334 Postage Payment and Documentation

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1.0 Basic Standards for Postage Payment

1.1 Postage Payment Options

Postage for discount (presorted or automation) rate First-Class Mail must be paid with affixed postage (604.1.0 for stamps, 604.3.0 for precanceled stamps, or 604.4.0 for metered postage) or permit imprint (604.5.0) as specified in 2.0, *Postage Payment for Presorted Flats*, and 3.0, *Postage Payment for Automation Flats*. A permit imprint may be used for mailings of nonidentical-weight pieces only if authorized by Business Mailer Support at USPS Headquarters.

2.0 Postage Payment for Presorted Flats

2.1 Payment Methods for Presorted Rates

Presorted First-Class Mail rate postage must be paid with meter stamps under 604.4.0, permit imprints under 604.5.0, or precanceled postage under 604.3.0, subject to the corresponding standards for these methods. All pieces in a mailing must be paid with the same method unless otherwise permitted by standard or Business Mailer Support authorization.

2.2 Affixed Postage for Presorted First-Class Mail

Unless permitted by other standards or by Business Mailer Support, USPS Headquarters, when precanceled postage or meter stamps are used, only one payment method may be used in a mailing and each piece must bear postage under one of these conditions:

a. The full postage at the First-Class Mail rate for which it qualifies (no postage documentation is required).

b. A precanceled stamp or the full postage at the lowest First-Class Mail 1-ounce rate applicable to the mailing job, and full postage on metered pieces for additional ounce(s) or extra services.

c. Postage in an amount not less than the lowest available First-Class first-ounce letter or card rate (as applicable) in the mailing job if authorized by Business Mailer Support, plus full postage on metered pieces for any extra ounce(s); postage documentation may be required by standard.

2.3 Additional Postage

Additional postage for pieces not bearing sufficient postage when presented to the USPS must be paid before acceptance either using an advance deposit account or with a meter stamp affixed to the postage statement accompanying the mail. When the amount of postage affixed is subject to Business Mailer Support authorization under 2.2c, *Affixed Postage for Presorted First-Class Mail*, credit is not given for postage affixed in excess of the authorized amount.

3.0 Postage Payment for Automation Flats

3.1 Payment Methods

First-Class Mail automation rate postage must be paid with meter stamps, permit imprints, or precanceled stamps. All pieces in a mailing must be paid with the same method unless otherwise permitted by standard or Business Mailer Support authorization. Permit imprints may be used for mailings of nonidentical-weight pieces only if authorized by Business Mailer Support.

3.2 Affixing Postage for Automation Rate First-Class Mail

Unless permitted by other standards or Business Mailer Support authorization, when precanceled postage or meter stamps are used, only one payment method may be used in a mailing and each piece must bear postage under one of these conditions:

a. Each metered piece weighing more than 1 ounce must bear the correct additional postage to pay for the additional ounce(s).

b. Each piece must bear a precanceled stamp or meter postage in the exact amount or at the lowest rate applicable to pieces in the mailing job. If exact postage is not affixed, all additional postage must be paid at the time of mailing with an advance deposit account or with a meter stamp affixed to the required postage statement.

c. Documentation meeting the standards in 4.0 must be presented with the postage statement to show the number of pieces at each rate and the computation of the additional postage due for pieces not bearing full postage at the applicable rate (i.e., the difference between what the pieces bear and the correct postage at the rate for which each qualifies).

3.3 Nondenominated Precanceled Stamps

A mailer may use available nondenominated precanceled stamps if:

a. Stamps are affixed to *every* piece in the mailing.

b. Additional postage is paid at the time of mailing either by advance deposit account or by a meter stamp affixed to the back of the accompanying postage statement.

c. Documentation is presented with the postage statement showing, by 5-digit and 3-digit ZIP Code, the number of pieces at each rate and the computation of the additional postage due at the applicable rate (i.e., the difference between the value of the nondenominated stamp affixed and the correct postage at the rate for which each piece qualifies).

3.4 Lower Denomination Precanceled Stamps

A mailer may use precanceled stamps of a denomination less than the postage for the first ounce at the lowest rate in the mailing if:

a. The stamps do not bear an improper rate marking.

b. The same denomination of stamp is affixed to every piece in the mailing.

c. Additional postage is paid at the time of mailing either by advance deposit account or by a meter stamp affixed to the back of the accompanying postage statement.

d. Documentation is presented with the postage statement showing, by 5-digit and 3-digit ZIP Code, the number of pieces at each rate and the computation of the additional postage due at the applicable rate (i.e., the difference between the value of the stamps affixed and the correct postage at the rate for which each piece qualifies).

3.5 Postage Affixed at Lowest Rate to All Pieces

Where it is not practicable for the mailer to affix the exact postage to each piece or to affix the lowest postage rate to all pieces in the mailing, the mailer may compute postage for the mailing as if the lowest rate affixed to any piece in the mailing were affixed to all pieces. Additional postage is computed based on the difference between the lowest rate affixed to any piece in the mailing and the rate for each rate level in the mailing. This computation must be documented to meet the basic standards in 4.0, *Mailing Documentation*. No refund is paid for any piece where postage is affixed at a rate higher than the lowest rate claimed for or affixed to any piece. The total additional postage must be paid either by advance deposit account or by a meter stamp affixed to the back of the accompanying postage statement.

4.0 Mailing Documentation

4.1 Completing Postage Statements

Any mailing claiming a discount and all permit imprint mailings must be accompanied by a postage statement completed and signed by the mailer (in duplicate if the mailer wants a receipted copy). A change made to any postage statement requires the mailer (agent) to correct the postage statement accordingly and document the correction.

4.2 Basic Documentation Standards

Generally, documentation is required from a mailer when a mailing is presented to the USPS. Supporting documentation of postage is required unless the correct rate is affixed to each piece or each piece is of identical weight and the pieces are separated by rate when presented for acceptance. Documentation describes the preparation, rate levels, and content of the mailing; details the volume and postage data; and, by comparison with the actual mailing it describes, supports the claims contained on the postage statement accompanying the mailing and allows the USPS to verify its accuracy. Documentation must be submitted when specified for the rate claimed or postage payment method used.

4.3 Documentation Standards for Automation Mailings

A complete postage statement must accompany each mailing, supported by documentation produced by PAVE-certified (or MAC-certified) software or standardized documentation. Mailers may use a single postage statement and a single documentation report for all rate levels in a single mailing. Documentation of postage is not required if the correct rate is affixed to each piece or if each piece is of identical weight and the pieces are separated by rate when presented for acceptance.

4.4 Preparing Documentation

As provided by standard, documentation may be presented in abbreviated form or on computer-readable media. Required documentation must be presented with every mailing unless, by standard, it may be provided to support multiple mailings or mailings that are part of the same job or cycle.

4.5 Multiple Standards

If multiple documentation standards apply to the same mailing, only one set of documentation is necessary if it provides enough information to meet all applicable standards. Redundant or duplicate documentation is not required simply to meet individual standards.

4.6 Standard Format for Documentation

Documentation must be produced by software certified under the Presort Accuracy Validation and Evaluation (PAVE) program or the Manifest Analysis and Certification (MAC) program, appropriate for the accompanying class of mail and rate claimed, or the documentation must be prepared as standardized documentation according to this section. Standardized documentation contains the elements described in 708.1.0, as applicable. Documentation produced by PAVE-certified or MAC-certified software is considered standardized documentation.

4.7 Providing Additional Information

The postmaster of the office of mailing may require additional information if the documentation submitted does not allow the corresponding mailing to be verified. Failure to provide information is sufficient reason for the USPS to refuse a mailing. The mailer may appeal any determination to the PCSC under 607.2.0, *Rulings on Mailing Standards*.

4.8 Reporting Multiple Mailings on One Statement

Each group of pieces prepared as a separate mailing must be presented with a postage statement using the correct USPS form for the particular class, rate, and postage payment method. A mailer may report more than one mailing from a single job on the same postage statement if the mailings are presented at the same time for verification, the pieces are in the same processing category, each mailing separately meets all applicable eligibility standards, and the number of pieces in each mailing is separately reported on the postage statement.

4.9 Facsimile Postage Statements

Facsimile postage statements must contain data and elements in locations as close as possible to where they appear on the USPS form. Data fields that do not pertain to information and rates claimed in the mailing and other extraneous information that appears on the USPS form do not have to be included. Facsimiles must include

all other information pertaining to the mailing, including the class of mail (or subclass as appropriate), postage payment method (e.g., permit imprint), and four-digit form number (hyphen and suffix optional). All parts, and line numbers within each part, must reflect those on the USPS form. In some cases, this can include fields from multiple USPS forms onto a single facsimile. Most importantly, the facsimile must fully and exactly reproduce the “Certification” and “USPS Use Only” fields that appear on the USPS form. A facsimile postage statement produced by software certified by the USPS Presort Accuracy Validation and Evaluation (PAVE) or Manifest Analysis and Certification (MAC) program is considered a USPS-approved form for these standards. Others may be approved by the entry office postmaster.