



275 Mail Preparation

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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.

1.2 Definition of Mailings

Mailings are defined as:

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 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. Other specific standards may define whether separate mailings may be combined, palletized, reported, or deposited together.

- a. 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 [201.6.0](#): 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. 5-digit scheme (pallets and sacks) for 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](#) 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



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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. The 5-digit scheme sort is always optional, including when 5-digit sortation is required for price eligibility. The 5-digit scheme sort need not be used for all possible 5-digit scheme sorts.

- d. 3-digit: the ZIP Code in the delivery address on all pieces begins with the same three digits (see [L002](#), Column A).
- e. 3-digit scheme bundles for flats meeting the automation-compatibility standards in [201.6.0](#): 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.
- f. ADC: all pieces are addressed for delivery in the service area of the same area distribution center (ADC) (see [L004](#)).
- g. ASF/NDC for parcels: 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](#)).
- h. 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. Quantities indicated for optional or required sortations always refer to pieces unless specifically excepted.
- 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. 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.
- 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. 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.

- e. 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.
- f. A *bundle* is a group of addressed pieces secured together as a unit. Bundle preparation is described in [2.0](#).
- g. 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

A *bundle* is a group of addressed pieces, for a presort destination, secured together as a unit. See [203.3.0](#) for bundling standards.

3.0 Sacks and Sack Labels

See [203.5.0](#) for sack standards.

4.0 Basic Standards for Preparing Media Mail and Library Mail

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

- a. Each mailing must meet the applicable price and eligibility standards in [273](#) and [1.0](#) through [3.0](#).
- b. Each piece claimed at Media Mail prices must be marked “Presorted (or “PRSR”) Media Mail” under [202.3.9](#). Each piece claimed at Library Mail prices must be marked “Presorted (or “PRSR”) Library Mail” under [202.3.9](#).
- c. All pieces must be sorted to the finest extent possible under [5.0](#), [6.0](#), or palletized under [705.8.0](#).
- d. All parcels in a mailing must be within the same processing category. See [201.7.0](#) for definitions of machinable and irregular parcels.



5.0 Preparing Media Mail and Library Mail Presorted Flats

5.1 Bundling

5.1.1 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 [203.3.0](#) 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.

5.1.2 Bundling and Labeling

For mailings consisting entirely of pieces meeting the automation-compatibility criteria in [201.6.0](#) 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 [1.3b](#).
- b. 5-digit (optional, but required for 5-digit price); red Label 5 or OEL. See definition in [1.3b](#).
- c. 3-digit scheme (required); green Label 3 SCH or OEL. See definition in [1.3c](#).
- d. 3-digit; green (required) Label 3 or OEL. See definition [1.3d](#).
- e. ADC (required); pink Label A or OEL.
- f. Mixed ADC (required); tan Label X or OEL.

5.2 Sacking

5.2.1 Required Sacking

A sack must be prepared when the quantity of mail for a required presort destination reaches the minimums specified in [5.2.2](#) or 1,000 cubic inches. Smaller volumes are not permitted (except in mixed ADC sacks).

5.2.2 Sacking and Labeling

Preparation sequence, sack size, and labeling:

- a. 5-digit/scheme (optional, but required for 5-digit price); see [1.3b](#); scheme sort required (before 5-digit sort), only for pieces meeting the automation-compatibility criteria in [201.6.0](#); 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 [203.4.11](#) 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."

6.0 Preparing Media Mail and Library Mail Parcels

6.1 Basic Standards

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

- a. Each mailing must meet the applicable price and eligibility standards in [273](#) and [1.0](#) through [3.0](#).
- b. All parcels in a mailing must be within the same processing category. See [201.7.0](#) for definitions of machinable and irregular parcels.
- c. All pieces must be sorted to the finest extent possible or palletized under [705.8.0](#).

6.2 Preparing Machinable Parcels

6.2.1 Required Sacking

A sack must be prepared when the quantity of mail for a required presort destination reaches 10 addressed pieces or 20 pounds, whichever occurs first. At the mailer's option, a sack may be prepared when the quantity of mail reaches 1,000 cubic inches. Smaller volumes are not permitted (except in mixed NDC sacks). Sacking also is subject to these conditions:

- a. Identical-weight pieces that weigh 2 pounds or less must be sacked using the 10-piece minimum; those that weigh more must be sacked using the 20-pound or 1,000 cubic inch minimum.
- b. For nonidentical-weight pieces, mailers must use either 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 10-piece or 20-pound minimum applies). Alternately, mailers may sack by the actual piece count, mail weight for each bundle destination, or 1,000 cubic inch minimum, provided that 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 postage statement which sacking method was used except for eVS mailings prepared under [705.2.9](#).



6.2.2 Sacking and Labeling

Preparation sequence and labeling:

- a. 5-digit/scheme (optional, but required for 5-digit price); 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 on mail (see [203.4.11](#) for overseas military mail).
 2. Line 2: For 5-digit scheme sacks, "PSVC MACH 5D SCH." For 5-digit sacks, "PSVC MACH 5D."
- b. NDC: required.
 1. Line 1: use [L601](#), Column B.
 2. Line 2: "PSVC MACH NDC."
- c. Mixed NDC: required (no minimum).
 1. Line 1: "MXD" followed by the [L601](#), Column B information for the NDC serving the 3-digit ZIP Code of entry Post Office.
 2. Line 2: "PSVC MACH WKG."

6.3 Preparing Irregular Parcels

6.3.1 Required Bundling

A bundle must be prepared when the quantity of addressed pieces for a required presort level reaches a minimum of 10 pieces. Smaller volumes are not permitted except for mixed ADC bundles. Bundling is not required for pieces placed in 5-digit scheme sacks and 5-digit sacks when such pieces are enclosed in an envelope, full-length sleeve, full-length wrapper, or polybag and the minimum bundle volume is met. The maximum weight of each physical bundle is 20 pounds, except that 5-digit bundles placed in 5-digit sacks may weigh a maximum of 40 pounds. Each physical bundle must contain at least two addressed pieces. Bundling is also subject to these conditions:

- a. Identical-weight pieces that weigh 1 pound or less must be prepared using the 10-piece minimum; those that weigh more than 1 pound must be prepared using the 10-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 10-piece or 10-pound minimum applies), or bundle 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 in each bundle and their total weight.
- c. Mailers must note on the postage statement which sacking method was used except for the Electronic Verification System (eVS) mailings prepared under [705.2.9](#).

6.3.2 Bundling and Labeling

Preparation sequence, bundle size, and labeling:

- a. 5-digit (optional, but required for 5-digit price eligibility); 10-piece minimum; red Label 5 or optional endorsement line (OEL).
- b. 3-digit (required); 10-piece minimum; green Label 3 or OEL.
- c. ADC (required); 10-piece minimum; pink Label A or OEL.
- d. Mixed ADC (required); no minimum; tan Label X or OEL.

6.3.3 Required Sacking

A sack must be prepared when the quantity of mail for a required presort destination reaches 10 addressed pieces or 20 pounds, whichever occurs first. At the mailer's option, a sack may be prepared when the quantity of mail reaches 1,000 cubic inches. Smaller volumes are not permitted (except in mixed ADC sacks). Optional 5-digit scheme sacks may be prepared only when there are at least 10 addressed pieces or 20 pounds. Smaller volumes are not permitted (except in mixed ADC sacks). Sacking is also subject to these conditions:

- a. Identical-weight pieces weighing 2 pounds or less must be sacked using the 10-piece minimum; those that weigh more must be sacked using the 20-pound or 1,000 cubic inch minimum.
- b. For nonidentical-weight pieces, mailers must use either 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 10-piece or 20-pound minimum applies). Alternatively, mailers may sack by the actual piece count, mail weight for each destination, or 1,000 cubic inch minimum, provided that documentation can be provided with the mailing that shows (specifically for each sack) the number of pieces in each sack and their total weight.
- c. Mailers must note on the postage statement which sacking method was used except for eVS mailings prepared under [705.2.9](#).

6.3.4 Sacking and Labeling

Preparation sequence and labeling:

- a. 5-digit/scheme (optional, but required for 5-digit price); 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 on mail (see [203.4.11](#) for overseas military mail).
 2. Line 2: For 5-digit scheme sacks, "PSVC IRREG 5D SCH." For 5-digit sacks, "PSVC IRREG 5D."
- b. 3-digit: required.
 1. Line 1: use [L002](#), Column A.
 2. Line 2: "PSVC IRREG 3D."



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- c. ADC: required.
 - 1. Line 1: use [L004](#), Column B.
 - 2. Line 2: "PSVC IRREG ADC."
- d. Mixed ADC: required (no minimum).
 - 1. Line 1: "MXD" followed by city, state, and ZIP Code of ADC serving 3-digit ZIP Code prefix of entry Post Office, as shown in [L004](#). If placed on an ASF or NDC pallet under option in [705.8.10.5](#), use [L010](#).
 - 2. Line 2: "PSVC IRREG WKG."