

435 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 price 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.

1.2 Definition of Mailings

A “mailing” is defined as 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 must be prepared as a separate mailing.

1.3 Terms for Presort Levels

Terms used for presort levels are defined as follows:

- a. *5-digit scheme for First-Class Mail parcels*: the ZIP Code in the delivery address on all pieces begins with one of the 5-digit ZIP Code ranges processed by the USPS as a single scheme, as shown in [L606](#).
- b. *5-digit*: the delivery address on all pieces includes the same 5-digit ZIP Code.
- c. *3-digit*: the ZIP Code in the delivery address on all pieces begins with the same three digits (see [L002](#), Column A).
- d. *Origin/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. Separation is optional for each such 3-digit area regardless of the volume of mail.
- e. *ADC*: all pieces are addressed for delivery in the service area of the same area distribution center (ADC) (see [L004](#)).
- f. *Mixed [ADC]*: the pieces are for delivery in the service area of more than one ADC.



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 price claimed.
- c. An *origin/entry 3-digit sack* contains all mail (regardless of quantity) for a 3-digit ZIP Code area processed by the SCF in whose service area the mail is verified/entered.
- d. The *required quantity* (for example, “required at 10 pieces”) means that the unit must be prepared for the corresponding presort level whenever the specified quantity of mail is reached or exceeded. Smaller quantities may be prepared only if permitted by the standards for each price.
- e. *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.
- f. A “*logical*” *presort destination* represents the total number of pieces in a mailing that are eligible for a specific presort level based on the required sortation, but which might not be contained in a single container (sack or pallet) due to applicable preparation requirements or the size of the individual pieces.

2.0 Sacks

2.1 Presort

Presort, presort levels, and standard preparation terms are defined in [1.0](#).

2.2 Standard Containers

Mailings must be prepared in USPS-approved sacks. 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.

2.3 Sack Preparation

All sack preparation is subject to these standards:

- a. Each sack must bear the correct sack label.
- b. The weight of a sack and its content must not exceed 70 pounds.

3.0 Sack Labels

3.1 Basic Standards

Sack labels are subject to the following:

- a. Use 1-inch labels for sacks with metal 1-inch label holders/closures.

- b. Use 2-inch labels for sacks with 2-inch label holder pockets.
- c. Use 2-inch labels for sacks with dual plastic label holders/closures. One-inch labels may be used but are not recommended.
- d. Illegible labels are not acceptable. Machine-printed labels (available from the USPS) ensure legibility. Legible hand-printed labels are acceptable. Physical Characteristics of a Sack Label

A sack label must meet these specifications:

- e. Color: white or manila.
- f. Weight: 70-pound or heavier stock.
- g. Length (parallel to printing): 3.250 inches minimum; 3.515 inches maximum.
- h. Height (perpendicular to printing):
 - 1. For 1-inch labels: 0.937 inch minimum; 0.980 inch maximum.
 - 2. For 2-inch labels: 1.860 inches minimum; 2.015 inches maximum.

3.2 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.

3.3 Line 2 (Content Line)

Line 2 (content line) must meet these standards:

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



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

CONTENT TYPE	CODE
Digit	D
First-Class Mail	FCM
Mixed	MXD
Working	WKG

3.4 Line 3 (Origin Line)

Line 3 (origin line showing office of mailing or mailer information) must be the bottom line of required information unless the sack contains mail manifested using the Electronic Verification System (eVS) under [705.2.9](#). Line 3 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. As an alternative to adding a fourth line for eVS mailings as required by [3.5](#), "eVS" may appear as the first element on Line 3.

3.5 Electronic Verification System

All sacks containing parcels prepared and identified using the Electronic Verification System (eVS) under [705.2.9](#) must show "eVS" (or the alternatives "EVS" or "E-VS") directly below Line 3 using the same size and lettering used for Line 3. As an option, "eVS" may be placed as the first element on Line 3.

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.

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:

- It may be placed above Line 1 in not more than 0.083 inch high type (6-point type).
- 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.
- 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.
- It may appear below Line 3.
- 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.

4.0 Preparing Presorted Parcels

4.1 Basic Standards

Each Presorted First-Class Mail mailing must be prepared in USPS-approved sacks and marked “Presorted” (or “PRSRT”) and “First-Class.” All pieces must be sorted together and prepared under [4.3](#) and [4.4](#).

4.2 Single-Piece Mail Presented With Presorted Mailings

Regardless of the method of postage payment, single-piece (nonpresorted) First-Class Mail may be presented with and reported on the same postage statement as pieces claimed at presort prices as follows:

- a. The single-piece mail must be physically separated from other pieces.
- b. The single-piece mail must bear no price marking, or must be marked only “First-Class” or (if not affixed with full postage) “Single-Piece” or “SNGLP” under [202.3.0](#).
- c. The mailer must affix full correct postage to each piece of single-piece mail, or pay the additional postage at the time of mailing.

4.3 Bundling

Bundling is not permitted.

4.4 Sacking and Labeling

Preparation sequence, sack size, and labeling:

- a. 5-digit/scheme optional, but required for 5-digit price (see definition in [1.3a](#)); 10-pound minimum, labeling:
 1. Line 1: For 5-digit scheme sacks use [L606](#), Column B. For 5-digit sacks use city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code on mail (see [3.2c](#) for overseas military mail).
 2. Line 2: For 5-digit scheme sacks, “FCM PARCELS 5D SCH.” For 5-digit sacks, “FCM PARCELS 5D.”
- b. 3-digit optional, but required for 3-digit price; 10-pound minimum, except for optional origin/entry 3-digit(s); labeling:
 1. Line 1: [L002](#), Column A.
 2. Line 2: “FCM PARCELS 3D.”
- c. ADC (required); 10-pound minimum; labeling:
 1. Line 1: [L004](#), Column B.
 2. Line 2: “FCM PARCELS ADC.”
- 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 PARCELS WKG.”

