

## 323 Prices and Eligibility

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### 1.0 Prices and Fees

#### 1.1 Price Application

The following price applications apply:

- a. Except commercial plus items weighing up to 0.50 pound (see [1.1c](#)) and commercial plus cubic items (see [423.1.1d.](#)), Priority Mail mailpieces are charged per pound; any fraction of a pound is rounded up to the next whole pound. For example, if a piece weighs 0.75 pound, the weight (postage) increment is 1 pound.
- b. Flat-rate prices are not based on weight and zone but are charged a flat rate regardless of actual weight (up to 70 pounds) of the mailpiece and domestic destination.
- c. The minimum postage amount per addressed piece is the 1-pound price except commercial plus items weighing up to 0.50 pound. Charge the 0.50-pound price for commercial plus items up to 0.50 pound. Items over 0.50 pound are rounded up to the next whole pound. For example, if a commercial plus piece weighs 0.10 pound, the weight (postage) increment is 0.50 pound; if a piece weighs 0.75 pound, the weight (postage) increment is 1 pound.
- d. Priority Mail items mailed under a specific customer agreement are charged according to the individual agreement.

#### 1.2 Commercial Base Prices

For prices, see [Notice 123—Price List](#). The commercial base prices are available for:

- a. Click-N-Ship customers.
- b. Registered end-users of USPS-approved PC Postage products when using a qualifying shipping label managed by the PC Postage system used.
- c. Customers using permit imprint.
- d. Priority Mail Open and Distribute customers; see [423.1.3](#) and [705.17.0](#).
- e. Priority Mail mailpieces returned to Merchandise Return Service (MRS) permit holders (see [505.3.0](#)).
- f. Customers using USPS-approved IBI postage meters that print the IBI with the appropriate price marking (see [302.3.1](#)) and electronically transmit transactional data to the USPS.



### 1.3 Commercial Plus Prices

#### 1.3.1 Basic Eligibility

[4-17-11] For prices, see [Notice 123—Price List](#). Commercial plus prices are available to Priority Mail (including Critical Mail) customers who qualify for commercial base prices and whose cumulative account volume exceeds a combined total of 5,000 letter-size and flat-size pieces (including Flat Rate Envelopes, but not the Padded Flat Rate Envelope) or 75,000 total pieces (see [423](#)) in the previous calendar year (except Priority Mail Open and Distribute) or who have a customer commitment agreement with USPS, and are:

- a. Registered end-users of USPS-approved PC Postage products.
- b. Permit imprint customers.
- c. Priority Mail Open and Distribute (PMOD) customers (see [423.1.3](#) and [705.17.0](#)).
- d. MRS permit holders (see [423.1.3](#) and [505.3.0](#)).
- e. Customers using USPS-approved IBI postage meters that print the IBI with the appropriate price marking for commercial price items (see [302.3.1](#)) and electronically transmit transactional data daily to USPS for all mailpieces and mail categories.

#### 1.3.2 New Priority Mail Customers

[4-17-11] Commercial plus prices are available for new Priority Mail customers who have a customer commitment agreement with the USPS. Shippers must contact their account manager or the manager, Shipping Support, Shipping Services (see [608.8.0](#) for address) for additional information.

### 1.4 Critical Mail Prices

#### 1.4.1 Basic Eligibility

Critical Mail flat-size pieces are charged a flat rate regardless of domestic destination or weight for barcoded, automation flats up to 13 ounces. Critical Mail flat-size pieces that exceed 13 ounces in weight or exceed 3/4 inch thickness, or are not barcoded according to [3.2](#), will be charged the Priority Mail Commercial Plus Flat Rate Envelope price (volume thresholds apply). Critical Mail prices for flats are available to Critical Mail customers whose Priority Mail and Critical Mail volume exceeds a combined total of 5,000 letter-size and flat-size pieces (including Flat Rate Envelopes, but not the Padded Flat Rate Envelope), in the previous calendar year or who have a customer commitment agreement (see [1.4.2](#)) with USPS, and that are:

- a. Registered end-users of USPS-approved PC Postage products when using a qualifying shipping label managed by the PC Postage system used.
- b. Permit imprint customers.

#### 1.4.2 New Critical Mail Customers

The following requirements must be met for new Critical Mail customers:

- a. All customers using Critical Mail service must have a customer commitment agreement with USPS. Customers must contact their account manager or the Manager, Shipping Support, Shipping Services (see [608.8.1](#) for address) for agreement requirements.
- b. USPS-produced Critical Mail flat-size envelopes must be used and mailpieces must be authorized by the Manager, Integrated Business Solutions, Shipping Services (see [608.8.1](#) for address). Prior to the first mailing of Critical Mail items, the mailer must provide 10 preproduction mailpiece samples to the Manager, Integrated Business Solutions or designee for review and approval. Sample pieces must be packaged in USPS-produced Critical Mail flat-size envelopes; mailpieces must include the full range of the proposed contents that will be shipped; and mailpieces must bear applicable labels and barcodes (i.e. Intelligent Mail barcodes and Delivery Confirmation labels or Signature Confirmation labels).

## **1.5 Flat Rate Envelopes-Basic Standards**

Any amount of material may be mailed in a USPS-produced Priority Mail Flat Rate Envelope. For information about Priority Mail Flat-Rate Boxes, see [423](#).

### **1.5.1 Sealing Flat Rate Envelopes**

When sealing a Flat Rate Envelope, the container flaps must be able to close within the normal folds. Tape may be applied to the flaps and seams to reinforce the container; provided the design of the container is not enlarged by opening the sides and the container is not reconstructed in any way.

### **1.5.2 Flat Rate Envelopes-Price and Eligibility**

There are two types of USPS-produced Priority Mail Flat Rate Envelopes: A paper envelope and a padded envelope (for commercial plus only). Each type of USPS-produced Priority Mail Flat Rate Envelope is priced at a flat rate regardless of the actual weight (up to 70 pounds) of the mailpiece or domestic destination. See the [Notice 123—Price List](#) for applicable prices.

## **1.6 Hold For Pickup**

Under Hold For Pickup service, Priority Mail items are held at a designated Post Office location for pick up by a specified addressee or designee. Hold For Pickup service is not available for Critical Mail.

## **1.7 Pickup on Demand Fee**

The Pickup on Demand fee is charged per occurrence. This service may be combined with Express Mail, Package Services, and international mail pickups (see 507.6.0). See [Notice 123—Price List](#).

## **1.8 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. Except for Critical Mail and mailers using eVS, express all single-piece weights in decimal pounds rounded off to two decimal places. For Critical Mail, express single-piece weights in decimal pounds rounded off to four decimal places. Mailers using eVS may round off to four decimals, and eVS will automatically round to the appropriate



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decimal place. If a customer is using a manifest mailing system, the manifest weight field must be properly completed by adhering to the rules relative to the specific manifest.

### **1.9 Computing Postage**

Determine weight increment for each piece and pay postage under [324.1.0](#). For permit imprint mailings, multiply the number of addressed pieces at each weight increment by the corresponding postage price.

## **2.0 Content Standards for Priority Mail**

### **2.1 General**

All mailable matter may be sent as Priority Mail, except matter prohibited by standards (e.g., certain hazardous materials).

### **2.2 Matter Required to be Mailed as First-Class Mail**

Unless Express Mail is used, Priority Mail prices are required for a mailpiece that weighs more than 13 ounces when the mailpiece contains matter that must be mailed as First-Class Mail (see [133.3.0](#)).

## **3.0 Basic Standards for Priority Mail**

### **3.1 Definition**

Priority Mail is an expedited service and may contain any mailable matter weighing no more than 70 pounds. Lower weight limits apply to some commercial parcels under [423.1.0](#); Critical Mail letters and flats under [223.1.4](#) and [1.4](#); APO/FPO mail subject to [703.2.0](#) and [703.4.0](#) and Department of State mail subject to [703.3.0](#).

### **3.2 Additional Standards for Critical Mail Flats**

Critical Mail, a category of Priority Mail, is available for barcoded, automation-compatible letters (see [223.1.3](#)) and barcoded, automation flats. With the exception of restricted mail as described in [601.8.0](#), any mailable matter may be mailed via Critical Mail. USPS-produced Critical Mail flat-size envelopes must be used for all Critical Mail flats. Flats may not exceed 13 ounces in weight or 3/4 inch thickness. Critical Mail flats also must:

- a. Bear an Intelligent Mail barcode with the correct routing code that represents the finest depth of sort achieved in the address matching process, and barcodes must be placed according to [302.4.0](#).
- b. 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 address quality standards in [333.5.5](#) and [708.3.0](#).

### **3.3 Service Objectives**

All Priority Mail receives expeditious handling and transportation, but the USPS does not guarantee delivery within a specified time.

**3.4 Matter Closed Against Postal Inspection**

Matter closed against postal inspection includes First-Class Mail, Priority Mail (including Critical Mail), and Express Mail. The USPS may open mail other than First-Class Mail, Priority Mail (including Critical Mail), or Express Mail to determine whether the proper postage is paid. Material wrapped or packaged so that it cannot be examined easily or examined without destruction or serious damage is closed against postal inspection and is charged the appropriate First-Class Mail or Priority Mail price.

