344 Postage Payment and Documentation

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1.0 Basic Standards for Postage Payment

1.1 Postage Payment Options

The mailer is responsible for proper postage payment. Postage for Standard Mail must be paid with meter (604.4.0), permit imprint (604.5.0), or precanceled stamps (604.3.0). Postage-affixed pieces must bear the correct postage unless excepted by standard. A permit imprint may be used for mailings that contain nonidentical-weight pieces only if authorized by Business Mailer Support at USPS Headquarters.

2.0 Postage Payment for Presorted and Enhanced Carrier Route Flats

2.1 Identical-Weight Pieces

Mailings of identical-weight pieces may have postage affixed to each piece at the exact price for which the piece qualifies, or each piece in the mailing may have postage affixed at the lowest price applicable to pieces in the mailing or mailing job. Alternatively, a nondenominated precanceled stamp may be affixed to every piece in the mailing or mailing job, or each piece may bear a permit imprint. If exact postage is not affixed, all additional postage and surcharges must be paid at the time of mailing with an advance deposit account or with a meter strip affixed to the required postage statement. If exact postage is not affixed, documentation meeting the standards in 4.0 must be submitted to substantiate the additional postage unless the pieces are identical weight and separated by price when presented for acceptance.

2.2 Nonidentical-Weight Pieces

Postage for nonidentical-weight pieces subject to the minimum per piece prices may be paid by meter stamps, precanceled stamps, or precanceled stamped envelopes. Mailings of nonidentical-weight pieces subject to the piece/pound prices may have postage paid by permit imprint (if the mailer is authorized by Business Mailer Support) or by meter or precanceled stamps (if each piece has the full postage affixed). Alternatively, except for heavy automation and Enhanced Carrier Route letters, the mailer may affix the per piece price to each piece and pay the pound price for the mailing through an advance deposit account. Under this alternative, the mailer must provide a postage statement for each payment method and mark each piece “Pound Rate Pd via Permit,” in the postage meter indicium or ad plate or other means that ensures a legible endorsement. For mailings of

nonidentical-weight pieces, “nonidentical” must be shown as the weight of a single piece on the applicable postage statement; other entries must be completed as directed.

2.3 Combined Price

Meter postage may be used for combined price mailings containing both pieces subject to pound prices and pieces subject to minimum per piece charges. Postage for such mailings may be paid with permit imprint only if authorized by Business Mailer Support.

3.0 Postage Payment for Automation Flats

3.1 All Pieces

Unless authorized by the USPS under 705.2.0 through 705.5.0 in *Advanced Preparation and Special Postage Payment Systems* and 705.16.0, *Plant-Verified Drop Shipment*, when precanceled postage or meter stamps are used, only one payment method may be used in a mailing, and each piece must bear the correct postage at the price claimed based on its eligibility. For mailings of nonidentical-weight pieces subject to the piece/pound prices, the mailer may affix the applicable per piece price to each piece and pay the pound price for the mailing by a permit imprint advance deposit account. All pieces prepared this way in the same mailing must be subject to the same pound price. A postage statement must be submitted for each payment method and each piece must be marked “Pound Price Pd via Permit” in the postage meter indicium or ad plate or other means that ensures a legible endorsement. “Nonidentical” must be shown as the weight of a single piece on the postage statement.

3.2 Adding Additional Postage

In a metered or precanceled stamp mailing:

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

b. Documentation presented with the postage statement must show the computation of the additional postage due for pieces not bearing full postage at the applicable price (i.e., the difference between what the pieces bear and the correct postage at the price for which each qualifies).

3.3 Nondenominated Precanceled Stamps

A mailer may use nondenominated precanceled stamps if:

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

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

c. Documentation is presented with the postage statement as described in 3.2b.

3.4 Precanceled Stamps at Lower Denominations

A mailer may use precanceled stamps of a denomination less than the postage for the lowest price in the mailing if:

a. The stamps do not bear an improper price 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 by advance deposit account or meter stamp affixed to the back of the accompanying postage statement.

d. Documentation is presented with the postage statement as described in 3.2b.

3.5 Mixed Price Mailing Documentation

Where it is not practicable for the mailer to affix the exact postage to each piece or to affix the lowest postage price to all pieces in the mailing, the mailer may compute postage for the mailing as if the lowest price affixed to any piece in the mailing were affixed to all pieces. Additional postage is computed based on the difference between the lowest price affixed to any piece in the mailing and the price for each price level in the mailing. This computation must be documented to meet the basic standards in 4.0. No refund is paid for any piece where postage is affixed at a price higher than the lowest price 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 commercial price, 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 price is affixed to each piece or each piece is of identical weight and the pieces are separated by price when presented for acceptance. Documentation describes the preparation, price 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 price 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 price levels in a single mailing. Documentation of postage is not required if the correct price is affixed to each piece or if each piece is of identical weight and the pieces are separated by price when presented for acceptance.

4.4 Documentation Submission—Full-Service Automation Option

Mailers entering Standard Mail pieces under the full-service automation option must electronically submit postage statements and mailing documentation, including qualification and container reports, to the *PostalOne!* system as described in 705.23.3.4.

4.5 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.

4.6 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.

4.7 Standard Format for Documentation

Standard Mail 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 price 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.

4.8 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.

4.9 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, price, 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.

4.10 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 prices 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. For example: Part A, lines A5, A6, and total – Part A from Form 3602-R, and Part F, lines F1, F2, and total – Part F from Form 3602-R, can be consolidated onto a single Form 3602 (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.

5.0 Residual Pieces

5.1 Residual Standard Mail Subject to First-Class Mail Prices

Mailers who have pieces weighing 13 ounces or less that do not qualify for Standard Mail prices but that are prepared as Standard Mail must pay single-piece First-Class Mail postage for such pieces. If mailers do not desire to receive First-Class Mail service for such pieces they may enter the mailpieces "as is" (i.e., bearing the Standard Mail markings and endorsements), under the following conditions:

a. Additional markings and/or postage must not be added to these pieces.

b. Mail bearing metered or precanceled stamp postage must pay the difference between the postage affixed at the Standard Mail prices and the single-piece First-Class Mail prices by means of an advance deposit account or by affixing a meter stamp for the appropriate amount to Form 3600-R. These pieces are reported in Part C on Form 3600-R under the heading "From Standard Mail mailing."

c. Mail bearing permit imprints must pay the appropriate single-piece First-Class Mail prices by completing Form 3600-R. These pieces are reported in Part C on Form 3600-R under the heading "From Standard Mail mailing." For permit imprint mail there must be at least 200 pieces, except when the pieces are part of a larger mailing job and are submitted for acceptance along with the mail and a Standard Mail postage statement for the other pieces in the same mailing job.

5.2 Residual Standard Mail Subject to Priority Mail Prices

Mailers who have permit imprint pieces weighing over 13 ounces but less than 16 ounces that do not qualify for Standard Mail prices but that are prepared as Standard Mail must pay Priority Mail postage for such pieces. Mailpieces paid with meters or permit imprints must re-envelope or otherwise prepare the pieces so that when mailed they bear only the appropriate Priority Mail markings, ancillary service endorsements, and ACS codes and do not bear Standard Mail markings, endorsements, or ACS codes. Mailpieces paid with permit imprints for which mailers do not desire to receive Priority Mail service may enter the mailpieces "as is" (i.e., bearing the Standard Mail markings and endorsements), under the following conditions:

a. Additional markings and/or postage must not be added to these pieces.

b. The appropriate Priority Mail prices must be paid by completing Part E of Form 3600-R on the line titled “Pieces From Standard Mail mailing” in the postage calculation section. For permit imprint mail there must be at least 200 pieces, except when the pieces are part of a larger mailing job and are submitted for acceptance along with the mail and a Standard Mail postage statement for the other pieces in the same mailing job.