233 Prices and Eligibility

Overview

1.0 Prices and Fees for First-Class Mail
2.0 Content Standards for First-Class Mail Letters
3.0 Basic Standards for First-Class Mail Letters
4.0 Additional Eligibility Standards for Nonautomation First-Class Mail Letters
5.0 Additional Eligibility Standards for Automation First-Class Mail Letters
6.0 Eligibility Standards for Card Price First-Class Mail

1.0 Prices and Fees for First-Class Mail

1.1 Price Application

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

1.2 Price Computation for First-Class Mail Letters

[1-22-12] Commercial First-Class Mail presorted letters are charged at one price for the first two ounces, with separate prices for pieces over two ounces up to three ounces and for pieces over three ounces up to 3.5 ounces. Any fraction of an ounce is considered a whole ounce. For example, if a piece weighs 2.2 ounces, the weight (postage) increment is 3 ounces. The pricing per ounce is similar for automation First-Class Mail letters, with pricing differences per sortation level.

1.3 Presorted and Automation Prices for Cards and Letters

For prices, see Notice 123–Price List.

1.4 Nonmachinable Surcharge

Surcharge per Presorted price piece (see Notice 123–Price List and 201.2.1, *Criteria for Nonmachinable Letters*.

1.5 Presort Mailing Fee

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

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. For First-Class Mail, affix postage to each piece under 234.2.2, or, for permit imprint mailings, multiply the number of addressed pieces at each price increment (and in each price category, if applicable) by the corresponding postage price, 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 prices 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*.

2.8 Round-Trip Mailings with One Optical Disc

When a letter-size mailpiece weighing no more than 1 ounce in round-trip mailings includes one standard optical disc no larger than 12 centimeters in diameter per mailpiece, the disc will not be considered to be rigid and a nonmachinable surcharge will not be charged on either the outgoing piece or the returned BRM or PRM piece as long as the disc is not put in a rigid container and the envelope itself is not rigid. For the purpose of this standard, round-trip mailings are mailings entered under these conditions:

a. The mailing is presented at a BMEU or other acceptance facility as a presort mailing at presort machinable or automation First-Class Mail letter prices.

b. The mailpieces are addressed to subscribers and include either a BRM (under 505.1.0) or PRM (under 505.2.0) envelope designed for return of the disc to the permit holder.

c. A sample of the return envelope is provided to the acceptance employee at the time of mailing for verification that the mailing is designed for round-trip purposes.

d. Returned BRM or PRM pieces must be picked up by the mailer at designated postal facilities, upon payment of all applicable postage and fees.

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 Price Options

First-Class Mail letters offer shape-based single-piece prices in 133.1.0 and discounted prices 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, *Prices 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 Machinable and 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

[1-22-12] 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 prices. Effective February 12, 2012, payment of this fee is waived for mailers who present only full-service automation mailings (under 705.24.0) containing 90% or more pieces qualifying for full-service prices. Payment of one fee allows a mailer to enter mail at all those prices. 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 requires the periodic matching of a mailer's address records with customer-filed change-of-address orders maintained by the USPS. For this standard, *address* is a specific address associated with a specific occupant name. Each address in a mailing at First-Class Mail commercial letter prices must meet the requirements in 602.5.0.

3.5.2 Basis for Move Update Assessment Charge

Mailings are subject to a Move Update assessment charge if more than 30 percent of addresses with a change of address (COA) are not updated, based on the error rate found in USPS sampling at acceptance during Performance-Based Verification. Specifically, mailings for which the sample contains greater than 30 percent failed COAs out of the total COAs in the sample are subject to additional postage charges as follows:

a. The percentage of the mailing paying the charge is based on the percentage of failed pieces above 30 percent.

b. Each of the assessed pieces is subject to the $0.07 per piece charge.

c. As an example, if 40% of COAs in the sample are not updated, then the charge is applied to 10% (=40% - 30%) of the total mailing.

d. Mailings for which the sample has five or fewer pieces that were not updated for a COA are not subject to the assessment, regardless of the failure percentage.

3.6 ZIP Code Accuracy

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. Each address in a mailing at commercial First-Class Mail letter prices must meet the ZIP Code accuracy requirements in 602.6.0.

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 price 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 Mail 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-price pieces) that meet one or more of the nonmachinable characteristics in 201.2.1.

5.0 Additional Eligibility Standards for Automation First-Class Mail Letters

5.1 Basic Standards for Automation First-Class Mail Letters

All pieces in a First-Class Mail automation 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 price First-Class Mail.

c. Meet the physical standards in 201.3.0, *Physical Standards for Machinable and 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 5.5, *Address Standards for Barcoded Pieces*, and 708.3.0, *Coding Accuracy Support System (CASS)*.

e. Bear an accurate delivery point POSTNET barcode or an Intelligent Mail barcode encoded with the correct delivery point routing code, matching the delivery address and meeting the standards in 202.5.0, and 708.4.0. 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 Letters*, for letters and cards.

5.2 Additional Eligibility Standards for Full-Service Automation First-Class Mail Letters

All pieces entered under the full-service Intelligent Mail automation option must:

a. Bear a unique Intelligent Mail barcode.

b. Be part of a mailing that meets the standards in 705.24.0.

5.3 Maximum Weight for Automation Letters

Maximum weight for First-Class Mail automation letters is 3.5 ounces (0.2188 pound) (see 201.3.6, *Heavy Letter Mail (over 3 ounces)*, for pieces heavier than 3 ounces).

5.4 Price Application—Automation Cards and Letters

Automation prices 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 price. Preparation to qualify for the 5-digit price 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 prices.

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

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

d. Pieces in mixed AADC trays qualify for the mixed AADC price, except for pieces prepared under 5.4c.

5.5 Address Standards for Barcoded Pieces

5.5.1 Basic Address Standards for Barcodes

To qualify for automation prices, 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 price must be the correct barcode for the corresponding delivery address on the piece.

5.5.2 Numeric ZIP+4

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

5.5.3 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 202.5.6. The numeric equivalent is formed by adding three digits directly after the ZIP+4 code.

5.5.4 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.

5.5.5 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.

5.5.6 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.

5.5.7 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.

5.6 Reply Cards and Envelopes Enclosed in Automation Price 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 Machinable and 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 Price First-Class Mail

6.1 Card Price

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

6.2 Cards and Letters

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