

375 Mail Preparation

Overview

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1.0 General Information for Mail Preparation

1.1 Definition of Presort Process

[8-1-11] 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.

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 the same processing category that are sorted together and/or presented under a single minimum volume mailing requirement. 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 separate mailings.
- b. Media Mail and Library Mail and any other type of mail may not be part of the same mailing even if in the same processing category.

1.3 Terms for Presort Levels

Terms used for presort levels are defined as follows:

- a. 5-digit: the delivery address on all pieces includes the same 5-digit ZIP Code.
- b. 5-digit scheme (bundles and sacks) for flats meeting the automation-compatibility standards in [301.3.0](#): the ZIP Code in the delivery address on all pieces begins with one of the 5-digit ZIP Code ranges shown in [L007](#). When standards require 5-digit/scheme sort, mailers must prepare all possible 5-digit scheme bundles and sacks of flats before preparing 5-digit bundles and sacks. The 5-digit ZIP Codes in each scheme are treated as a single presort destination subject to a single minimum volume. Bundles prepared for a 5-digit scheme destination that contain pieces for only one of the schemed 5-digit ZIP Codes are considered 5-digit scheme sorted.
- c. 3-digit: the ZIP Code in the delivery address on all pieces begins with the same three digits (see [L002](#), Column A).
- d. 3-digit scheme bundles for flats meeting the automation-compatibility standards in [301.3.0](#): the ZIP Code in the delivery address on all pieces begins with one of the 3-digit ZIP Code ranges shown in [L008](#). When standards require 3-digit/scheme sort, mailers must prepare all possible 3-digit scheme bundles of flats before preparing 3-digit bundles. The 3-digit ZIP Codes in each scheme



are treated as a single presort destination subject to a single minimum volume. Bundles prepared for a 3-digit scheme destination that contain pieces for only one of the schemed 3-digit ZIP Codes are considered 3-digit scheme sorted.

- e. ADC: all pieces are addressed for delivery in the service area of the same area distribution center (ADC) (see [L004](#)).
- f. Mixed [NDC, ADC, etc.]: the pieces are for delivery in the service area of more than one NDC, ADC, etc.

1.4 Preparation Definitions and Instructions

For purposes of preparing mail:

- a. The term, *pieces*, refers to individually addressed mailpieces.
- b. A *full sack* is defined in the standards for the class and price claimed.
- c. 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. Smaller quantities may be prepared only if specifically permitted.
- d. 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. Smaller quantities may be prepared only if specifically permitted.
- e. A *bundle* is a group of addressed pieces secured together as a unit. Bundle preparation is described in [2.0](#).
- f. 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 preparation requirements or the size of the individual pieces.

2.0 Bundles

2.1 Definition of a Bundle

Mailers assemble pieces available for different presort destinations into groups. A bundle is a group of addressed pieces secured together as a unit.

2.2 Address Visibility

Mailers preparing presort bundles must ensure that the delivery address information and any presort designations on the top mailpiece in each bundle are visible and readable by the naked eye. Mailers using strapping can avoid obstructing visibility by using clear, smooth strapping tightly secured around the bundle.

2.3 Arranging Pieces in a Bundle ("Facing")

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).
- d. When pieces are nonuniform in thickness because they are thicker in the center instead of along an edge or corner, instead of counter-stacking such pieces, limit the height (thickness) of the bundle to 3 to 6 inches.

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. When banding bundles, mailers must meet the following standards:
 1. Do not place any bands closer than 1 inch from any bundle edge.
 2. When using twine or string, 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 or 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.

2.6 Bundle Sizes

Each logical bundle (the total group of pieces for a bundle destination) of flats must meet the bundle size standards in 4.2. The pieces in the logical bundle must be secured in a physical bundle(s). Each physical bundle for a destination should contain at least the minimum bundle size. The size of each physical bundle may, however, contain the exact bundle minimum, more or fewer pieces than the bundle minimum; depending on the size or total number of the pieces to that destination. Unless otherwise noted, the maximum weight for bundles in sacks is 20 pounds. Bundles on pallets must meet additional bundling requirements under 705.8.0, and each bundle must always contain at least two pieces.

2.7 Other Bundle Sizes

An individual bundle may be prepared with fewer than the minimum number of pieces required 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).

2.8 Labeling Bundles

The presort level of each bundle must be identified either with an optional endorsement line under [708.7.0](#) or with a barcoded pressure-sensitive bundle label placed anywhere on the address side of the top piece in the bundle, as long as it does not obscure the delivery address block. The following colors and presort characters apply to bundle labels:

- a. Five-digit scheme presort level, red Label 5 SCH.
- b. Five-digit presort level, red Label 5.
- c. Three-digit scheme presort level, green Label 3 SCH.
- d. Three-digit presort level, green Label 3.
- e. ADC presort level, pink Label A.
- f. Mixed ADC presort level, tan Label X.

3.0 Sacks and Sack Labels

3.1 Maximum Weight of Sacks

The maximum weight of any sack (mail plus sack tare) must not exceed 70 pounds.

3.2 Basic Standards for Sack Labels

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 and with dual plastic label holders/closures.
- c. Illegible labels are not acceptable. Machine-printed labels (available from the USPS) ensure legibility. Legible hand-printed labels are acceptable.

3.3 Physical Characteristics of a Sack Label

A sack label must meet these specifications:

- a. Color: white or manila.
- b. Weight: 70-pound or heavier paper stock (required for mailings of automation-compatible flats, optional for others).
- 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.

3.4 Line 1 (Destination Line)

Line 1 (destination line) must meet these standards:

- a. *Placement.* Line 1 must be the first line on the label, 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.
- b. *Information.* Line 1 must contain only the information specified by standard, including the destination facility prefix (e.g., "ADC"). Two zeros may follow the 3-digit ZIP Code prefix (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.

3.5 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 or tray 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
Barcoded	BC
Digit	D
Flats	FLTS
General Delivery Unit	G
Highway Contract Route	H
Mixed	MXD
Nonbarcoded	NON BC (sacks)
Package Services	PSVC
Post Office Box Section	B
Rural Route	R
Working	WKG

3.6 Line 3 (Office of Mailing or Mailer Information Line)

Line 3 (office of mailing or mailer information line) must be the bottom line of required information and must show either the city and state of the origin Post Office or the mailer's name and the city and state of the mailer's location. The ZIP Code of the mailer's location may be used instead of the city and state.



3.7 Abbreviations for Lines 1 and 3

Lines 1 and 3 may contain abbreviated information if such abbreviations are in the USPS City State Product.

3.8 Placement of Extraneous Information

Extraneous information is not permitted, except as allowed by 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.

4.0 Preparing Presorted Flats

4.1 Basic Standards

All mailings of Presorted Media Mail and Presorted Library Mail are subject to these general requirements:

- a. All pieces must be sorted to the finest extent possible under [4.2](#) or palletized under [705.8.0](#).
- b. Each piece claimed at Media Mail prices must be marked "Presorted (or "PRSRT") Media Mail" under [302.3.0](#). Each piece claimed at Library Mail prices must be marked "Presorted (or "PRSRT") Library Mail" under [302.3.0](#).

4.2 Bundling

4.2.1 Required Bundling

A bundle must be prepared when the quantity of addressed pieces for a required presort level is a minimum of 10 pieces. Smaller volumes are permitted only under [2.6](#) and [2.7](#) and for mixed ADC bundles. The maximum weight of each physical bundle is 20 pounds, except that 5-digit bundles in 5-digit sacks may weigh a maximum of 40 pounds. Each bundle must contain at least two addressed pieces.

4.2.2 Bundling and Labeling

For mailings consisting entirely of pieces meeting the automation-compatibility criteria in [301.3.0](#), pieces must be prepared in 5-digit scheme bundles for 5-digit ZIP Codes in [L007](#) and in 3-digit scheme bundles for 3-digit ZIP Codes in [L008](#). Preparation sequence, bundle size, and labeling:

- a. 5-digit scheme (optional, but required for 5-digit price); red Label 5 SCH or OEL. See definition in [1.4c](#).

- b. 5-digit (optional, but required for 5-digit price); red Label 5 or OEL. See definition in [1.4c](#).
- c. 3-digit scheme (required); green Label 3 SCH or OEL. See definition in [1.4d](#).
- d. 3-digit; green (required) Label 3 or OEL. See definition [1.4d](#).
- e. ADC (required); pink Label A or OEL.
- f. Mixed ADC (required); tan Label X or OEL.

4.3 Sacking

4.3.1 Required Sacking

A sack must be prepared when the quantity of mail for a required presort destination reaches the minimums specified in [4.3.2](#) or 1,000 cubic inches. Smaller volumes are not permitted (except in mixed ADC sacks).

4.3.2 Sacking and Labeling

Preparation sequence, sack size, and labeling:

- a. 5-digit/scheme (optional, but required for 5-digit price); see [1.4c](#); scheme sort required, only for pieces meeting the automation-compatibility criteria in [301.3.0](#); minimum 10 addressed pieces; labeling:
 - 1. Line 1: For 5-digit scheme sacks, use [L007](#), Column B. For 5-digit sacks, use city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code on mail (see [3.4](#) for overseas military mail).
 - 2. Line 2: For 5-digit scheme sacks, "PSVC FLT 5D SCH NBC." For 5-digit sacks, "PSVC FLT 5D NBC."
- b. 3-digit: required (20-piece minimum).
 - 1. Line 1: use [L002](#), Column A.
 - 2. Line 2: "PSVC FLTS 3D NON BC."
- c. ADC: required (20-piece minimum).
 - 1. Line 1: use [L004](#), Column B.
 - 2. Line 2: "PSVC FLTS ADC NON BC."
- d. Mixed ADC: required (no minimum).
 - 1. Line 1: Use [L009](#), Column B.
 - 2. Line 2: "PSVC FLTS NON BC WKG."

