

## 245 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 rate 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.

#### 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 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 (e.g., automation, nonautomation, enhanced carrier route) 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 [243.3.6, Residual Volume Requirement](#), the types of Standard Mail listed below may not be part of the same mailing.
  1. Automation rate and any other type of mail.
  2. Enhanced Carrier Route and any other type of mail.
  3. Enhanced Carrier Route letter rate pieces and Enhanced Carrier Route nonletter rate pieces.
  4. Presorted rate mail and any other type of mail.
  5. Machinable and nonmachinable pieces.
  6. 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.
  7. 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 (trays) for automation letters*: the ZIP Code in the delivery address on all pieces is one of the 5-digit ZIP Code areas processed by the USPS as a single scheme, as shown in the USPS City State Product.
- 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*: the ZIP Code in the delivery address on all pieces begins with one of the 3-digit prefixes processed by the USPS as a single scheme, as shown in [L003](#).
- f. *Origin/optional 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. Subject to standard, a separation is required for each such 3-digit area regardless of the volume of mail.
- g. *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.
- h. *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.
- i. *ADC/AADC*: all pieces are addressed for delivery in the service area of the same area distribution center (ADC) or automated area distribution center (AADC) (see [L801](#) or [L801](#)).
- j. *ASF/BMC*: all pieces are addressed for delivery in the service area of the same auxiliary service facility (ASF) or bulk mail center (BMC) (see [L601](#), [L602](#), or [L605](#)).
- k. *Mixed [ADC or AADC]*: the pieces are for delivery in the service area of more than one ADC or AADC.
- l. *Residual* pieces/bundles 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 rate. 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. This definition also applies when *pieces* is used in eligibility standards. Quantities indicated for optional or required sortations always refer to pieces unless specifically excepted.
- b. A *full letter tray* is one in which faced, upright pieces fill the length of the tray between 85% and 100% full.
- c. A *less-than-full* letter tray is one that contains mail for the same destination regardless of quantity or whether a full tray was previously prepared for that destination. Less-than-full trays may be prepared only if permitted by the standards for the rate claimed.
- d. An *overflow* letter tray is a less-than-full tray that contains all pieces remaining after preparation of full trays for the same destination. Overflow trays may be prepared only if permitted by the standards for the rate claimed.
- e. A *5-digit scheme sort* for automation letters yields 5-digit scheme trays for those 5-digit ZIP Codes identified in the USPS City State Product and 5-digit trays for other areas. Mail prepared using 5-digit scheme sort must be entered no later than 90 days after the release date of the City State Product used to obtain the scheme information (see [708.3.0, Coding Accuracy Support System \(CASS\)](#)). The 5-digit ZIP Codes in each scheme are treated as a single presort destination subject to a single minimum volume, with no further separation by 5-digit ZIP Code required. Trays 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. When standards require 5-digit/scheme sort, mailers must prepare all possible 5-digit scheme trays, then prepare all possible 5-digit trays.
- f. A *3-digit scheme sort* yields 3-digit scheme trays for those 3-digit ZIP Code prefixes listed in [L003](#) and 3-digit trays for other areas. The 3-digit ZIP Code prefixes in each scheme are treated as a single presort destination subject to a single minimum tray volume, with no further separation by 3-digit prefix required. Trays prepared for a 3-digit scheme destination that contain pieces for only one of the schemed 3-digit areas are still considered 3-digit scheme sorted and are labeled accordingly. When standards require 3-digit/scheme sort, mailers must prepare all possible 3-digit scheme trays, then prepare all possible 3-digit trays.
- g. 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. If more than one 3-digit (or 3-digit scheme) area is served, as indicated in [L005](#), a separate tray must be prepared for each.
- h. 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 rate eligibility



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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 rate.

- i. 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 rate eligibility standards. Standards for quantities with which preparation is optional are often followed by standards for larger quantities with which preparation is required.
- j. *Entry [facility]* (or *origin [facility]*) refers to the USPS mail processing facility (e.g., “entry BMC”) 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 BMC* includes subordinate ASFs unless otherwise specified.
- k. 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.
- l. A *bundle* is a group of addressed pieces secured together as a unit. The presort process considers the total number of pieces available for the particular presort destination and assembles them into groups meeting applicable volume and size standards. When the standards for the rate claimed require securing the pieces in each group together, the result is a bundle. The term *bundle* does not apply to unsecured groups of pieces (e.g., pieces prepared in trays and identified by separator cards or tic marks). Bundle preparation is described in [2.0](#).
- m. A *tic mark* is defined as a solid black rectangle that must be printed on both the front side (extending over the top) and back side (flap side) of the envelope. Tic marks may be used in lieu of separator cards for Standard Mail automation mailings and separator cards or rubber bands in Standard Mail nonautomation carrier route mailings prepared in full 5-digit carrier routes trays. Tic marks must be printed on the top edge of the first mailpiece in each carrier route grouping during the mailpiece production process and must meet the following specifications:
  1. Color: black.
  2. Reflectance and Contrast Ratio: The tic mark must meet the reflectance and contrast ratio specifications in [708.4.4, Reflectance](#).
  3. Location: The tic mark must extend along the top edge of the envelope, to the left of center line of the envelope. Its location must be referenced to the center line. The right edge of the tic mark must be 0.5 inch (+ 0.125 inch) from the center line of the envelope.

4. Size: The width of the tic mark must be 0.5 inch (+ 0.125 inch). The tic mark must extend over the top of the envelope, down each side a distance of 0.25 inch (+ 0.125 inch). When a second tic mark is used to indicate a tray break at the end of the tray, all specifications are the same as for one tick mark, except for the location on the envelope. When a second tic mark is used on the last piece in a tray to indicate a tray break, the right edge of the second tic mark must be 0.5 inch (+ 0.125 inch) from the left edge of the first tic mark.
- n. 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 (tray 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 restrictions on bundles.

## 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. The term *bundle* does not apply to pieces grouped or prepared loose in trays.

### 2.2 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.

### 2.3 Preparing Bundles

Cards and letter-size pieces are subject to these bundling standards:

- a. The maximum thickness for bundles of carrier route rate mail is 4 inches. The maximum thickness for other bundles is 6 inches.
- b. Mailings consisting entirely of card-size pieces (i.e., pieces not larger than 4-1/4 by 6 by 0.016 inch) must always be prepared in bundles.
- c. Bundles must be prepared for mail in all less-than-full trays and for nonmachinable Standard Mail.
- d. Except under 6.7, separator cards or tic marks may be used instead of bundling for letter-size pieces in full 5-digit carrier routes trays of Enhanced Carrier Route Standard Mail. The cards must be of paper or card stock, at least 0.25 inch higher than the highest pieces in the mailing, and in front of the corresponding groups of mail. The tic mark must be applied during the mailpiece production process and be printed on the top edge of the envelope, to the left of the center line of the envelope.



- e. For mailings consisting entirely of card-size pieces and mail in less-than-full trays, mailers must secure bundles with rubber bands, elastic strapping, flat plastic strapping, or string. Elastic strapping must be approved by USPS Engineering. If requested, the mailer must be able to show such approval for the strapping material used for a mailing.
- f. Bundles up to 1 inch thick must be secured with appropriate banding placed once around the girth (narrow dimension). Bundles over 1 inch thick must be secured with at least two bands, one around the length and one around the girth.

### **2.4 Securing Bundles**

Bundle preparation is subject to the following requirements:

- a. Bundles must be able to withstand normal transit and handling without breakage or injury to USPS employees.
- b. Bundles must be secured with banding, shrinkwrap, or shrinkwrap plus one or more bands. Banding includes plastic bands, rubber bands, twine/string, and similar material. Use of wire or metal banding is not permitted.
- c. When one band is used, it must be placed tightly around the girth (narrow dimension).
- d. Bundles over 1 inch high (thick) must be secured with at least two bands or with shrinkwrap. When double banding is used to secure bundles, it must encircle the length and girth of the bundle at least once. Additional bands may be used if none lies within 1 inch of any bundle edge.
- e. Banding tension must be sufficient to tighten and depress the edges of the bundle so pieces will not slip out of the banding during transit and processing. Loose banding is not allowed.
- f. When twine/string is used to band bundles, the knot(s) must be secure so the banding does not come loose during transit and processing.

### **2.5 Exception to Bundle Preparation—Full Single-Sort-Level Trays**

In mailings not entirely of card-size pieces (i.e., pieces not larger than 4-1/4 by 6 by 0.016 inch), mailers need not prepare bundles when placing mail in a full tray and none of the mail in that tray would have been more finely sorted if bundled. For example, the content of a full ADC tray need not be bundled if it would have all been prepared in ADC bundles to the same destination.

### **2.6 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 subject to specific thickness limits in [2.3](#).

### **2.7 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 rate claimed without loss of rate 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 28 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

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. On letter-size mail (including card-size pieces), the bundle label must be placed in the lower left corner of the address side of the top piece in the bundle. Bundle labels must not be obscured by banding or shrinkwrap. 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.

## 2.9 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.

## 2.10 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 LTR BC R 012”).
- c. Line 3: City and two-letter state abbreviation of the origin post office.

## 3.0 Letter Trays

### 3.1 Standard Containers

Mailings must be prepared in letter trays with sleeves. Containers for Customized MarketMail are specified in [705.1.4](#). The following additional standards apply:

- a. Palletized mail is also subject to [705.8.0](#).



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- 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 Tray Sizes

These approximate measurements define the letter tray sizes that apply to all Standard Mail preparation standards:

- a. 2-foot managed mail (MM) trays: 21 inches long by 10 inches wide (inside bottom dimensions) by 4-5/8 inches high.
- b. 1-foot MM trays: 10-1/4 inches long by 10 inches wide (inside bottom dimensions) by 4-5/8 inches high.
- c. 2-foot extended MM (EMM) trays: 21-3/4 inches long by 11-1/2 inches wide (inside bottom dimensions) by 6-1/8 inches high.

### 3.3 Letter Tray Preparation

Letter trays are prepared as follows:

- a. Subject to availability of equipment, standard managed mail (MM) trays must be used for all letter-size mail, except that extended managed mail (EMM) trays must be used when available for letter-size mail that exceeds the inside dimensions of MM trays defined in 3.2. When EMM trays are not available for those larger pieces, they must be placed in MM trays, angled back, or placed upright perpendicular to the length of the tray in row(s) to preserve their orientation.
- b. Pieces must be “faced” (oriented with all addresses in the same direction with the postage area in the upper right).
- c. Each tray prepared must be filled before filling the next tray, with the contents in multiple trays relatively balanced. When preparing full trays, mailers must fill all possible 2-foot trays first; if there is mail remaining for the presort destination, mailers must use a combination of 1-foot and 2-foot trays that results in the fewest total number of trays for that presort level. As an alternative, if there is mail remaining, mailers may move those pieces to the next higher presort level at which there is a minimum quantity (e.g., 150 pieces).
- d. For presort destinations that do not require full trays, pieces are placed in a less-than-full tray.
- e. Mailers must use as few trays as possible without jeopardizing rate eligibility. For instance, a mailer will never have two 1-foot trays to a single destination; instead, that mail must be placed in a single 2-foot tray. A 1-foot tray is prepared only if it is a full tray with no overflow; or if there is less than 1 foot of mail for that destination; or if the overflow from a full 2-foot tray is less than 1 foot of mail.
- f. Each tray must bear the correct tray label.
- g. Each tray must be sleeved and strapped under 3.4 and 3.5.



- h. If a mailing is prepared using an MLOCR/barcode sorter and is submitted with standardized documentation, then pieces do *not* have to be grouped by 3-digit ZIP Code prefix (or by 3-digit scheme, if applicable) in AADC trays, or by AADC in mixed AADC trays.

### **3.4 Tray Sleevng and Strapping**

Each letter tray must be sleeved using USPS-provided sleeves. Except under [3.5](#), each sleeved letter tray must then be secured with one plastic strap placed tightly around the length of the tray without crushing the tray or sleeve.

### **3.5 Strapping Exception**

Strapping is not required for any letter tray placed on a 5-digit, 3-digit, or SCF pallet secured with stretchwrap. In addition, if the processing and distribution manager gives a written waiver, strapping is not required for any letter tray that originates and destines in the same SCF (mail processing plant) service area.

### **3.6 Origin/Entry 3-Digit/Scheme Trays**

After all finer sort levels are prepared, an origin/entry 3-digit tray (or, if applicable, origin/entry 3-digit scheme tray) must be prepared to contain any remaining mail for each 3-digit (or 3-digit scheme) area serviced by the SCF serving the post office where the mail is verified (origin), and may be prepared for each 3-digit (or 3-digit scheme) area served by the SCF/plant where mail is entered (if that is different from the SCF/plant serving the post office where the mail is verified—e.g., a PVDS deposit site). In all cases, only one less-than-full tray may be prepared for each 3-digit (or 3-digit scheme) area.

## **4.0 Tray Labels**

### **4.1 Basic Standards**

Tray labels are subject to these basic standards:

- a. Use 2-inch labels.
- b. Illegible labels are not acceptable. Machine-printed labels (available from the USPS) ensure legibility. Legible hand-printed labels are acceptable.
- c. Tray labels for automation rate mailings are subject to [4.9.1, Basic Standards for Barcoded Tray Labels](#), and [708.6.0](#).

### **4.2 Physical Characteristics of Tray Labels**

A tray label must meet these specifications:

- a. Color: white or manila.
- b. Weight: minimum 70-pound stock (500 sheets, 24 by 36 inches).
- c. Height (perpendicular to printing): 1.860 inches minimum; 2.015 inches maximum.
- d. Length (parallel to printing): 3.250 inches minimum; 3.515 inches maximum.
- e. Thickness: 0.005 inch minimum.



### 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 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 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 tray and other information as specified by standards.
- b. *Codes:* The codes shown below must be used as appropriate on Line 2 of tray and pallet labels.

CONTENT TYPE	CODE
Barcoded	BC
Barcoded and Nonbarcoded	BC/NBC
Carrier Route	C (type of route)
Carrier Routes	CR-RT or CR-RTS
Digit	D
General Delivery Unit	G
Highway Contract Route	H
Letters	LTR or LTRS
Machinable	MACH
Manual (cannot be processed on automated equipment or mailer requests manual processing)	MAN or MANUAL
Mixed	MXD
Nonmachinable	NON MACH
Nonbarcoded	NON BC (sacks) NBC (pallets and cotrayed or cosacked mail under <a href="#">705.9.0</a> )
Post Office Box Section	B
Rural Route	R
Standard Mail	STD
Working	WKG

#### 4.5 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 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.

#### 4.6 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.

#### 4.7 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.

### 4.8 Placement of Tray Label

A tray label must be securely placed in an adhesive-backed label holder that is affixed to the specific location designated on the tray. Where no specific location is indicated the label must be securely placed in an adhesive-backed label holder that is affixed horizontally to the top left corner of one end of the tray. Do not use tape. Insert labels completely into the label holder to ensure that they do not fall out during processing. Do not insert labels upside down.

### 4.9 Barcoded Tray Labels

#### 4.9.1 Basic Standards for Barcoded Tray Labels

[Exhibit 4.9.1](#) shows the types of mail requiring barcoded tray labels. Barcoded labels must meet these general standards:

- a. Use 2-inch labels.
- b. Mailer-produced barcoded labels must meet the standards in [708.6.0](#).
- c. All information on barcoded labels must be machine-printed. Alterations to preprinted barcoded labels (e.g., handwritten changes) may not be made.
- d. Barcoded labels must be inserted completely into the label holder on the tray to prevent their loss during transport and processing.

#### Exhibit 4.9.1 Required Barcoded Container Labels

RATE OR TYPE	PROCESSING CATEGORY
<b>Standard Mail</b>	
Automation rate	Letter-size
Enhanced Carrier Route	Letter-size (barcoded labels not required for letter-size pieces with simplified addresses or paid at nonletter rates)

## 5.0 Preparing Nonautomation Letters

### 5.1 Basic Standards

All mailings and all pieces in each mailing at Regular Standard Mail and Nonprofit Standard Mail nonautomation rates are subject to specific preparation standards in [5.0](#) and to these general standards (automation rate mailings must be prepared under [7.0](#)):

- a. All pieces must meet the eligibility standards in [243.2.0](#) through [243.5.0](#). Nonprofit Standard Mail must meet the additional eligibility standards in [703.1.0](#).
- b. All pieces in each mailing must be in the letter-size processing category. Unless excepted by standard, letter-size pieces must be prepared in letter trays.
- c. All pieces must meet the applicable general preparation standards in [202](#), [Elements on the Face of a Mailpiece](#).

- d. All pieces in the mailing must meet the specific sortation and preparation standards in [5.0](#).
- e. Sortation determines rate eligibility as specified in [243.5.0, Additional Eligibility Standards for Nonautomation Standard Mail Letters](#).

## 5.2 Marking

Subject to the marking standards in [202.3.0, Placement and Content of Mail Markings](#), and [202.4.0, Endorsement Placement](#), regular Standard Mail pieces must be marked “Presorted Standard” (or “PRSRT STD”) and Nonprofit Standard Mail pieces must be marked “Nonprofit Organization” (or “Nonprofit Org.” or “Nonprofit”). Regular and Nonprofit Standard Mail pieces must not be marked “ECRLOT,” “ECRWSH,” “ECRWSS,” “AUTO,” or “Single-Piece” (or “SNGLP”).

## 5.3 Machinable Preparation

### 5.3.1 Machinable Bundling

Machinable pieces are not bundled, except for the following (see [2.3](#)):

- a. Card-size pieces.
- b. All pieces in a less-than-full mixed AADC tray.

### 5.3.2 Traying and Labeling

Instead of preparing overflow AADC trays with fewer than 150 pieces, mailers may include these pieces in mixed AADC trays. Preparation sequence, tray size, and labeling:

- a. Origin/entry 3-digit (optional, no minimum); labeling:
  - 1. Line 1: [L002](#), Column A.
  - 2. Line 2: “STD LTR 3D MACH.”
- b. AADC (required); 150-piece minimum (overflow allowed); labeling:
  - 1. Line 1: [L801](#), Column B.
  - 2. Line 2: “STD LTR AADC MACH.”
- c. Mixed AADC (required); no minimum; labeling:
  - 1. Line 1: [L011](#), Column B. If entered at an ASF or BMC or for mail placed on an ASF or BMC pallet under option in [705.8.10.2, L010](#), Column B.
  - 2. Line 2: “STD LTR MACH WKG.”

## 5.4 Nonmachinable Preparation

### 5.4.1 Nonmachinable Bundling

Except as provided in [2.5, Exception to Bundle Preparation—Full Single-Sort-Level Trays](#), bundling is required before traying. 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. Preparation sequence, bundle size, and labeling:

- a. 5-digit (required); 10-piece minimum; red Label 5 or optional endorsement line (OEL); labeling not required for pieces in full 5-digit trays.



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- 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.

#### 5.4.2 Traying and Labeling

Overflow trays are not allowed. Preparation sequence, tray size, and labeling:

- a. 5-digit (required); 150-piece minimum; labeling
  - 1. Line 1: city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code on mail (see [4.0, Tray Labels](#), for overseas military mail).
  - 2. Line 2: "STD LTR 5D MANUAL."
- b. 3-digit (required); 150-piece minimum (mailers may prepare 3-digit origin/entry trays with as few as 10 pieces per tray); labeling:
  - 1. Line 1: [L002](#), Column A.
  - 2. Line 2: "STD LTR 3D MANUAL."
- c. ADC (required); 150-piece minimum; labeling:
  - 1. Line 1: [L004](#), Column B.
  - 2. Line 2: "STD LTR ADC MANUAL."
- d. Mixed ADC (required); no minimum; labeling:
  - 1. Line 1: [L011](#), Column B. If placed on an ASF or BMC pallet under option in [705.8.10.2](#), use [L010](#).
  - 2. Line 2: "STD LTR MANUAL WKG."

## 6.0 Preparing Enhanced Carrier Route Letters

### 6.1 Basic Standards

All mailings and all pieces in each mailing at Enhanced Carrier Route Standard Mail and Nonprofit Enhanced Carrier Route Standard Mail nonautomation rates are subject to specific preparation standards in [6.0](#) and to these general standards:

- a. All pieces must meet the standards for basic eligibility in [243.2.0](#) through [243.4.0](#) and specific eligibility in [243.6.0, Additional Eligibility Standards for Enhanced Carrier Route Standard Mail Letters](#). Nonprofit Enhanced Carrier Route Standard Mail must meet the additional eligibility standards in [703.1.0](#).
- b. All pieces in each mailing must be in the letter-size processing category. Unless excepted by standard, letter-size pieces must be prepared in letter trays.
- c. All pieces must meet the applicable general preparation standards in [2.0](#) through [4.0](#) and [202, Elements on the Face of a Mailpiece](#), and the following:
  - 1. Pieces must be sequenced according to [6.8, Delivery Sequence Standards](#).
  - 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 [6.0](#) or the palletization standards in [705.8.0](#).
- e. Sortation determines rate eligibility as specified in [243.6.0, Additional Eligibility Standards for Enhanced Carrier Route Standard Mail Letters](#).

## 6.2 Marking

Subject to the marking standards in [202.3.0, Placement and Content of Mail Markings](#), and [202.4.0, Endorsement Placement](#), Enhanced Carrier Route Standard Mail pieces must be marked “Presorted Standard” (or “PRSRT STD”), and Nonprofit Enhanced Carrier Route Standard Mail pieces must be marked “Nonprofit Organization” (or “Nonprofit Org.” or “Nonprofit”). All pieces must also be marked “ECRLOT” for basic rate, “ECRWSH” for high density rate, or “ECRWSS” for saturation rate. Pieces in carrier route mailings under [6.7](#) must bear carrier route information lines under [708.8.0](#).

## 6.3 Residual Pieces

Pieces not sorted as a carrier route mailing must be prepared as a separate mailing at Standard Mail automation or Presorted rates or at single-piece First-Class or Priority Mail rates.

## 6.4 Carrier Route Bundle Preparation

Prepare carrier route bundles of letter-size mail as follows:

- a. Mailers must prepare only carrier route bundles, except under [6.7](#). Carrier route bundles are not permitted in full carrier route trays, except for card-size pieces.
- b. Except under [6.5](#), carrier route bundles must contain at least 10 pieces.
- c. The method of labeling a carrier route bundle is based on the following tray levels:
  - 1. Carrier route tray: No bundle labeling is required.
  - 2. 5-digit or 3-digit carrier routes tray: Bundles must have a facing slip unless the pieces in the bundle have a carrier information line or an optional endorsement line (OEL).

## 6.5 Bundles and Trays With Fewer Than the Minimum Number of Pieces Required

As a general exception to [6.4](#), a mailer may prepare a bundle with fewer than 10 pieces and a less-than-full carrier route tray when they are claiming the saturation rate for the contents and the applicable density standard is met.

## 6.6 General Traying and Labeling

For all ECR letters over 3 ounces and all ECR letters that are not automation-compatible or delivery-point barcoded, prepare trays as explained below. Also prepare trays as explained below when a mailing contains some pieces over 3 ounces and some pieces up to 3 ounces. For ECR automation-compatible letters that are delivery-point barcoded and weigh up to 3 ounces, prepare trays under [6.7](#). Preparation sequence, tray size, and labeling:

- a. Carrier route: required; full trays only, no overflow.



### 245.6.7

1. Line 1: city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code on mail (see [4.0, Tray Labels](#), for overseas military mail).
  2. Line 2: for saturation, “STD LTR MACH WSS,” followed by route type and number; for high-density, “STD LTR MACH WSH,” followed by route type and number; for basic, “STD LTR MACH LOT,” followed by route type and number.
- b. 5-digit carrier routes: required if full tray, optional with minimum one 10-piece bundle.
1. Line 1: city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code on mail (see [4.0, Tray Labels](#), for overseas military mail).
  2. Line 2: “STD LTR 5D CR-RT MACH.”
- c. 3-digit carrier routes: optional with minimum one 10-piece bundle for each of two or more 5-digit areas.
1. Line 1: city, state, and 3-digit ZIP Code prefix shown in [L002](#), Column A, that corresponds to 3-digit ZIP Code prefix on mail.
  2. Line 2: “STD LTR 3D CR-RT MACH.”
- d. For trays containing barcoded automation-compatible letter-size pieces over 3 ounces or nonmachinable letter-size pieces, use these Line 2 label designations in place of “MACH”:
1. Trays containing barcoded, automation-compatible pieces over 3 ounces: “BC.”
  2. Trays containing nonmachinable pieces: “MAN.”
  3. Trays containing simplified address pieces: “MAN.”

#### **6.7 Traying and Labeling for Automation-Compatible ECR Letters**

Mailers must make full carrier route and 5-digit carrier routes trays, when possible, for automation-compatible, delivery-point barcoded ECR letters that weigh up to 3 ounces. Except for card-size pieces, pieces must not be bundled. Group pieces together by carrier route in 5-digit and 3-digit carrier routes trays. If pieces for one carrier route do not result in a full tray, mailers must combine pieces from at least two routes to make full 5-digit carrier routes trays, grouping pieces together by carrier route. If pieces for multiple carrier routes do not result in a full 5-digit tray, mailers must combine pieces from at least two 5-digit ZIP Codes to make 3-digit carrier routes trays, grouping pieces together by carrier route. If pieces fill more than one tray but do not fill an additional tray, mailers must place excess pieces in a tray at the next sortation level. Preparation sequence, tray size, and labeling:

- a. Carrier route: required; full trays only, no overflow.
1. Line 1: city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code on mail (see [4.0](#) for overseas military mail).
  2. Line 2: for saturation, “STD LTR BC WSS,” followed by route type and number; for high-density, “STD LTR BC WSH,” followed by route type and number; for basic, “STD LTR BC LOT,” followed by route type and number.



- b. 5-digit carrier routes: required; full trays only, no overflow, no bundling.
  1. Line 1: city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code on mail (see [4.0](#) for overseas military mail).
  2. Line 2: "STD LTR 5D CR-RT BC."
- c. 3-digit carrier routes: required; bundling required in less-than-full trays.
  1. Line 1: city, state, and 3-digit ZIP Code prefix shown in [L002](#), Column A, that corresponds to 3-digit ZIP Code prefix on mail.
  2. Line 2: "STD LTR 3D CR-RT BC."

## 6.8 Delivery Sequence Standards

### 6.8.1 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 [6.1](#) through [6.7](#) in *Preparing Enhanced Carrier Route Letters* and the standards below. Pieces prepared with a simplified address must also meet the corresponding standards.

### 6.8.2 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.

### 6.8.3 Updating Walk Sequence Information—General

Walk-sequence rate pieces prepared with other than a simplified address format under [6.8.4](#) 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 (DSF) or Delivery Sequence File, Second Generation (DSF<sup>2</sup>).
- c. Delivery sequence information from USPS address sequencing services, as requested by the customer.

### 6.8.4 Updating Walk Sequence Information for Simplified Addressing

Walk-sequence rate pieces prepared with a simplified address must be based on delivery stop information obtained within 90 days before the mailing date, either from the Delivery Statistics File or from the postmaster of the destination office.

### 6.8.5 Out-of-Date Walk Sequence Information

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



### 6.8.6 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 rates. 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.

## 6.9 Delivery Sequence Documentation

### 6.9.1 Basic 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<sup>2</sup> 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 Products](#)).
- e. Form 3553 showing the date of the eLOT product used, or the date from the USPS Qualification report produced by presort software.

### 6.9.2 High Density

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

### 6.9.3 Saturation Density—Simplified Address Mail

For each carrier route to which mail with a simplified address is sent at the saturation rate, 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.

#### 6.9.4 Saturation Density—Other Mail

For each carrier route to which mail without a simplified address is sent at the saturation rate, 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.

#### 6.9.5 Both Rates

If a mailing contains pieces qualifying for both walk-sequence rates, the documentation required by [6.9.2, High Density](#), and either [6.9.3, Saturation Density—Simplified Address Mail](#), or [6.9.4, Saturation Density—Other Mail](#), may be combined. Entries for pieces at the high density rate must be so annotated on the documentation. For the entire mailing, a summary of the total number of pieces at each rate must be provided. This documentation must be submitted with each applicable mailing.

#### 6.9.6 Carrier Route Rate

If a mailing includes high density and saturation rate and basic carrier route rate pieces, in addition to the applicable information required by [6.9.2](#) through [6.9.5 in Delivery Sequence Documentation](#), the documentation for the basic carrier route rate mail must show, by 5-digit ZIP Code and, within each, by carrier route, the total number of addressed pieces at each rate for each carrier route to which pieces are addressed. Pieces qualifying for the basic carrier route rate must be so annotated. For the entire mailing, a summary by 5-digit ZIP Code of the total number of pieces at each rate must be provided. This documentation must be submitted with each applicable mailing to meet the documentation standard for the carrier route rate.

## 7.0 Preparing Automation Rate Letters

### 7.1 Basic Standards

Letter-size automation rate Standard Mail must be prepared under [7.0](#) and the eligibility standards for the rate claimed. Trays must bear barcoded tray labels under [4.9](#).

### 7.2 Mailings

All pieces in a mailing must meet the standards in [201.1.0, Physical Standards for Machinable Letters and Cards](#), and [201.3.0, Physical Standards for Automation Letters and Cards](#), and must be sorted together to the finest extent required for the rate claimed. The definitions of a mailing and permissible combinations are in [1.0, General Information for Mail Preparation](#).

### 7.3 Marking

All Standard Mail automation rate pieces must be marked under [202.3.0, Placement and Content of Mail Markings](#). Pieces claimed at an automation rate must bear the appropriate class marking and “AUTO,” except as provided in [202.3.0](#). Pieces not



claimed at an automation rate must not bear "AUTO" unless First-Class single-piece rate postage is affixed or a corrective single-piece rate marking ("Single-Piece" or "SNGLP") is applied.

### 7.4 General Preparation

Grouping, bundling, and labeling are not generally required or permitted, except bundling is required in any mailing consisting entirely of card-size pieces and for pieces in overflow and less-than-full trays, and grouping is required under 7.5.

### 7.5 Tray Preparation

Instead of preparing overflow trays with fewer than 150 pieces, mailers may include these pieces in the next tray level when a tray of 150 or more pieces can be made. Mailers must note these trays on standardized documentation (see 708.1.2). Pieces that are placed in the next tray level must be grouped by destination and placed in the front of that tray. Mailers may use this option selectively for 3-digit and AADC ZIP Codes. This option does not apply to origin/entry 3-digit/scheme trays. Preparation sequence, tray size, and Line 1 labeling:

- a. 5-digit/scheme (see 1.4e): optional, but required for 5-digit rate (150-piece minimum); overflow allowed; for Line 1, label as follows:
  1. For 5-digit scheme trays, use destination shown in the current USPS City State Product.
  2. For 5-digit trays, use city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code destination on pieces (see 4.0 for overseas military mail).
- b. 3-digit/scheme; required (150-piece minimum, except no minimum for optional origin/entry 3-digit/scheme(s)); overflow allowed; for Line 1, use L002, Column B.
- c. AADC: required (150-piece minimum); overflow allowed; group pieces by 3-digit ZIP Code prefix (or 3-digit/scheme if applicable); for Line 1, use L801, Column B.
- d. Mixed AADC: required (no minimum); group pieces by AADC; for Line 1 labeling: use L011, Column B. If entered at an ASF or BMC or for mail placed on an ASF or BMC pallet under option in 705.8.10.2, use L010, Column B.

### 7.6 Tray Line 2

Line 2: "STD LTR" and:

- a. 5-digit scheme: "BC 5D SCHEME."
- b. 5-digit: "5D BC."
- c. 3-digit scheme: "BC 3D SCHEME" and, if applicable, as shown in L002, Column B, followed by the letter "A," "B," or "C."
- d. 3-digit: "3D BC."
- e. AADC: "AADC BC."
- f. Mixed AADC: "BC WKG."

**7.7 Presentation**

Upon presentation of letter-size automation rate Standard Mail mailings to USPS for verification, mailers must present all mixed AADC trays together, and such trays must either be adjacent to one another or side by side, and must be placed as the top layer(s) on any given container.

