

INTELLIGENT MAIL BARCODES FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

General

What is the Intelligent Mail® barcode?

The Intelligent Mail barcode, formerly referred to as the 4-State Customer barcode, is a new Postal Service barcode used to sort and track letters and flats. The Postal Service is promoting use of the Intelligent Mail barcode because it expands the ability to track individual mailpieces and provides customers with more options and information about the mail.

How does it work?

The Intelligent Mail barcode combines the data of the existing POSTNET™ and the PLANET Code® barcodes, as well as other data, into a single barcode. The Intelligent Mail barcode is a type of height-modulated barcode, that uses four distinct vertical bar types (Full, Tracker, Ascender and Descender) as shown below.



Note: The Postal Service Flat Mail Identification Code Sort (FICS) program uses another type of 4-state barcode that looks similar to the Intelligent Mail barcode, but it is applied as an ID tag on non-barcoded flat mail pieces only.

How do mailers benefit from the Intelligent Mail barcode?

The Intelligent Mail barcode is the result of the Postal Service's efforts to develop more robust codes capable of encoding more information, while minimizing the space used on the mailpiece. The Intelligent Mail barcode:

- Has a greater overall data capacity than existing barcodes.
- Provides mailers with more digits for their use, allowing for unique identification of up to a billion mailpieces per mailing.
- Provides greater visibility and more accurate, detailed information about mailings which can enable better decision making.
- Increases mailpiece "real estate" by eliminating the need for multiple barcodes.
- Allows for participation in multiple USPS service programs with a single barcode.

What services use the Intelligent Mail barcode and when can I start using it?

The Postal Service offers a suite of services for letters and flats using the Intelligent Mail barcode. Business Mail Entry Units (BMEU) started accepting letters with the Intelligent Mail barcode in September of 2006. In May of 2007, the

Postal Service expanded use of the Intelligent Mail barcode by allowing mailers to use it on automation flat-size mailpieces.

Since then, mailers have had the option to use the Intelligent Mail barcode on letter and flat mail for the Confirm® Service, referred to as OneCode Confirm™, and a version of Address Change Service™ (ACS™) called OneCode ACS™.

Current Confirm subscribers should contact Confirm Customer Assistance at 800-238-3150 for instructions on how to use their Subscriber ID within the Mailer ID field and to modify their account to accept the Intelligent Mail barcode.

What about automation prices?

Since March 2007, mailers using the Intelligent Mail barcode have been able to qualify for automation prices as long as all other automation requirements are met including meeting addressing, readability, and other requirements for processing on automated equipment.

The Intelligent Mail barcode must contain a proper routing ZIP Code™, a valid Mailer ID and a Service Type ID to satisfy the criteria for automation prices. The easiest way to apply for a Mailer ID is to contact your local Mailpiece Design Analyst (MDA). If you do not know who your local MDA is there is an easy lookup tool on Postal Explorer (*pe.usps.com*).

Am I required to use the Intelligent Mail barcode in lieu of POSTNET and PLANET codes?

Currently, use of the Intelligent Mail barcode is optional; however, because it offers significant advantages over POSTNET and PLANET Code barcodes (including using less mailpiece “real estate” and offering more overall data capacity), many customers have found it makes good business sense to adopt this new format today. The Postal Service’s current plans are to require use of the Intelligent Mail barcode to qualify for automation prices beginning May 2010.

Where can I place the Intelligent Mail barcode?

When used to qualify for an automation price, the Intelligent Mail barcode follows the same placement rules as POSTNET barcodes. On letters, it can be placed in the address block or in the barcode clear zone found on the lower right corner of the envelope. On flats, the Intelligent Mail barcode can be placed anywhere on the address side as long as it is at least 1/8 inch from any edge of the piece.

What are the dimensions of the barcode?

The 31-digit Intelligent Mail barcode (65 bars) is slightly longer than the 11-digit POSTNET (62 bars). The print specification allows mailers some flexibility in choosing the height and width of the barcode they produce. The minimum height specification for the Intelligent Mail barcode is 0.125 inches.

Will I have problems passing MERLIN® program requirements?

No. The Postal Service’s Mail Evaluation Readability and Lookup Instrument (MERLIN) program is a tool that assists with the acceptance of business mail.

The Intelligent Mail barcode tolerances are similar to POSTNET's and will work with MERLIN.

Will I need to complete CASS™ or MASS™ certification again?

The Coding Accuracy Support System (CASS) certification enables the Postal Service to evaluate the accuracy of address-matching software programs. The CASS process is applicable to mailpieces with the Intelligent Mail barcode, but there is no need to redo this certification.

The Multi-line Accuracy Support System (MASS) certification is an extension of CASS. It has an annual certification requirement and the Intelligent Mail barcode certification is now incorporated into this process.

Full-Service and Basic Options

What is the basic service for Intelligent Mail?

With the "basic" option - it's pretty simple - mailers will use the Intelligent Mail barcode on their letter and flat mailpieces in place of the POSTNET barcode. With one exception, mailers must populate all the fields in the barcode – those fields are the Barcode ID with the Optional Endorsement Line information if used; the Service Type ID specifying class of mail and any special services; the USPS assigned Mailer ID; and the Delivery Point ZIP Code. Under the Basic option you are not required to uniquely number your mailpieces – so you may choose to populate the Serial Number field of the Intelligent Mail Barcode with zeroes.

What is the full-service option for Intelligent Mail?

The first requirement for the full-service option is to apply an Intelligent Mail barcode with a unique serial number on each of your letter and flat mailpieces.

You will be required to apply the Intelligent Mail Tray barcode on tray and sack labels and the Intelligent Mail Container barcode, when required, on labels affixed to pallets, all purpose containers (APCs), gaylords and other rolling stock.

You will need to electronically submit postage statements and mailing documentation before the mailing is inducted.

Just as today, if you drop-ship mail to DBMC, DADC, or DSCF facilities, you must schedule appointments using the Facility Access and Shipment Tracking (FAST) system. In addition, these appointments must be created or updated with content (container level) details provided to USPS through the electronic *PostalOne!*FAST Web Services application. For more information, visit usps.com/postalone/autodropshipschedule.htm.

Will there be a price differential between basic-service and full-service mailings?

We understand that there are a number of factors that will influence customers' decisions regarding their participation in the Intelligent Mail program. The full-service option provides free start-the-clock information to notify mailers when we

take possession of their mail, and free address correction information. We have also announced that there will be a price differential between the two options, with the full-service option priced lower than the basic option. We hope that the combination of these differences between the two options will encourage many customers to choose the full-service option since it provides many more opportunities to realize the benefits of the Intelligent Mail vision. The proposal, including the prices, will not go into effect until May 2009. Since the prices will be part of our comprehensive price adjustment which depends on many variables, including the inflation rate, it is not possible to provide the specific prices at this time. In the meantime, though, we will be working with the industry to better understand their intelligent mail efforts, and we will be evaluating the financial implications of various pricing approaches. Again, we understand that many factors will influence customer participation, and will continue to be as forthcoming as possible with information that will help guide those decisions.

What information is provided with "start-the-clock"?

We will provide free start-the-clock information that indicates when a full-service mailing has been inducted by the Postal Service. This will not include container scan information.

Will the Intelligent Mail barcode be required on all reply mail that is enclosed in outgoing automation-priced letters and flats?

Yes, we encourage mailers to use the Intelligent Mail barcode on all reply mail as soon as practical; our proposal requires use of the Intelligent Mail barcode as of May 2010. The Intelligent Mail barcode on business reply mail pieces would include 9-digit routing codes; barcodes on other reply mail would include delivery point routing codes.

When POSTNET barcodes are no longer allowed, will PLANET Code barcodes be allowed with Confirm service?

We encourage mailers to use the Intelligent Mail barcode for Confirm service as soon as they are able. When POSTNET barcodes are no longer acceptable for automation mail prices (as of May 2010), we would simultaneously disallow PLANET Code barcodes for use with Confirm service.

How will mailers access information from scans of tray label and container label barcodes?

The Postal Service will consider providing this data in the future as part of an existing or new product.

How do you suggest I create unique serial numbers?

The Serial Number field is used to uniquely identify mailpieces for the full-service option. You can create unique serial numbers through a variety of methods and techniques such as: serializing the mailpieces (e.g. consecutive numbering), embedding Julian dates, or using database random number generators and reference tables. The key is to keep the serial numbers unique for a 45-day period.

Can I repeat the same serial numbers in a full-service mailing within 45 days as long as the pieces contain different Service Type IDs?

Yes. The Service Type ID in combination with the Mailer ID and serial number can be used for mailpiece uniqueness when the class of mail is different.

Can pieces within the same mailing have different Service Type IDs?

Yes, for example a mailer may choose to request Confirm service for some pieces but not for all pieces in a mailing.

When using the full-service option, will the mail in each tray have to match the documentation?

For most mailings, yes, unless otherwise authorized as noted in our publication, *A Guide to Electronic Documentation and Appointments for Full-Service Mailings*, available in May 2008 on our website, ribbs.usps.gov/fullserviceguides. Note that the mailing documentation must accurately match the total number of pieces for each destination.

Will there be palletization standards for full-service mailings of First-Class Mail?

These are subject to customer/supplier agreements.

Are Mail.dat and Wizard Web Services fully ready to support full-service Intelligent Mail implementation?

We are making the necessary modifications to the systems in concert with the industry. USPS will be ready with the implementation of these data exchange methods by May 2009.

Under what conditions will Postal Wizard (PW) be allowed for full-service mailings?

Postal Wizard (formerly called "Postage Statement Wizard") enables electronic submission of postage statements. PW is acceptable for full-service mailings of less than 10,000 First-Class Mail or Standard Mail pieces that do not require accompanying documentation, such as permit imprint mailings of identical weight pieces separated by price category or mailings with the exact postage affixed to each piece. (See current DMM 244.4.3 for Standard Mail letters and similar DMM sections for documentation standards for other classes and shapes of mail.)

When using Intelligent Mail container labels under the full-service option, how many container labels will be required and where will they be placed?

To enhance our ability to successfully scan container label barcodes, there should be three labels placed on different sides of the pallet. For containers other than pallets, mailers would place a container label in designated location(s).

Special Services

What are the conditions for participants using the full-service option to obtain free address correction notices?

We will provide free automated address correction notices for correctly formatted mailpieces (in a full-service mailing) that have the appropriate ancillary service endorsement and Service Type ID embedded in Intelligent Mail barcodes.

Will printed ancillary service endorsements be allowed, either for traditional Address Change Service (ACS) or when using OneCode ACS?

Yes, though not required for First-Class Mail, printed ancillary service endorsements will still be allowed. When using either traditional ACS or OneCode ACS, printed ancillary service endorsements will still be required for Standard Mail to ensure that mailers receive the address correction service they requested.

Can the Return Service Requested ancillary service endorsement be used when using the Intelligent Mail barcode?

When "Return Service Requested" is used on mailpieces, those mailpieces will be handled as they are today, whether or not they have an Intelligent Mail barcode. The Return Service Requested endorsement is not authorized for use with either traditional ACS or OneCode ACS. If it is included on any mailpiece, an ACS record will not be created and the mailpiece will be processed according to the handling appropriate for the class of mail.

Can an Intelligent Mail barcode be used on Certified Mail as a replacement for the current barcoded Certified Mail label?

Not at this time.

If I embed the optional endorsement line (OEL) information in the Intelligent Mail barcode on mailpieces, will I have to print the OEL in the address block as well?

Yes, at least on the top piece of each bundle of flats. The human-readable printed OEL is needed for situations in which we have to manually handle bundles of flats, so employees can determine the presort level of the bundles. We do not need the printed OEL on any bundles of automation letters, but we still require a printed OEL (or pressure-sensitive bundle label) on nonautomation letters.

Mailer IDs

What is a Mailer ID and how do I obtain one?

A Mailer ID may be a 9-digit or 6-digit number, depending on the annual mail volume of the mailer. Mailer IDs are assigned by USPS to each mail owner or mailing agent that requests them. They are used in Intelligent Mail barcodes, Intelligent Mail tray barcodes, and Intelligent Mail container barcodes. Mailer IDs are also identified in electronic mailing documentation submitted with full-service mailings. Mailer IDs may be requested by contacting your local Mailpiece Design Analyst (MDA) or Business Mail Entry unit. To locate an MDA, access: pe.usps.com/mpdesign/mpdfr_mda_lookup.asp.

Can one mailer obtain multiple Mailer IDs?

More than one Mailer ID will be granted to the same mailer or mailing agent on an exception basis. Contact the Mailpiece Design Analyst or Business Mail Entry Unit where your mailing account is held and advise them of the reason for your request for multiple Mailer IDs.

Can the Mailer ID in an Intelligent Mail barcode be the mail preparer's or does it always have to be the ID of the mail owner?

Yes, the Mailer ID can be either the mail owner's or the mail preparer's. The mail owner must be identified by one of two means under the full-service option. The first is to use the mail owner's Mailer ID in the Intelligent Mail barcode applied to letters and flats. The second is by the mail preparer's submission of electronic documentation that identifies the mail owner. When mail owners elect to use their own 6-digit or 9-digit Mailer ID and unique serial numbers for mailpieces, mail preparers would be required to honor the 6-digit or 9-digit Mailer ID and unique numbering as architected by the mail owner.

Whose Mailer ID may be used on the mailpieces, trays or sacks, and containers that are part of the same mailing? Can they be different or do they all have to be the same?

The Mailer ID used in the Intelligent Mail barcode on letters and flats, in the Intelligent Mail Tray barcodes on tray and sack labels, and in the Intelligent Mail Container barcodes on container labels may be the same Mailer ID throughout the whole mailing — or a different Mailer ID may be used on tray labels and container labels than is used on mailpieces. For example, a mail owner's Mailer ID may be used in the Intelligent Mail barcode on the pieces in a mailing, but the mail preparer's Mailer ID is in the barcodes on tray and container labels. Also, multiple Mailer IDs are likely to occur in an MLOCR environment merging mailpieces from multiple owners. However, if the mail preparer's Mailer ID is used on the mailpieces, the mailing documentation accompanying the mailing must specify the mail owners.

Will a customer who acquired a Mailer ID before using Confirm service be able to use an existing Mailer ID once they decide to use Confirm?

Currently, Mailer IDs used on pieces for Confirm must have a leading zero in a 6-digit Mailer ID field. However, migrating from Confirm to OneCode Confirm must be coordinated with the Postal Service. By May 2009, mailers will be able to use any valid existing Mailer ID to obtain Confirm service.

Resources and Tools

What steps do I take to begin using Intelligent Mail Barcodes?

1. Talk with Mail Service Providers and vendors (or decide to do in-house).
2. Apply for Mailer ID – work with your Mailpiece Design Analyst (MDA).

3. Download software used to translate your intelligent data into the Intelligent Mail barcode.
4. Populate barcode fields.
5. Generate correct barcodes (31-digits applied to encoding software/fonts).

What tools (such as scanners, verifiers, templates, artwork) are available to help generate the Intelligent Mail barcode?

Converting to the Intelligent Mail barcode is a straightforward process that will provide you with many benefits. The Postal Service has developed a number of tools to help make it as easy as possible for you to prepare your Intelligent Mail barcodes appropriately. A number of tools and other resources are available on our website at ribbs.usps.gov/onecodesolution/ such as online encoder/decoder, encoder software for a range of platforms and Intelligent Mail barcode fonts.

Manual tools can be used to verify the physical characteristics of an Intelligent Mail barcode you have already created. Software tools help you prepare your barcodes in electronic format. Please access our *Intelligent Mail Barcode Resource* document currently available on our website at ribbs.usps.gov/onecodesolution/ to learn more about these tools. Remember, you can always reach out to your Mailpiece Design Analyst to get advice or direction about the suite of Intelligent Mail barcodes. Your vendors and mail service providers will also likely have resources to help you take advantage of these new barcodes.

How do I decode the Intelligent Mail barcode?

Unlike today's POSTNET barcode, the Intelligent Mail barcode cannot be decoded by looking at it. USPS provides an online decoder tool available on our website at ribbs.usps.gov/onecodesolution/. A decoder will convert a sequence of bars in the Intelligent Mail barcode into meaningful tracking and delivery point ZIP Code information. Decoders are not owned by the Postal Service; please check with vendors for other decoders.

Does the Intelligent Mail barcode need to use a certain font?

Yes, special fonts are needed to print the Intelligent Mail barcode. See our Intelligent Mail website at ribbs.usps.gov/onecodesolution/ for a listing of the fonts provided by the Postal Service. There are many commercial products that provide the fonts you will need to create the Intelligent Mail barcode. These new fonts will also meet the updated barcode specifications the Postal Service has defined. Commercial vendors that provide fonts for the Intelligent Mail barcode are listed in the *Intelligent Mail Barcode Resource* document.

Where can I find more information on the Intelligent Mail barcode?

For the latest information on the Intelligent Mail barcode, visit the Rapid Information Bulletin Board System (RIBBS) website at: ribbs.usps.gov/onecodesolution/.