

Customer Support Ruling
Mailing Standards
Headquarters, US Postal Service
Arlington, VA 22209-6038

Invoices Enclosed in Standard Mail and Package Services Parcels

PS-155 (E610.4.1; E710.1.5)

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In accordance with *Domestic Mail Manual* (DMM) E610.4.1 and E710.1.5, an invoice, whether or not it also serves as a bill, if it relates solely to the matter with which it is mailed, may be enclosed or placed in an envelope (marked "Invoice Enclosed") and may be attached to the outside of a parcel mailed at the Standard Mail or Package Services rates showing any or all of the following:

1. Names and addresses of sender and addressee.
2. Names and quantities of articles enclosed, descriptions of each (e.g., price, tax, style, stock number, size, and quality and, if defective, nature of defects).
3. Order or file number, date of order, date and manner of shipment, shipping weight, and postage paid, and initials or name of packer or checker.

Invoices have long been used by the mail-order industry to advise customers of how their orders are being filled (description of the merchandise sent, initials of the packer or checker, etc.) and, since 1968, as bills or statements of account relating solely to the matter with which mailed. The term invoice has many different meanings depending on its particular use. Since 1888, when Congress enacted the basic statute relating to permissible marks, printing or writing on Periodicals and Standard Mail, the Postal Service has permitted invoices to be enclosed in Standard Mail parcels and Package Services parcels. In 1913 the Postal Service interpretation of the 1888 statute was codified in the Postal Laws and Regulations to specifically permit the enclosure of invoices which included, for purposes of description, the price, style, stock number, size and quality of the articles, the order or file number, date of order, date and manner of shipment and initials or name of the salesman or of the person by whom the articles were packed or checked.

The Postal Service's regulation allowing invoices to be enclosed with Standard Mail and Package Services parcels remained substantially the same through the years up to 1968, although the postal regulations were recodified and certain sections renumbered on many occasions.

Throughout this period, it was the practice of the mail-order industry to use invoices to provide customers with standardized information about the fulfillment of their orders. Customers receiving only a part of their order in a shipment need to know why the shipment is incomplete. Therefore, in addition to information describing the items enclosed in the parcel, brief impersonal notations such as "Temporarily Out Of Stock" have been added to describe the status of items included in the same order, but not in the same shipment. These additions describe why the enclosed shipment is incomplete and the Postal Service does not question their inclusion on invoices enclosed with Standard Mail and Package Services parcels.

In enacting the Postal Revenue Act of 1967, the Congress, for the first time, set a statutory basis for the enclosure of invoices in Standard Mail and Package Services parcels. The 1967 act contained a provision requiring that all bills and statements of account be mailed at the First-Class rates as prescribed in DMM E110.1.5. An exception to this requirement was added which provided that invoices whether or not they also serve as bills or statements of account could be included in Standard Mail and Package Services parcels without payment of First-Class Mail postage. The statutory language added to the list of permissible marks and enclosures in

Standard Mail, the following: "Invoices, whether or not also serving as bills, if they relate solely to the matter with which they are mailed."

With this change, Congress intended that mailers be allowed to continue their practice of enclosing in Standard Mail and Package Services parcels certain identifying information relating to the shipment. Because invoices were already allowed to be enclosed in Standard Mail and Package Services parcels, the "relating solely to the matter with which they are mailed" language should be interpreted as underscoring the exception to the new rule that bills and statements of account are subject to the First-Class rates. The "relating solely" language was included to ensure that cumulative statements of account would not be enclosed in parcels.

In making a determination whether information contained on invoices enclosed with Standard Mail parcels and Package Services parcels is a proper addition, postal employees should consider several factors. The additions must be brief and impersonal. They must relate solely to merchandise included in the same order as the merchandise enclosed in a particular parcel. Notations such as "temporarily out of stock," "reorder in 60 days," "color info. missing," "this item no longer available," "mailed in parcel 2," etc., are acceptable notations forming parts of invoices enclosed with Standard Mail and Package Services parcels. Cumulative bills and statements of account are not acceptable.

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