge per Presorted rate piece (see 201.2.1, *Criteria for Nonmachinable Letters*, and 4.3, *Nonmachinable Surcharge for Letter-Size Pieces*): $0.17.

1.5 Presort Mailing Fee

Presort mailing fee, per 12-month period, per office of mailing: $175.00.

1.6 Computing Postage for First-Class Mail

Determine single-piece weight and weight (postage) increment for each addressed piece as prescribed in 1.7 and 1.2, *Rate Computation for First-Class Mail Letters*. For First-Class Mail, affix postage to each piece under 234.2.2, *Affixed Postage for*

Presorted First-Class Mail, or, for permit imprint mailings, multiply the number of addressed pieces at each rate increment (and in each rate category, if applicable) by the corresponding postage rate, add the *unrounded* products, and round off the total postage to the nearest whole cent.

1.7 Determining Single-Piece Weight

To determine single-piece weight in any mailing of nonidentical-weight pieces, weigh each piece individually. To determine single-piece weight in a mailing of identical-weight pieces, weigh a sample group of at least 10 randomly selected pieces and divide the total sample weight by the number of pieces in the sample. Express all single-piece weights in decimal pounds rounded off to four decimal places.

2.0 Content Standards for First-Class Mail Letters

2.1 General

With the exception of restricted material as described in 601.8.0, any mailable item may be mailed as First-Class Mail.

2.2 Bills and Statements of Account

Bills and statements of account must be mailed as First-Class Mail (or Express Mail) and are defined as follows:

a. Bills and statements of account assert a debt in a definite amount owed by the addressee to the sender or a third party. In addition, bills include a demand for payment; statements of account do not include a demand for payment. The debt does not have to be due immediately but may become due at a later time or on demand. The debt asserted need not be legally collectible or owed.

b. Bills and statements of account do not need to state the precise amount due if they contain information that would enable the debtor to determine that amount.

2.3 Personal Information

Mail containing personal information must be mailed as First-Class Mail (or Express Mail). Personal information is any information specific to the addressee.

2.4 Handwritten and Typewritten Material

Mail containing handwritten or typewritten material must be mailed as First-Class Mail or Express Mail.

2.5 Matter Marked Postcard or Double Postcard

Any matter marked “Postcard” or “Double Postcard” must be mailed as First-Class Mail or Express Mail.

2.6 Matter Not Required to be Mailed as First-Class Mail

Matter eligible for Standard Mail or Package Services rates or authorized as Periodicals is not required to be mailed as First-Class Mail or Express Mail.

2.7 Prohibited Air Transportation

All First-Class Mail is subject to limitations for air transportation. Generally, all mailable matter may be transported by aircraft, unless restricted in 601.10.0, *Hazardous Materials*.

3.0 Basic Standards for First-Class Mail Letters

3.1 3.1 Description of Service

3.1.1 Service Objectives

First-Class Mail receives expeditious handling and transportation. Service objectives for delivery are 1 to 3 days; however, delivery time is not guaranteed.

3.1.2 Rate Options

First-Class Mail letters offer shape-based single-piece rates in 133.1.0 and discounted rates in 1.0 for presorted mailings of 500 or more pieces that weigh 3.5 ounces or less.

3.2 Defining Characteristics

3.2.1 Inspection of Contents

First-Class Mail is closed against postal inspection. Federal law and USPS regulations restrict both opening and reviewing the contents of First-Class Mail by anyone other than the addressee.

3.2.2 Forwarding Service

The price of First-Class Mail includes forwarding service to a new address for up to 12 months.

3.2.3 Return Service

The price of First-Class Mail includes return service if the mailpiece is undeliverable.

3.2.4 Extra Services Exclusive to First-Class Mail

First-Class Mail is the only class of mail eligible to receive the following extra services: Registered Mail service and Certified Mail service.

3.2.5 Additional Extra Services

Additional extra services available with First-Class Mail are certificate of mailing service, COD service, Delivery Confirmation service (parcels only), insured mail service (merchandise only), return receipt service, restricted delivery service, Signature Confirmation service (parcels only), and special handling. See information regarding extra services in 503.

3.3 Additional Basic Standards for First-Class Mail

All presorted First-Class Mail letters must:

a. Meet the basic content standards for First-Class Mail in 2.0.

b. Weigh 3.5 ounces or less.

c. Meet the applicable standards in 234, *Postage Payment and Documentation*, and 1.0, *Rates and Fees for First-Class Mail*.

d. Be part of a single mailing of at least 500 pieces of Presorted First-Class Mail.

e. Meet the applicable physical standards in:

1. 201.1.0, *Physical Standards for Machinable Letters and Cards*.
2. 201.2.0, *Physical Standards for Nonmachinable Letters*.
3. 201.3.0, *Physical Standards for Automation Letters and Cards*.

f. Bear a delivery address that includes the correct ZIP Code or ZIP+4 code and that meets these address quality standards:

1. The Move Update standard in 3.5.
2. The ZIP Code accuracy standard in 3.6.
3. If an alternative addressing format is used, the additional standards in 602.3.0.

3.4 Presort Mailing Fee

A First-Class Mail presort mailing fee must be paid once each 12-month period at each office of mailing by any person or organization entering mailings at automation or Presorted First-Class Mail rates. Payment of one fee allows a mailer to enter mail at all those rates. Persons or organizations paying this fee may enter mail of their clients as well as their own mail. The fee may be paid in advance only for the next 12 months and only during the last 60 days of the current service period. The fee charged is that which is in effect on the date of payment.

3.5 Move Update Standard

3.5.1 Basic Standards

The Move Update standard is a means of reducing the number of mailpieces in a mailing that require forwarding or return by the periodic matching of a mailer's address records with customer-filed change-of-address orders received and maintained by the USPS. For the purposes of this standard, *address* means a specific address associated with a specific occupant name. Addresses subject to the Move Update standard must meet these requirements:

a. Each address and associated occupant name used on the mailpieces in a mailing must be updated within 185 days before the mailing date, with one of the USPS-approved methods in 3.5.2.

b. Each individual address in the mailing is subject to the Move Update standard.

c. If an address used on a mailpiece in a mailing at one class of mail and rate is updated with an approved method (e.g., Address Change Service), the same address may be used during the following 185 days and meets the Move Update standard.

d. Except for mail bearing an alternative address format, addresses used on pieces claiming First-Class Mail Presorted rates, regardless of any required surcharge, must meet the Move Update standard.

3.5.2 USPS-Approved Methods

The following methods are authorized for meeting the Move Update standard:

a. Address Change Service (ACS).

b. National Change of Address Linkage System (NCOA^{Link}).

c. *FASTforward* MLOCR processes if used each time before mail entry. If a mailpiece that initially uses *FASTforward* MLOCR processing is rejected and then entered into a Direct View Encoding Desk (DVED) operation (or similar system), the piece does not meet the Move Update standard. The name and address information on the piece must then be processed through a *FASTforward* RVE system to meet the Move Update standard. *FASTforward* RVE processes also meet the Move Update standard if used each time before mail entry.

d. Mailer Move Update Process Certification and USPS-approved alternative methods for mailers with legitimate restrictions on incorporating USPS-supplied change-of-address information into their mailing lists. The National Customer Support Center (see 608.8.1 for address) administers and approves both Mailer Move Update Process Certification and alternative methods.

e. Ancillary service endorsements under 507.1.5.1, *First-Class Mail and Priority Mail*, except "Forwarding Service Requested."

3.5.3 Mailer Certification

The mailer's signature on the postage statement certifies that the Move Update standard has been met for each address in the corresponding mailing presented to the USPS.

3.6 ZIP Code Accuracy

3.6.1 Basic Standards

The ZIP Code accuracy standard is a means of ensuring that the 5-digit ZIP Code in the delivery address correctly matches the delivery address information. For the purposes of this standard, *address* means a specific address associated with a specific 5-digit ZIP Code. Addresses used on pieces claiming certain rates under 3.6.1d that are subject to the ZIP Code accuracy standard must meet these requirements:

a. Each address and associated 5-digit ZIP Code used on the mailpieces in a mailing must be verified and corrected within 12 months before the mailing date with one of the USPS-approved methods in 3.6.2.

b. Each individual address in the mailing is subject to the ZIP Code accuracy standard.

c. If an address used on a mailpiece in a mailing at one class of mail and rate is verified and corrected with an approved method, the same address may be used during the following 12 months to meet the ZIP Code accuracy standard required for mailing at any other class of mail and rate.

d. Except for mail bearing a simplified address, addresses used on pieces claiming First-Class Mail rates, regardless of any required surcharges, must meet the ZIP Code accuracy standard.

3.6.2 USPS-Approved Methods

The following methods are authorized for meeting the ZIP Code accuracy standard:

a. For computerized lists, Coding Accuracy Support System (CASS)-certified address matching software and current USPS City State Product, within a mailer's computer systems or through an authorized service provider.

b. For manually maintained lists or small computerized lists, options include the following:

1. Surveys of addressees on mailer's address list inquiring about the accuracy of ZIP Code information.
2. Any mailing list service in 507.6.0.
3. An authorized service provider.
4. CASS-certified matching software.
5. USPS Web site www.usps.com.

3.6.3 Mailer Certification

The mailer's signature on the postage statement certifies that the ZIP Code accuracy standard has been met for each address in the corresponding mailing presented to the USPS.

4.0 Additional Eligibility Standards for Nonautomation First-Class Mail Letters

4.1 Additional Standards for Machinable First-Class Mail

In addition to the standards in 3.0, *Basic Standards for First-Class Mail Letters*, all pieces in a First-Class Mail Presorted rate mailing must be marked, sorted, and documented as specified in 235.5.0, *Preparing Nonautomation Letters*.

4.2 Barcodes

Any POSTNET barcode on a mailpiece in a nonautomation First-Class mailing must be correct for the delivery address and meet the standards in 202.5.0, *Barcode Placement*, and 708.3.0, *Coding Accuracy Support System (CASS)* and 708.4.0, *Standards for POSTNET and Intelligent Mail Barcodes*.

4.3 Nonmachinable Surcharge for Letter-Size Pieces

The nonmachinable surcharge in 1.4 applies to letter-rate pieces (except card-rate pieces) that meet one or more of the nonmachinable characteristics in 201.2.1.

5.0 Additional Eligibility Standards for Automation Rate First-Class Mail Letters

5.1 Basic Standards for Automation First-Class Mail Letters

All pieces in a First-Class Mail automation rate mailing must:

a. Meet the basic standards for First-Class Mail in 3.0.

b. Be part of a single mailing of at least 500 pieces of automation rate First-Class Mail.

c. Meet the physical standards in 201.3.0, *Physical Standards for Automation Letters and Cards*.

d. Bear a delivery address that includes the correct ZIP Code, ZIP+4 code, or numeric equivalent to the delivery point barcode (DPBC) and that meets the address matching and coding standards in 5.4, *Address Standards for Barcoded Pieces*, and 708.3.0, *Coding Accuracy Support System (CASS)*.

e. Bear an accurate DPBC or Intelligent Mail barcode (see 708.4.3) matching the delivery address and meeting the standards in 202.5.0, *Barcode Placement*, and 708.4.0, *Standards for POSTNET and Intelligent Mail Barcodes*. Mailers must apply the barcode either on the piece or on an insert showing through a window.

f. Be marked, sorted, and documented as specified in 235.6.0, *Preparing Automation Rate Letters*, for letters and cards.

5.2 Maximum Weight for Automation Letters

Maximum weight for First-Class Mail automation letters is 3.5 ounces (0.2188 pound) (see 201.3.13.4, *Heavy Letter Mail*, for pieces heavier than 3 ounces).

5.3 Rate Application—Automation Cards and Letters

Automation rates apply to each piece that is sorted under 235.6.0 into the corresponding qualifying groups:

a. Groups of 150 or more pieces in 5-digit/scheme trays qualify for the 5-digit rate. Preparation to qualify for the 5-digit rate is optional. Pieces placed in full 3-digit/scheme trays in lieu of 5-digit/scheme overflow trays under 235.6.6 are eligible for the 5-digit rates.

b. Groups of 150 or more pieces in 3-digit/scheme trays qualify for the 3-digit rate. Pieces placed in full AADC trays in lieu of 3-digit/scheme overflow trays under 235.6.6 are eligible for the 3-digit rates.

c. Groups of fewer than 150 pieces in origin 3-digit/scheme trays and all pieces in AADC trays qualify for the AADC rate. Pieces placed in mixed AADC trays in lieu of AADC overflow trays under 235.6.6 are eligible for the AADC rates.

d. Pieces in mixed AADC trays qualify for the mixed AADC rate, except for pieces prepared under 5.3c.

5.4 Address Standards for Barcoded Pieces

5.4.1 Basic Address Standards for Barcodes

To qualify for automation rates, addresses must be sufficiently complete to enable matching to the current USPS ZIP+4 Product when used with current CASS-certified address matching software. Standardized address elements are not required. Any barcode that appears on a mailpiece claimed at an automation rate must be the correct barcode for the corresponding delivery address on the piece.

5.4.2 Numeric ZIP+4

A numeric ZIP+4 code must consist of five digits, a hyphen, and four digits.

5.4.3 Numeric Delivery Point Barcode (DPBC)

A numeric equivalent of the delivery point barcode (DPBC) consists of five digits followed by a hyphen and seven digits as specified in 202.5.5. The numeric equivalent is formed by adding three digits directly after the ZIP+4 code.

5.4.4 Address Elements

Addresses must include the correct street number, predirectional, street name, suffix, and postdirectional that are input to obtain a match with the current USPS ZIP+4 Product.

5.4.5 Firm Name

An address must include a firm name when necessary to obtain a match with the finest level of ZIP+4 code in the USPS ZIP+4 Product. If an address contains a firm name assigned a unique ZIP+4 code in the USPS ZIP+4 Product, the unique ZIP+4 code must be used. If the firm name is not one assigned a unique ZIP+4 code in the USPS ZIP+4 Product and the apartment/suite number is included in the address, the ZIP+4 code for the range in which the apartment/suite number appears must be used in that address. If the firm name does not correspond to a firm name that has a unique ZIP+4 code assigned in the USPS ZIP+4 Product and the apartment/suite number is not included in the address, the ZIP+4 code for the building must be used.

5.4.6 Secondary Designator

If a secondary address designator (e.g., an apartment number) is shown in the address, the mailpiece must show the appropriate ZIP+4 code representing the range for that secondary address as contained in the current USPS ZIP+4 Product. If a secondary address designator is required to obtain an exact match with the finest level of ZIP+4 code in the USPS ZIP+4 Product but the information is not available, the alternative ZIP+4 code or ZIP+4 or delivery point barcode for the building must be used.

5.4.7 P.O. Box

A post office box address must contain a post office box number that can be exactly matched with the USPS ZIP+4 Product in effect.

5.5 Reply Cards and Envelopes Enclosed in Automation Rate First-Class Mail

All letter-size reply cards and envelopes provided as enclosures in automation First-Class Mail and addressed for return to a domestic delivery address must meet the standards in 201.3.0, *Physical Standards for Automation Letters and Cards*, for enclosed reply cards and envelopes. The mailer must certify that this standard has been met when the corresponding mail is presented to the USPS.

6.0 Eligibility Standards for Card Rate First-Class Mail

6.1 Card Rate

A card may be a single or double (reply) stamped card or a single or double postcard. Stamped cards are available from USPS with postage imprinted on them. Postcards are commercially available or privately printed mailing cards. To be eligible for a card rate, a card and each half of a double card must meet the physical standards in 201.1.2 and the applicable eligibility and preparation standards for the

rate claimed. Ineligible cards are subject to letter-size rates. Cards may be prepared and mailed at the First-Class Mail single-piece card rate, Presorted card rate, or automation card rates.

6.2 Cards and Letters

Pieces claimed at card rates and pieces claimed at letter rates are subject to separate minimum volume criteria, but may be combined in the same mailing and reported on the same postage statement.