445 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

Mailings are defined as:

a. General. A mailing is a group of pieces within the same class of mail and, except for certain parcel prices, 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 and mail for each separate class and subclass must be prepared as a separate mailing. Other specific standards may define whether separate mailings may be combined, palletized, reported, or deposited together.

b. Standard Mail. Except as provided in 443.3.6, *Residual Volume Requirement*, the types of Standard Mail listed below may not be part of the same mailing.

1. Enhanced Carrier Route and any other type of mail.
2. Enhanced Carrier Route letter price pieces and Enhanced Carrier Route nonletter price pieces.
3. Presorted price mail and any other type of mail.
4. Machinable and nonmachinable pieces.
5. Except as provided by standard, Regular mail may not be in the same mailing as Nonprofit mail, and Enhanced Carrier Route mail may not be in the same mailing as Nonprofit Enhanced Carrier Route mail.
6. Customized MarketMail and any other type of mail.

1.3 Terms for Presort Levels

Terms used for presort levels are defined as follows:

a. *Carrier route:* all pieces for delivery to the same city route, rural route, highway contract route, Post Office box section, or general delivery unit.

b. *5-digit:* the delivery address on all pieces includes the same 5-digit ZIP Code.

c. *5-digit scheme (pallets and sacks) for Standard Mail parcels:* the ZIP Code in the delivery address on all pieces begins with one of the 5-digit ZIP Code zones processed by the USPS as a single scheme, as shown in L606.

d. *3-digit:* the ZIP Code in the delivery address on all pieces begins with the same three digits (see L002, Column A).

e. *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.

f. *SCF:* the separation includes pieces for two or more 3-digit areas served by the same sectional center facility (SCF) (see L005), *except that,* where required or permitted by standard, mail for a single 3-digit area may be prepared in an SCF separation when no mail for other 3-digit ZIP Code areas is available. For pallets, the SCF sort may include mail for a single 3-digit ZIP Code area.

g. *Origin/optional entry SCF:* the separation includes bundles for one or more 3-digit areas served by the same sectional center facility (SCF) (see L002, Column C, or L005) in whose service area the mail is verified/entered. Subject to standard, this separation is required regardless of the volume of mail.

h. *ADC:* all pieces are addressed for delivery in the service area of the same area distribution center (ADC) (see L004).

i. *ASF/NDC:* all pieces are addressed for delivery in the service area of the same auxiliary service facility (ASF) or network distribution center (NDC) (see L601, L602, or L605).

j. Origin NDC: this separation includes all pieces addressed for delivery to ZIP Codes within the same NDC (see L601) that serves the acceptance office that verifies the mailing. There is no minimum quantity requirement for this separation.

k. *Mixed [NDC, ADC, etc.]:* the pieces are for delivery in the service area of more than one NDC, ADC, etc.

l. *Residual* pieces/bundles/sacks contain material remaining after completion of a presort sequence. Residual mail lacks the volume set by standard to require or allow bundle preparation to a particular destination, and usually does not qualify for a presort price. Residual mail is also referred to as *nonqualifying* or *working* mail.

1.4 Preparation Definitions and Instructions

For purposes of preparing mail:

a. *Pieces* refers to individually addressed mailpieces.

b. A *full* sack is defined in the standards for the class and price claimed.

c. A *5-digit/scheme sort for Standard Mail parcels* yields 5-digit scheme sacks or pallets for those 5-digit ZIP Codes listed in L606 and 5-digit sacks or pallets for other ZIP Codes. The 5-digit ZIP Codes in each scheme are treated as a single presort destination subject to a single minimum volume (if required), with no further separation by 5-digit ZIP Code required. Sacks or pallets prepared for a 5-digit scheme destination that contain pieces for only one of the schemed 5-digit ZIP Codes are still considered 5-digit scheme sorted and are labeled accordingly.

d. An *origin 3-digit* (or *origin 3-digit scheme*) tray contains all mail (regardless of quantity) for a 3-digit ZIP Code (or 3-digit scheme) area processed by the SCF in whose service area the mail is verified. A separate tray may be prepared for each 3-digit ZIP Code (or 3-digit scheme) area.

e. The *required at [quantity]* instruction (e.g., "required at 10 pieces") means that the particular unit *must* be prepared for the corresponding presort level whenever the specified quantity of mail is reached or exceeded. Bundles and containers may contain more than the specified *required at* quantity up to the applicable maximum physical size. Subject to applicable price eligibility standards, smaller quantities may be prepared only if permitted. Where specified by standard, required preparation applies only if the mailer chooses to qualify for the corresponding price.

f. The *optional at [quantity]* instruction means that the particular unit *may* be prepared for the corresponding presort level whenever the specified quantity of mail is reached or exceeded. Bundles or containers may contain more than the specified *optional at* quantity up to the applicable maximum physical size. Smaller quantities may be prepared only if permitted by applicable price eligibility standards. Standards for quantities with which preparation is optional are often followed by standards for larger quantities with which preparation is required.

g. *Entry [facility]* (or *origin [facility]*) refers to the USPS mail processing facility (e.g., "entry NDC") 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 (e.g., for plant-verified drop shipment), the Post Office of entry determines the *entry* facility. *Entry SCF* includes both single-3-digit and multi-3-digit SCFs. *Entry NDC* includes subordinate ASFs unless otherwise specified.

h. The *group pieces* instruction means the pieces are to be sorted together as if to be bundled but not actually secured into a bundle. Bundle labels and other bundle identification methods may be used for unsecured groups of pieces as permitted by standard.

i. A *bundle* is a group of addressed pieces secured together as a unit. Bundle preparation is described in 2.0.

j. A *"logical" presort destination* represents the total number of pieces that are eligible for a specific presort level based on the required sortation, but which might not be contained in a single bundle or in a single container (sack or pallet)

due to applicable preparation requirements or the size of the individual pieces. For example, there may be 42 mailpieces for ZIP Code 43112 forming a Standard Mail "logical" 5-digit bundle, and they are prepared in three physical 5-digit bundles because of the applicable weight and height restrictions on bundles. For pallets, 2,800 pounds of mail may be destined to an SCF destination, and these would form the "logical" SCF pallet, but the mail is placed on two physical SCF pallets each weighing 1,400 pounds because of the 2,200 pound maximum pallet weight requirement.

2.0 Bundles

2.1 Definition of a Bundle

Mailers assemble pieces for different presort destinations into groups. A "bundle" is a group of addressed pieces secured together as a unit. The term "bundle" does not apply to unsecured groups of pieces. Bundling under 445 is allowed only for carrier route bundles of irregular parcels and 5-digit bundles of Not Flat-Machinable pieces placed on pallets or in pallet boxes (see 6.0).

2.2 Address Visibility

Mailers preparing presort bundles must ensure that the delivery address information on the top mailpiece in each bundle is visible and readable by the naked eye. Mailers using strapping that might cover the address can avoid obstructing visibility by using clear, smooth strapping tightly secured around the bundle. Mailers using barcoded pressure-sensitive bundle labels, optional endorsement lines, carrier route information lines, or carrier route facing slips also must ensure that the information in these presort designations is visible and readable by the naked eye. This standard does not apply to the following:

a. Bundles placed in or on 5-digit or 5-digit scheme (L001) sacks or pallets.

b. Bundles placed in carrier route and 5-digit carrier routes sacks.

c. Bundles of mailpieces at carrier route prices entered at a destination delivery unit (DDU).

2.3 Arranging Pieces in a Bundle ("Facing")

Except as noted in 2.4, all pieces in a bundle must be "faced" (arranged with the addresses in the same read direction), with an address visible on the top piece.

2.4 Preparing Bundles of Pieces of Nonuniform Thickness ("Counterstacking")

Bundles of flats and other pieces of nonuniform thickness may be prepared by counter-stacking under these conditions:

a. Counter-stacking should be used only to create bundles of more uniform thickness that are more likely to maintain their integrity during transportation and processing.

b. Counter-stacking is appropriate for saddle-stitched mailpieces and pieces where one edge is thicker than other edges or one corner is thicker than other corners.

c. When counter-stacking, pieces must all have addresses facing up and be divided into no more than four approximately equal groups, with each group rotated 180 degrees from the preceding and succeeding group(s); prepare as few groups as possible to create a bundle of uniform thickness.

d. Counter-stacked groups within a bundle should be as thick as possible, generally at least 1 inch thick.

e. When pieces are nonuniform in thickness because they are thicker in the center instead of along an edge or corner, counter-stacking will generally not result in a bundle of uniform thickness (i.e., a football-shaped bundle would be created). Instead of counter-stacking such pieces, limit the height (thickness) of the bundle to 3 to 6 inches to ensure the bundle will stay together during normal transit and handling.

2.5 Securing Bundles

Bundles must withstand normal transit and handling without breaking and without causing injury to USPS employees or damage to USPS equipment.
Mailers must meet the following standards when preparing and securing bundles:

a. Secure bundles with banding, shrinkwrap, or shrinkwrap supplemented with one or more bands. *Banding* includes plastic bands, rubber bands, twine, string, and similar material. Mailers must meet the following standards when banding bundles:

1. Do not place any bands closer than 1 inch from any bundle edge.
2. When using twine or string to band bundles, secure the knot(s) so the twine or string does not come loose during transit and processing.
3. Do not use wire or metal banding.
4. Do not use any loose banding.

b. When using only banding to secure bundles, apply banding under the following additional requirements:

1. Use at least one band to encircle the length of the bundle and use at least one band to encircle the girth of the bundle.
2. Use tension sufficient to tighten and depress the edges of the bundle so that pieces do not slip out of the banding during transit and processing.

2.6 Preparing Bundles in Sacks

In addition to the standards in 2.5, mailers must prepare and secure bundles placed in sacks as follows:

a. The maximum weight for all bundles is 20 pounds.

b. Measure bundles at the lowest (thinnest) point to determine the bundle height.

c. A bundle that exceeds the maximum prescribed height by less than the thickness of a single piece meets the standard (for example, if a piece is 0.75 (3/4) of an inch thick, 11 pieces may be secured in a bundle 8.25 inches high, even though the maximum bundle height is 8 inches).

d. Bundles of pieces with covers of “coated stock” (for example, magazines or catalogs with glossy covers) that are not individually enclosed in an envelope or mailing wrapper are subject to these conditions:

1. Bundles secured with rubber bands, twine, string, or only shrinkwrap must not exceed 3 inches in height.
2. Bundles secured with shrinkwrap plus one or two plastic straps, or with at least two plastic straps, one around the length and one around the girth, must not exceed 6 inches in height.

e. Bundles of pieces with outer surfaces of “uncoated stock” are subject to these conditions:

1. Bundles must not exceed 8 inches in height (recommended maximum height is 6 inches).
2. “Uncoated stock” refers to pieces with outer surfaces composed of material other than paper (such as plastic, cloth, or fiberboard) and also refers to pieces with coated covers that are individually enclosed in a cover or mailing wrapper of uncoated stock, such as an envelope or polybag.

2.7 Pieces With Simplified Address

For mail prepared with a simplified address, all pieces for the same Post Office must be prepared in bundles of 50 when possible. If bundles of other quantities are prepared, the actual number of pieces must be shown on the facing slip attached to show distribution desired (e.g., rural route, city route, Post Office boxholder). Bundles must be secure and stable subject to specific weight limits in 705.8.0 if placed on pallets, and specific weight and height limits in 2.6 if placed in sacks.

2.8 Bundles With Fewer Than the Minimum Number of Pieces Required

An individual bundle may be prepared with fewer than the minimum number of pieces required by the standards for the price claimed without loss of price eligibility under either of these conditions:

a. A greater number of pieces would exceed the maximum physical size for a bundle and the total number of pieces for that presort destination meets the minimum volume standard (e.g., 30 pieces are available to meet a 10-piece minimum, but a bundle of eight pieces is 6 inches thick).

b. The pieces constitute the “last bundle” for a presort destination and previously prepared bundles met the applicable minimum volume standard (e.g., 505 pieces prepared in 10 50-piece bundles and one five-piece bundle).

2.9 Labeling Bundles

Unless excepted by standard, the presort level of each bundle (other than carrier route bundles) must be identified either with an optional endorsement line under 708.7.0 or with a barcoded pressure-sensitive bundle label. Barcoded pressure-sensitive bundle labels must not obscure the delivery address block. Banding or shrinkwrap must not obscure any bundle label. The following colors and presort characters apply to bundle labels:

a. Five-digit presort level, red Label 5.

b. Three-digit presort level, green Label 3.

c. ADC presort level, pink Label A.

d. Mixed ADC presort level, tan Label X.

2.10 Use of Carrier Route Information Lines

Bundles for individual carrier routes, rural routes, highway contract routes, Post Office box sections, or general delivery units must be prepared with facing slips under 2.0, optional endorsement lines under 708.7.0, or carrier route information lines under 708.6.0. These standards apply to Enhanced Carrier Route Standard Mail mailings. Carrier route information lines may be on all pieces in a mailing, regardless of presort level.

2.11 Facing Slips—All Carrier Route Mail

All facing slips used on carrier route bundles must show this information:

a. Line 1: Destination city, two-letter state abbreviation, and 5-digit ZIP Code.

b. Line 2: Content (as appropriate to the class), followed by carrier route type and route number (e.g., “STD IRREG LOT CR R 012”).

c. Line 3: City and two-letter state abbreviation of the origin Post Office.

3.0 Sacks

3.1 Standard Containers

Mailings must be prepared in sacks. Containers for Customized MarketMail are specified in 705.1.0. The following additional standards apply:

a. Palletized mail is also subject to 705.8.0.

b. 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.

3.2 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.

4.0 Sack Labels

4.1 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.

4.2 Physical Characteristics of a Sack Label

A sack label must meet these specifications:

a. Color: white or manila.

b. Weight: 70-pound or heavier stock (optional).

c. Length (parallel to printing): 3.250 inches minimum; 3.515 inches maximum.

d. 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.

4.3 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.

4.4 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
Carrier Route	C (type of route)
Carrier Routes	CR-RT or CR-RTS
Digit	D
General Delivery Unit	G
Highway Contract Route	H
Irregular Parcels	IRREG
Machinable	MACH
Mixed	MXD
Mixed Machinable and Irregular Parcels	MACH & IRREG
Post Office Box Section	B
Rural Route	R
Standard Mail	STD
Working	WKG

4.5 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 4.6, “eVS” may appear as the first element on Line 3.

4.6 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.

4.7 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.

4.8 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:

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

b. 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.

c. 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.

d. It may appear below Line 3.

e. 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.

5.0 Preparing Presorted Parcels

5.1 Basic Standards

All mailings and all pieces in each mailing at Regular Standard Mail and Nonprofit Standard Mail nonautomation prices are subject to specific preparation standards in 5.3, *Preparing Machinable Parcels*, and 5.4, *Preparing Irregular Parcels*, and to these general standards:

a. All pieces must meet the standards for basic eligibility in 443.2.0 through 443.4.0 in *Prices and Eligibility* and specific eligibility in 443.5.0. Nonprofit Standard Mail must meet the additional eligibility standards in 703.1.0.

b. Pieces in each mailing must be all machinable parcels or all irregular parcels as defined in 401.1.0, unless prepared under 5.3.1.

c. All pieces must meet the applicable general preparation standards in 1.0 through 4.0; 708.7.0, *Optional Endorsement Lines (OELs)*; and 708.6.0, *Standards for Barcoded Tray Labels, Sack Labels, and Container Placards*.

d. All pieces in the mailing must meet the specific sortation and preparation standards in 5.0 or the palletization standards in 705.8.0.

e. Sortation determines price eligibility as specified in 443.5.0, *Additional Eligibility Standards for Presorted Standard Mail Pieces*.

5.2 Markings

All regular and Nonprofit Standard Mail pieces must be marked under 402.2.0, *Placement and Content of Markings*. Regular and Nonprofit Standard Mail pieces must not be marked “ECRLOT,” “ECRWSH,” “ECRWSS,” or “Single-Piece” (or “SNGLP”).

5.3 Preparing Machinable Parcels

5.3.1 Sacking

Mailers may prepare 5-digit sacks only for parcels that will be dropshipped to a DNDC (or ASF when claiming DNDC prices), DSCF, or DDU. Mailers may prepare ASF or NDC sacks only for parcels that will be dropshipped to a DNDC (or ASF when claiming DNDC prices). There is no minimum for parcels prepared in 5-digit/scheme sacks entered at a DDU. Mailers choosing to combine the preparation of either irregular parcels or Not Flat-Machinable pieces (see 401.2.4.2) with machinable parcels placed in 5-digit/scheme sacks must prepare those sacks under 5.3.2a. Mailers choosing to combine the preparation of Not Flat-Machinable pieces weighing 6 ounces or more with machinable parcels placed in ASF, NDC, or mixed NDC sacks must prepare the sacks under 5.3.2.

5.3.2 Sacking and Labeling

Preparation sequence, sack size, and labeling:

a. 5-digit/scheme (optional, but required for 5-digit price), see definition in 1.4c; allowed only for mail deposited at DNDC (or ASF when claiming DNDC prices), DSCF, or DDU. Sacks must contain a 10-pound minimum except at DDU entry which has no 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 destination on pieces (see 4.0 for overseas military mail).

   2. Line 2: For 5-digit scheme sacks, "STD MACH 5D SCH." For 5-digit sacks, "STD MACH 5D."

b. ASF (optional), allowed only for mail deposited at an ASF to claim DNDC price; 10-pound minimum; labeling:

   1. Line 1: L602, Column B. DNDC price eligibility determined by Exhibit 446.3.1, *NDC/ASF—DNDC Price Eligibility*.

   2. Line 2: "STD MACH ASF."

c. NDC, allowed only for mail deposited at a DNDC to claim the NDC price; 10-pound minimum; labeling:

   1. Line 1: L601, Column B. DNDC price eligibility determined by Exhibit 446.3.1, *NDC/ASF—DNDC Price Eligibility*.

   2. Line 2: "STD MACH NDC."

d. Origin NDC (required); no minimum; labeling:

   1. Line 1: L601, Column B.

   2. Line 2: "STD MACH NDC."

e. Mixed NDC (required); no minimum; labeling:

   1. Line 1: "MXD" followed by L601, Column B information for NDC serving 3-digit ZIP Code prefix of entry Post Office.

   2. Line 2: "STD MACH WKG."

5.4 Preparing Irregular Parcels

5.4.1 Bundling

Bundling is not permitted, except for bundles of carrier route irregular parcels under 7.0.

5.4.2 Sacking

Mailers may prepare 5-digit sacks only for parcels that will be dropshipped to a DNDC (or ASF when claiming DNDC prices), DSCF, or DDU. See 5.4.4 for restrictions on SCF, ASF, and NDC sacks. Mailers must prepare a sack when the quantity of mail for a required presort destination reaches 10 pounds of pieces. There is no minimum for parcels prepared in 5-digit/scheme sacks entered at a DDU. Mailers choosing to combine irregular parcels with machinable parcels and NFMs in 5-digit/scheme sacks must prepare those sacks under 5.3.2. Mailers may

not prepare sacks containing irregular and machinable parcels to other presort levels. Mailers may combine irregular parcels with Not Flat-Machinable pieces weighing less than 6 ounces in sacks under 5.4.4.

5.4.3 Drop Shipment

A mailer using Priority Mail or Express Mail to drop ship Standard Mail irregular parcels may prepare sacks containing fewer than 125 pieces or less than 15 pounds of mail.

5.4.4 Sacking and Labeling

Preparation sequence, sack size, and labeling:

a. 5-digit/scheme (optional, but required for 5-digit price), see definition in 1.4c; allowed only for mail deposited at DNDC (or ASF when claiming DNDC prices), DSCF, or DDU. Sacks must contain a 10-pound minimum except at DDU entry which has no 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 destination on pieces (see 4.0 for overseas military mail).
   2. Line 2: For 5-digit scheme sacks, “STD IRREG 5D SCH.” For 5-digit sacks, “STD IRREG 5D.”

b. SCF, allowed only for mail deposited at a DSCF or a DNDC to claim SCF price; 10-pound minimum; labeling:

   1. For Line 1, L002, Column C.
   2. For Line 2, “STD IRREG SCF.”

c. ASF (optional), allowed only for mail deposited at an ASF to claim DNDC price; 10-pound minimum; labeling:

   1. Line 1: L602, Column B. DNDC price eligibility determined by Exhibit 446.3.1, NDC/ASF—DNDC Price Eligibility.
   2. Line 2: “STD IRREG ASF.”

d. NDC, allowed only for mail deposited at a DNDC to claim the NDC price; 10-pound minimum; labeling:

   1. Line 1: L601, Column B. DNDC price eligibility determined by Exhibit 446.3.1, *NDC/ASF—DNDC Price Eligibility*.
   2. Line 2: “STD IRREG NDC.”

e. Origin NDC (required); no minimum; labeling:

   1. Line 1: L601, Column B.
   2. Line 2: “STD IRREG NDC.”

f. Mixed NDC (required); no minimum; labeling:

   1. Line 1: “MXD” followed by L601, Column B information for NDC serving 3-digit ZIP Code prefix of entry Post Office.
   2. Line 2: “STD IRREG WKG.”

6.0 Preparing Not Flat-Machinable Pieces

6.1 Basic Standards

All mailings at Regular Standard Mail and Nonprofit Standard Mail NFM prices are subject to the general preparation standards in 1.0 through 4.0. Prepare NFM pieces according to the standards in 6.0 unless commingled with parcels under 5.0. Mark NFM pieces according to the standards in 402.2.5.1.

6.2 Bundling

Mailers may make 5-digit bundles of at least five pieces when placed on pallets or in pallet boxes under 705.8.0. No other NFM bundling is permitted. The height of a 5-digit bundle must be at least 1 inch less than the longest dimension of the individual mailpiece. For example, a mailpiece measuring 7 inches long, 5 inches high, and 1/2 inch thick must be placed in a bundle no higher than 6 inches.

6.3 Sacking and Labeling

6.3.1 Sacking

Mailers may prepare 5-digit sacks only for NFMs that will be dropshipped to a DNDC (or ASF when claiming DNDC prices), DSCF, or DDU. See 6.3.2 and 6.3.3 for other restrictions on SCF, ASF, and NDC sacks.

6.3.2 NFM Pieces Weighing Less Than 6 Ounces

Preparation sequence, sack size, and labeling for sacks of NFM pieces that weigh less than 6 ounces:

a. 5-digit/scheme (optional, but required for 5-digit price), see definition in 1.4c; allowed only for mail deposited at DNDC (or ASF when claiming DNDC prices), DSCF, or DDU. Sacks must contain a 10-pound minimum except at DDU entry which has no 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 destination on pieces (see 4.0 for overseas military mail).

   2. Line 2: For 5-digit scheme sacks, “STD NFM 5D SCH.” For 5-digit sacks, “STD NFM 5D.”

b. SCF, allowed only for mail deposited at a DSCF or a DNDC to claim SCF price; 10-pound minimum; labeling:

   1. For Line 1, L002, Column C.

   2. For Line 2, “STD NFM SCF.”

c. ASF (optional), allowed only for mail deposited at an ASF to claim DNDC price; 10-pound minimum; labeling:

   1. Line 1:L602, Column B. DNDC price eligibility determined by Exhibit 446.3.1, *NDC/ASF—DNDC Price Eligibility*.

   2. Line 2: “STD NFM ASF.”

d. NDC, allowed only for mail deposited at a DNDC to claim the NDC price; 10-pound minimum; labeling:

1. Line 1:L601, Column B. DNDC price eligibility determined by Exhibit 446.3.1, *NDC/ASF—DNDC Price Eligibility*.
2. Line 2: "STD NFM NDC."

e. Origin NDC (required); no minimum; labeling:

1. Line 1: L601, Column B.
2. Line 2: STD NFM NDC."

f. Mixed NDC (required); no minimum; labeling:

1. Line 1: "MXD" followed by L601, Column B information for NDC serving 3-digit ZIP Code prefix of entry Post Office.
2. Line 2: "STD NFM WKG."

6.3.3 NFM Pieces Weighing 6 Ounces or More

Preparation sequence, sack size, and labeling for sacks of NFM pieces that weigh 6 ounces or more:

a. 5-digit/scheme (optional, but required for 5-digit price), see definition in 1.4c; allowed only for mail deposited at DNDC (or ASF when claiming DNDC prices), DSCF, or DDU. Sacks must contain a 10-pound minimum except at DDU entry which has no 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 destination on pieces (see 4.0 for overseas military mail).
2. Line 2: For 5-digit scheme sacks, "STD NFM MACH 5D SCH." For 5-digit sacks, "STD NFM MACH 5D."

b. ASF (optional), allowed only for mail deposited at an ASF to claim DNDC price; 10-pound minimum; labeling:

1. Line 1: L602, Column B. DNDC price eligibility determined by Exhibit 446.3.1, *NDC/ASF—DNDC Price Eligibility*.
2. Line 2: "STD NFM MACH ASF."

c. NDC, allowed only for mail deposited at a DNDC to claim the NDC price; 10-pound minimum; labeling:

1. Line 1: L601, Column B. DNDC price eligibility determined by Exhibit 446.3.1, *NDC/ASF—DNDC Price Eligibility*.
2. Line 2: "STD NFM MACH NDC."

d. Origin NDC (required); no minimum; labeling:

1. Line 1: L601, Column B.
2. Line 2: "STD NFM MACH NDC."

e. Mixed NDC (required); no minimum; labeling:

1. Line 1: "MXD" followed by L601, Column B information for NDC serving 3-digit ZIP Code prefix of entry Post Office.
2. Line 2: "STD NFM MACH WKG."

7.0 Preparing Enhanced Carrier Route Parcels

7.1 Basic Standards

All mailings and all pieces in each mailing at Enhanced Carrier Route Standard Mail and Nonprofit Enhanced Carrier Route Standard Mail nonautomation prices are subject to specific preparation standards in 7.4, *Bundling*, and 7.5, *Preparing Irregular Parcels*, and to these general standards:

a. All pieces must meet the standards for basic eligibility in 443.2.0 through 443.4.0 in *Prices and Eligibility* and specific eligibility in 443.6.0, *Additional Eligibility Standards for Enhanced Carrier Route Standard Mail Parcels*. Nonprofit Enhanced Carrier Route Standard Mail must meet the additional eligibility standards in 703.1.0.

b. All pieces in each mailing must be irregular parcels as defined in 401.1.0.

c. All pieces must meet the applicable general preparation standards in 1.0 through 4.0, and the following:

   1. Pieces must be sequenced according to 7.6 and 7.7.

   2. Pieces with a simplified address format must meet the standards in 602.3.0, *Use of Alternative Addressing*.

d. All pieces in the mailing must meet the specific sortation and preparation standards in 7.0 or the palletization standards in 705.8.0.

e. Sortation determines price eligibility as specified in 443.6.0.

7.2 Marking

All regular and Nonprofit Standard Mail Enhanced Carrier Route pieces must be marked under 402.2.0, *Placement and Content of Markings*. All pieces must also be marked “ECRLOT” for basic price, “ECRWSH” for high density price, or “ECRWSS” for saturation price.

7.3 Residual Pieces

Pieces not sorted as a carrier route mailing must be prepared as a separate mailing at Standard Mail automation or Presorted prices.

7.4 Bundling

7.4.1 Carrier Route Bundle Preparation

Prepare carrier route bundles of parcels as follows:

a. Mailers must prepare only carrier route bundles.

b. Except under 7.4.2, carrier route bundles must contain at least 10 pieces.

c. The method of labeling a carrier route bundle is based on the following sack levels:

   1. Carrier route sack: No bundle labeling is required.

   2. 5-digit scheme or 5-digit carrier routes sacks: Bundles must have a facing slip unless the pieces in the bundle have a carrier information line or an optional endorsement line (OEL).

7.4.2 Bundles and Sacks With Fewer Than the Minimum Number of Pieces Required

As a general exception to 7.4.1, a mailer may prepare a bundle with fewer than 10 pieces and a less-than-full sack with fewer than 125 pieces and less than 15 pounds of pieces to a carrier route when they are claiming the saturation price for the contents and the applicable density standard is met.

7.5 Preparing Irregular Parcels

7.5.1 Sack Minimums

A sack must be prepared when the quantity of mail for a required presort destination reaches either 125 pieces or 15 pounds of pieces, whichever occurs first, subject to these conditions:

a. For identical-weight pieces, a single-piece weight of 1.92 ounces (0.12 pound) results in 125 pieces weighing 15 pounds. Identical-weight pieces weighing 1.92 ounces (0.12 pound) or less must be prepared using the 125-piece minimum; those that weigh more must be prepared using the 15-pound minimum.

b. For nonidentical-weight pieces, mailers must either use the minimum that applies to the average piece weight for the entire mailing (divide the net weight of the mailing by the number of pieces; the resulting average single-piece weight determines whether the 125-piece or 15-pound minimum applies) or sack by the actual piece count or mail weight for each sack, if documentation can be provided with the mailing that shows (specifically for each sack) the number of pieces and their total weight.

c. Mailers must note on the accompanying postage statement whether they applied the 125-piece (“PCS”) or 15-pound (“WT”) threshold or the method in 7.5.1b (“BOTH”).

7.5.2 Sacking and Labeling

Preparation sequence, sack size, and labeling:

a. Carrier route: required (minimum of 125 pieces/15 pounds).

   1. Line 1: city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code on mail (see 4.3 for overseas military mail).

   2. Line 2: “STD IRREG WSS” or “STD IRREG WSH” or “STD IRREG LOT” as applicable, followed by the route type and number.

b. 5-digit carrier routes: required (no minimum).

   1. Line 1: city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code on mail (see 4.3 for overseas military mail).

   2. Line 2: “STD IRREG CR-RTS.”

7.6 Delivery Sequence Standards

7.6.1 Basic Standards

Mailpieces for which a walk-sequence discount is claimed must be organized in the delivery sequence determined by the USPS and prepared as a carrier route mailing under 7.0 and the standards below. Pieces prepared with a simplified address must also meet the corresponding standards.

7.6.2 Missing Addresses

Some mailpieces cannot be sequenced because an exact match for a name or address cannot be obtained. These pieces may be included in a sequenced mailing only if they are placed behind or after the sequenced mail. Arrange these pieces:

a. Alphabetically by complete street name, then either in ascending order by ZIP+4 code sector segments or numerically in ascending order by primary address.

b. Numerically for numbered streets, then either in ascending order by ZIP+4 code sector segments or numerically in ascending order by primary address.

7.6.3 Updating Walk Sequence Information—General

Walk-sequence price pieces prepared with other than a simplified address format under 7.6.4 must be sequenced using USPS data from one of the following sources, issued within 90 days before the mailing date:

a. The Computerized Delivery Sequence (CDS) file.

b. The Delivery Sequence File, Second Generation (DSF^2).

c. Delivery sequence information from USPS address sequencing services, as requested by the customer.

7.6.4 Updating Walk Sequence Information for Simplified Addressing

Mailpieces with a simplified address, prepared for distribution to rural or highway contract routes or to PO boxes in a Post Office without city delivery, must be based on delivery stop information obtained within 90 days before the mailing date, either from the Delivery Statistics File, in accordance with 509.1.1, or from the postmaster of the destination office. Mailpieces with a simplified address, prepared for distribution to city routes or to PO boxes in a Post Office with city delivery, must be based only on delivery stop information obtained from the Delivery Statistics File, in accordance with 509.1.1, within 90 days before the mailing date.

7.6.5 Out-of-Date Walk Sequence Information

Mailings prepared with out-of-date walk-sequencing information are not eligible for walk-sequence prices.

7.6.6 Updating Line-of-Travel Sequence Information

Unless the mail is prepared in carrier walk sequence, line-of-travel (LOT) sequence is required for mailings at Standard Mail Enhanced Carrier Route basic prices. LOT sequence is not an exact walk sequence but a sequence of ZIP+4 codes arranged in the order that the route is served by a carrier. (First the ZIP+4 groups are sequenced, then the addresses within each are identified as being in ascending or descending order.) The USPS eLOT product provides a list of the ZIP+4 codes each carrier route serves, identifies the order in which they are delivered, and provides an

indicator specifying whether the addresses that share the same ZIP+4 code must be sorted in ascending or descending order. When a range of ZIP+4 codes on the same carrier route are assigned the same sequence number, the addresses bearing those ZIP+4 codes must be arranged in ascending ZIP+4 code order before the sequence number is assigned. LOT information must be updated within 90 days before the date of mailing.

7.7 Delivery Sequence Documentation

7.7.1 General Standards

The postage statement must be annotated in the "Carrier Route Sequencing Date" block on page 1. The mailer must annotate the postage statement to show the earliest (oldest) date of the method used to obtain sequencing information for the mailing. The mailer's signature on the postage statement certifies that this standard has been met when the corresponding mail is presented to the USPS. The mailer must maintain documentation to substantiate compliance with the standards for carrier route sequencing. Unless submitted with each corresponding mailing, the mailer must be able to provide the USPS with documentation (if requested) of accurate sequencing or delivery statistics for each carrier route to which pieces are mailed. Acceptable forms of documentation are:

a. The invoice showing that the addresses came from CDS.

b. DSF^2 invoice or documentation.

c. Copies of the delivery unit summaries that served as the mailer's bills for address sequencing service charges.

d. Evidence of receipt of information from postmasters for simplified address mailings (see 509.1.0, *Address Information System Services*).

e. Form 3553 showing the date of the eLOT product used, or the date from the USPS Qualification report produced by presort software.

7.7.2 High Density

For each Standard Mail carrier route to which high density price mail is addressed, the mailer must document the total number of addressed pieces to the route.

7.7.3 Saturation Density—Simplified Address Mail

For each carrier route to which mail with a simplified address is sent at the saturation price, the mailer must be able to document that the mailing meets the applicable density standard. This documentation must show the total number of active possible deliveries and the total number to which mailpieces in the mailing are being addressed, by 5-digit ZIP Code and, within each, by carrier route. It must be submitted with each applicable mailing.

7.7.4 Saturation Density—Other Mail

For each carrier route to which mail without a simplified address is sent at the saturation price, the mailer must be able to document that the mailing meets the applicable density standards. This documentation must show either the total number of active possible *residential* deliveries and the number and percentage to which mailpieces are addressed, or the total number of *all* active possible deliveries and the number and percentage to which mailpieces are addressed, depending on

whether qualification is based on the 90% or 75% criterion, respectively. The documentation must be listed by 5-digit ZIP Code and, within each, by carrier route. It must be submitted with each applicable mailing.

7.7.5 Both Prices

If a mailing contains pieces qualifying for high density and saturation walk-sequence prices, the documentation required may be combined. Entries for pieces at the high density price must be so annotated on the documentation. For the entire mailing, a summary of the total number of pieces at each price must be provided. This documentation must be submitted with each applicable mailing.

7.7.6 Carrier Route Price

If a mailing includes high density and saturation price and basic carrier route price pieces, in addition to the applicable information required by 7.7.2 through 7.7.5, the documentation for the basic carrier route price mail must show, by 5-digit ZIP Code and, within each, by carrier route, the total number of addressed pieces at each price for each carrier route to which pieces are addressed. Pieces qualifying for the basic carrier route price must be so annotated. For the entire mailing, a summary by 5-digit ZIP Code of the total number of pieces at each price must be provided. This documentation must be submitted with each applicable mailing to meet the documentation standard for the carrier route price.