

445 Mail Preparation

Overview

- [1.0 General Information for Mail Preparation](#)
- [2.0 Bundles](#)
- [3.0 Sacks](#)
- [4.0 Sack Labels](#)
- [5.0 Preparation for Presorted Parcels](#)
- [6.0 Preparation for Enhanced Carrier Route Parcels](#)

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. Not all presort levels are applicable in all situations.

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, except for certain parcel rates, 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 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 [443.3.6, Residual Volume Requirement](#), the types of Standard Mail listed below may not be part of the same mailing.
 1. Enhanced Carrier Route and any other type of mail.
 2. Enhanced Carrier Route letter rate pieces and Enhanced Carrier Route nonletter rate pieces.
 3. Presorted rate mail and any other type of mail.
 4. Machinable and nonmachinable pieces.
 5. 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.
 6. 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 (pallets and sacks) for Standard Mail 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](#).
- d. *3-digit*: the ZIP Code in the delivery address on all pieces begins with the same three digits (see [L002](#), Column A).
- e. *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.
- f. *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.
- g. *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.
- h. *ADC*: all pieces are addressed for delivery in the service area of the same area distribution center (ADC) (see [L004](#)).
- i. *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](#)).
- j. *Mixed [BMC, ADC, etc.]*: the pieces are for delivery in the service area of more than one BMC, ADC, etc.
- k. *Residual* pieces/bundles/sacks 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* sack is defined in the standards for the class and rate claimed.

- c. A *5-digit scheme sort for Standard Mail parcels* yields 5-digit scheme sacks or pallets for those 5-digit ZIP Codes listed 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 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 rate eligibility. The 5-digit scheme sort need not be used for all possible 5-digit scheme sorts.
- d. An *origin 3-digit (or origin 3-digit scheme) sack* 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/sack must be prepared for each.
- e. 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 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.
- f. 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.
- g. *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.
- h. 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.
- i. 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. Bundle preparation is described in 2.0.

- j. 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 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 weight and height restrictions on bundles. For pallets, 2,800 pounds of mail may be destined to an SCF destination, and these would form the “logical” SCF pallet, but the mail is placed on two physical SCF pallets each weighing 1,400 pounds because of the 2,200 pound maximum pallet weight requirement.

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 unsecured groups of pieces.

2.2 Address Visibility

Mailers preparing presort bundles must ensure that the delivery address information on the top mailpiece in each bundle is visible and readable by the naked eye. Mailers using strapping that might cover the address can avoid obstructing visibility by using clear, smooth strapping tightly secured around the bundle. Mailers using barcoded pressure-sensitive bundle labels, optional endorsement lines, carrier route information lines, or carrier route facing slips also must ensure that the information in these presort designations is visible and readable by the naked eye. This standard does not apply to the following:

- a. Bundles placed in or on 5-digit or 5-digit scheme (L001) sacks or pallets.
- b. Bundles placed in carrier route and 5-digit carrier routes sacks.
- c. Bundles of mailpieces at carrier route rates entered at a destination delivery unit (DDU).

2.3 Arranging Pieces in a Bundle (“Facing”)

Except as noted in 2.4, all pieces in a bundle must be “faced” (arranged with the addresses in the same read direction), with an address visible on the top piece.

2.4 Preparing Bundles of Pieces of Nonuniform Thickness (“Counterstacking”)

Bundles of flats and other pieces of nonuniform thickness may be prepared by counter-stacking under these conditions:

- a. Counter-stacking should be used only to create bundles of more uniform thickness that are more likely to maintain their integrity during transportation and processing.

- b. Counter-stacking is appropriate for saddle-stitched mailpieces and pieces where one edge is thicker than other edges or one corner is thicker than other corners.
- c. When counter-stacking, pieces must all have addresses facing up and be divided into no more than four approximately equal groups, with each group rotated 180 degrees from the preceding and succeeding group(s); prepare as few groups as possible to create a bundle of uniform thickness.
- d. Counter-stacked groups within a bundle should be as thick as possible, generally at least 1 inch thick.
- e. When pieces are nonuniform in thickness because they are thicker in the center instead of along an edge or corner, counter-stacking will generally not result in a bundle of uniform thickness (i.e., a football-shaped bundle would be created). Instead of counter-stacking such pieces, limit the height (thickness) of the bundle to 3 to 6 inches to ensure the bundle will stay together during normal transit and handling.

2.5 Securing Bundles

[4-30-06] Bundles must withstand normal transit and handling without breaking and without causing injury to USPS employees or damage to USPS equipment.

Mailers must meet the following standards when preparing and securing bundles:

- a. Secure bundles with banding, shrinkwrap, or shrinkwrap supplemented with one or more bands. *Banding* includes plastic bands, rubber bands, twine, string, and similar material. Mailers must meet the following standards when banding bundles:
 - 1. Do not place any bands closer than 1 inch from any bundle edge.
 - 2. When using twine or string to band bundles, secure the knot(s) so the twine or string does not come loose during transit and processing.
 - 3. Do not use wire or metal banding.
 - 4. Do not use any loose banding.
- b. When using only banding to secure bundles, apply banding under the following additional requirements:
 - 1. Use at least one band to encircle the length of the bundle and use at least one band to encircle the girth of the bundle.
 - 2. Use tension sufficient to tighten and depress the edges of the bundle so that pieces do not slip out of the banding during transit and processing.

2.6 Preparing Bundles in Sacks

[4-30-06] In addition to the standards in 2.5, mailers must prepare and secure bundles placed in sacks as follows:

- a. The maximum weight for all bundles is 20 pounds.
- b. Measure bundles at the lowest (thinnest) point to determine the bundle height.



- c. A bundle that exceeds the maximum prescribed height by less than the thickness of a single piece meets the standard (for example, if a piece is 0.75 (3/4) of an inch thick, 11 pieces may be secured in a bundle 8.25 inches high, even though the maximum bundle height is 8 inches).
- d. Bundles of pieces with covers of “coated stock” (for example, magazines or catalogs with glossy covers) that are not individually enclosed in an envelope or mailing wrapper are subject to these conditions:
 - 1. Bundles secured with rubber bands, twine, string, or only shrinkwrap must not exceed 3 inches in height.
 - 2. Bundles secured with shrinkwrap plus one or two plastic straps, or with at least two plastic straps, one around the length and one around the girth, must not exceed 6 inches in height.
- e. Bundles of pieces with outer surfaces of “uncoated stock” are subject to these conditions:
 - 1. Bundles must not exceed 8 inches in height (recommended maximum height is 6 inches).
 - 2. “Uncoated stock” refers to pieces with outer surfaces composed of material other than paper (such as plastic, cloth, or fiberboard) and also refers to pieces with coated covers that are individually enclosed in a cover or mailing wrapper of uncoated stock, such as an envelope or polybag.

2.7 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 and stable subject to specific weight limits in [705.8.0](#) if placed on pallets, and specific weight and height limits in [2.6](#) if placed in sacks.

2.8 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 eight pieces is 6 inches thick).
- b. The pieces constitute the “last bundle” for a presort destination and previously prepared bundles met the applicable minimum volume standard (e.g., 505 pieces prepared in 10 50-piece bundles and one five-piece bundle).

2.9 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. Barcoded

pressure-sensitive bundle labels must not obscure the delivery address block. Banding or shrinkwrap must not obscure any bundle label. 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.

2.10 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.

2.11 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 IRREG LOT CR R 012”).
- c. Line 3: City and two-letter state abbreviation of the origin post office.

3.0 Sacks

3.1 Standard Containers

Mailings must be prepared in sacks. Containers for Customized MarketMail are specified in 705.1.0. The following additional standards apply:

- a. Palletized mail is also subject to 705.8.0.
- 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 Sack Preparation

All sack preparation is subject to these standards:

- a. Each sack must bear the correct sack label.
- b. The weight of a sack and its content must not exceed 70 pounds.

4.0 Sack Labels

4.1 Basic Standards

[5-11-06] Sack labels are subject to the following:



- a. Use 1-inch labels for sacks with metal 1-inch label holders/closures.
- b. Use 2-inch labels for sacks with 2-inch label holder pockets.
- c. Use 2-inch labels for sacks with dual plastic label holders/closures. One-inch labels may be used but are not recommended.
- d. Illegible labels are not acceptable. Machine-printed labels (available from the USPS) ensure legibility. Legible hand-printed labels are acceptable.

4.2 Physical Characteristics of a Sack Label

[5-11-06] A sack label must meet these specifications:

- a. Color: white or manila.
- b. Weight: 70-pound or heavier stock (optional).
- c. Length (parallel to printing): 3.250 inches minimum; 3.515 inches maximum.
- d. Height (perpendicular to printing):
 1. For 1-inch labels: 0.937 inch minimum; 0.980 inch maximum.
 2. For 2-inch labels: 1.860 inches minimum; 2.015 inches maximum.

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 sacks and trays for overseas military destinations, Line 1 shows, from left to right, “APO” or “FPO,” followed by “AE” (for ZIP Codes within the ZIP Code prefix range 090-098), “AA” (for ZIP Codes within the 3-digit ZIP Code prefix 340), or “AP” (for ZIP Codes within the ZIP Code prefix range 962-966), followed by the destination 5-digit ZIP Code of the mail in the sack or tray.

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 sack and other information as specified by standards.

- b. *Codes:* The codes shown below must be used as appropriate on Line 2 of sack labels:

| CONTENT TYPE | CODE |
|--|-------------------|
| Carrier Route | C (type of route) |
| Carrier Routes | CR-RT or CR-RTS |
| Digit | D |
| General Delivery Unit | G |
| Highway Contract Route | H |
| Irregular Parcels | IRREG |
| Machinable | MACH |
| Mixed | MXD |
| Mixed Machinable and Irregular Parcels | MACH & IRREG |
| Post Office Box Section | B |
| Rural Route | R |
| Standard Mail | STD |
| Working | WKG |

4.5 Line 3 (Origin Line)

[1-4-07] Line 3 (origin line showing office of mailing or mailer information) must be the bottom line of required information unless the sack contains mail manifested using the Electronic Verification System (eVS) under 705.2.9. Line 3 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. As an alternative to adding a fourth line for eVS mailings as required by 4.6, "eVS" may appear as the first element on Line 3.

4.6 Electronic Verification System

[1-4-07] All sacks containing parcels prepared and identified using the Electronic Verification System (eVS) under 705.2.9 must show "eVS" (or the alternatives "EVS" or "E-VS") directly below Line 3 using the same size and lettering used for Line 3. As an option, "eVS" may be placed as the first element on Line 3.

4.7 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.

4.8 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:

- It may be placed above Line 1 in not more than 0.083 inch high type (6-point type).
- 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.



445.5.1

- 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.

5.0 Preparation for Presorted Parcels

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 [5.3, Preparation of Machinable Parcels](#), and [5.4, Preparation for Irregular Parcels](#), and to these general standards:

- a. All pieces must meet the standards for basic eligibility in [443.2.0](#) through [443.4.0 in Rates and Eligibility](#) and specific eligibility in [443.5.0](#). Nonprofit Standard Mail must meet the additional eligibility standards in [703.1.0](#).
- b. Pieces in each mailing must be all machinable parcels or all irregular parcels as defined in [401.1.0](#), unless prepared under [5.3.1](#).
- c. All pieces must meet the applicable general preparation standards in [1.0](#) through [4.0](#); [708.7.0, Optional Endorsement Lines \(OELs\)](#); and [708.6.0, Barcoding Standards for Container Labels](#).
- d. All pieces in the mailing must meet the specific sortation and preparation standards in [5.0](#) or the palletization standards in [705.8.0](#).
- e. Sortation determines rate eligibility as specified in [443.5.0, Additional Eligibility Standards for Presorted Standard Mail Parcels](#).

5.2 Markings

Subject to the marking standards in [402.2.0, Placement and Content of Markings](#), 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,” or “Single-Piece” (or “SNGLP”).

5.3 Preparation of Machinable Parcels

5.3.1 5-Digit Sacks

Mailers must prepare all possible 5-digit scheme or 5-digit sacks in a mailing that includes pieces claimed at the 3/5 rate. If 5-digit scheme or 5-digit sacks are not prepared when there are 10 pounds or more of mail for that destination, the mailer may not claim the 3/5 rate for any part of the mailing. Scheme sorting is optional and need not be done for all 5-digit scheme destinations. Mailers must prepare 5-digit sacks containing both machinable and irregular parcels under [5.4.2, Bundling and Labeling](#).

5.3.2 Sacking and Labeling

Preparation sequence, sack size, and labeling:

- a. 5-digit scheme (optional); 10-pound minimum except under [5.3.1](#); labeling:
 1. Line 1: [L606](#), Column B.
 2. Line 2: “STD MACH 5D SCHEME” or “STD MACH 5D SCH.”
- b. 5-digit (optional); 10-pound minimum except under [5.3.1](#); labeling:
 1. Line 1: city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code destination of pieces, preceded for military mail by correct prefix under [4.0](#), *Sack Labels*.
 2. Line 2: “STD MACH 5D.”
- c. ASF (optional), allowed only for mail deposited at an ASF to claim DBMC rate; 10-pound minimum; labeling:
 1. Line 1: [L602](#), Column B. DBMC rate eligibility determined by [Exhibit 446.3.1](#), *BMC/ASF—DMBC Rate Eligibility*.
 2. Line 2: “STD MACH ASF.”
- d. BMC (required); 10-pound minimum; labeling:
 1. Line 1: [L601](#), Column B. DBMC rate eligibility determined by [Exhibit 446.3.1](#), *BMC/ASF—DMBC Rate Eligibility*.
 2. Line 2: “STD MACH BMC.”
- e. Mixed BMC (required); no minimum; labeling:
 1. Line 1: “MXD” followed by [L601](#), Column B information for BMC serving 3-digit ZIP Code prefix of entry post office.
 2. Line 2: “STD MACH WKG.”

5.4 Preparation for Irregular Parcels

5.4.1 Required Bundling

Except as provided in [5.4.3](#), *Bundling Exceptions*, and [5.4.5](#), *Loose Packing*, bundling is required before sacking. A bundle must be prepared when the quantity of addressed irregular parcels for a required presort level reaches the required minimum bundle size. Irregular parcels of nonuniform thickness must be prepared in accordance with [5.4](#). Irregular parcels of uniform thickness (e.g., printed publications) and exceeding either 15 inches in length or 12 inches in height also must be bundled and sacked in accordance with [5.4](#) using the alternate labeling lists as specified in [5.4.8](#), *Sacking and Labeling*, or placed on pallets under [705.8.0](#). Smaller volumes are not permitted except for mixed ADC bundles and bundles prepared under [5.4.4](#), *Commingling Irregular Parcel Mailings*.

5.4.2 Bundling and Labeling

Preparation sequence, bundle size, and labeling:

- a. 5-digit (required); 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.

5.4.3 Bundling Exceptions

Bundling is not required for irregular parcels under any of these conditions:

- a. The parcels are 1/2 inch thick or greater and placed in a sack to the same destination to which they would otherwise be bundled (e.g., in a 3-digit sack rather than a 3-digit bundle).
- b. The parcels are so large that 10 or fewer fill a sack.
- c. The parcels are in a 5-digit scheme or 5-digit sack containing both machinable and irregular parcels. Sacks containing both machinable and irregular parcels may not be prepared to other presort levels.

5.4.4 Commingling Irregular Parcel Mailings

Business Mailer Support (BMS) (see [608.8.1](#) for address) may authorize the commingling of several permit imprint mailings of irregular parcels to achieve a finer presort if the payment of proper postage can be documented. BMS may waive minimum quantity standards for preparation of 5-digit and 3-digit presort destination bundles if doing so results in a finer preparation of at least 50% of the mail.

5.4.5 Loose Packing

District managers may authorize loose packing of unbundled irregular parcels to fill Number 3 sacks if no parcels in a sack would be more finely sorted if bundled. Parcels must be faced and packed to remain oriented in transit. The total weight of sacks containing such parcels may not exceed 70 pounds. Requests for loose packing must be made in advance through the post office of mailing.

5.4.6 Required Sacking

Except as provided in [5.4.7, Drop Shipment](#), a sack must be prepared when the quantity of mail for a required presort destination reaches either 125 pieces or 15 pounds of pieces, whichever occurs first, subject to these conditions:

- a. For identical-weight pieces, mailers must apply these methods:
 - 1. Pieces weighing 1.92 ounces (0.12 pound) or less must be prepared using the 125-piece minimum.
 - 2. Pieces weighing more than 1.92 ounces must be prepared using the 15-pound minimum.
- b. For nonidentical-weight pieces, mailers must apply either one of these methods:
 - 1. The minimum that applies to the average piece weight for the entire mailing is used. The net weight of the mailing is divided by the number of pieces, and the resulting average single-piece weight is used to determine whether the 125-piece or 15-pound minimum applies.
 - 2. The actual piece count or mail weight for each sack is used, if documentation can be provided with the mailing that shows for each sack the number of pieces and the total weight.

- c. The accompanying postage statement must indicate whether the 125-piece minimum, the 15-pound minimum, or both minimums are applied.

5.4.7 Drop Shipment

A mailer using Priority Mail or Express Mail to drop ship Standard Mail irregular parcels may prepare sacks containing fewer than 125 pieces or less than 15 pounds of mail.

5.4.8 Sacking and Labeling

Preparation sequence, sack size, and labeling:

- a. 5-digit scheme (optional), as applicable:
 - 1. Irregular parcels: 125-piece or 15-pound minimum; labeling for Line 1, [L606](#), Column B; for Line 2, “STD IRREG 5D SCHEME” or “STD IRREG 5D SCH.”
 - 2. Commingled machinable and irregular parcels: no minimum; labeling for Line 1, [L606](#), Column B; for Line 2, “STD MACH-IRREG 5D SCH.”
- b. 5-digit (required), as applicable:
 - 1. Irregular parcels: 125-piece or 15-pound minimum; labeling for Line 1, city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code on mail (see [4.3](#) for overseas military mail); for Line 2, “STD IRREG 5D.”
 - 2. Commingled machinable and irregular parcels: 10-pound minimum; labeling for Line 1, city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code on mail (see [4.3](#) for overseas military mail); for Line 2, “STD MACH-IRREG 5D.”
- c. 3-digit (required); 125-piece or 15-pound minimum; labeling:
 - 1. Line 1: [L002](#), Column A.
 - 2. Line 2: “STD IRREG 3D.”
- d. Origin 3-digit(s) (required) and entry 3-digit(s) (optional); one-bundle minimum (for origin or entry); labeling:
 - 1. Line 1: [L002](#), Column A.
 - 2. Line 2: “STD IRREG 3D.”
- e. ADC (required); 125-piece or 15-pound minimum; labeling:
 - 1. Line 1: [L603](#), Column B. (Use [L004](#) for irregular parcels of uniform thickness.)
 - 2. Line 2: “STD IRREG ADC.”
- f. Mixed ADC (required); no minimum; labeling:
 - 1. Line 1: [L604](#), Column B. (Use [L009](#) for irregular parcels of uniform thickness.)
 - 2. Line 2: “STD IRREG WKG.”



6.0 Preparation for Enhanced Carrier Route Parcels

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 [6.4, Bundling](#), and [6.5, Preparation for Irregular Parcels](#), and to these general standards:

- a. All pieces must meet the standards for basic eligibility in [443.2.0](#) through [443.4.0 in Rates and Eligibility](#) and specific eligibility in [443.6.0, Additional Eligibility Standards for Enhanced Carrier Route Standard Mail Parcels](#). Nonprofit Enhanced Carrier Route Standard Mail must meet the additional eligibility standards in [703.1.0](#).
- b. All pieces in each mailing must be irregular parcels as defined in [401.1.0](#).
- c. All pieces must meet the applicable general preparation standards in [1.0](#) through [4.0](#), and the following:
 1. Pieces must be sequenced according to [6.6](#) and [6.7](#).
 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 [443.6.0](#).

6.2 Marking

Subject to the marking standards in [402.2.0](#), 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.

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.

6.4 Bundling

6.4.1 Carrier Route Bundle Preparation

Prepare carrier route bundles of parcels as follows:

- a. Mailers must prepare only carrier route bundles.
- b. Except under [6.4.2](#), carrier route bundles must contain at least 10 pieces.
- c. The method of labeling a carrier route bundle is based on the following sack levels:
 1. Carrier route sack: No bundle labeling is required.
 2. 5-digit scheme or 5-digit carrier routes sacks: Bundles must have a facing slip unless the pieces in the bundle have a carrier information line or an optional endorsement line (OEL).

6.4.2 Bundles and Sacks With Fewer Than the Minimum Number of Pieces Required

As a general exception to 6.4.1, a mailer may prepare a bundle with fewer than 10 pieces and a less-than-full sack with fewer than 125 pieces and less than 15 pounds of pieces to a carrier route when they are claiming the saturation rate for the contents and the applicable density standard is met.

6.5 Preparation for Irregular Parcels

6.5.1 Sack Minimums

A sack must be prepared when the quantity of mail for a required presort destination reaches either 125 pieces or 15 pounds of pieces, whichever occurs first, subject to these conditions:

- a. For identical-weight pieces, a single-piece weight of 1.92 ounces (0.12 pound) results in 125 pieces weighing 15 pounds. Identical-weight pieces weighing 1.92 ounces (0.12 pound) or less must be prepared using the 125-piece minimum; those that weigh more must be prepared using the 15-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 125-piece or 15-pound minimum applies) or sack 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 and their total weight.
- c. Mailers must note on the accompanying postage statement whether they applied the 125-piece ("PCS") or 15-pound ("WT") threshold or the method in 6.5.1b ("BOTH").

6.5.2 Sacking and Labeling

Preparation sequence, sack size, and labeling:

- a. Carrier route: required (minimum of 125 pieces/15 pounds).
 1. Line 1: city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code on mail (see 4.3 for overseas military mail).
 2. Line 2: "STD IRREG WSS" or "STD IRREG WSH" or "STD IRREG LOT" as applicable, followed by the route type and number.
- b. 5-digit carrier routes: required (no minimum).
 1. Line 1: city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code on mail (see 4.3 for overseas military mail).
 2. Line 2: "STD IRREG CR-RTS."



6.6 Delivery Sequence Standards

6.6.1 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 6.0 and the standards below. Pieces prepared with a simplified address must also meet the corresponding standards.

6.6.2 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.

6.6.3 Updating Walk Sequence Information—General

Walk-sequence rate pieces prepared with other than a simplified address format under 6.6.4 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, Second Generation (DSF²).
- c. Delivery sequence information from USPS address sequencing services, as requested by the customer.

6.6.4 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.

6.6.5 Out-of-Date Walk Sequence Information

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

6.6.6 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.

6.7 Delivery Sequence Documentation

6.7.1 General 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. DSF² 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.

6.7.2 High Density

For each Standard Mail carrier route to which high density rate mail is addressed, the mailer must document the total number of addressed pieces to the route. If there are fewer than 125 addressed pieces for a given route, the documentation also must show the number of possible deliveries on the route.

6.7.3 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.

6.7.4 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



445.6.7.5

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.

6.7.5 Both Rates

If a mailing contains pieces qualifying for high density and saturation walk-sequence rates, the documentation required 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.

6.7.6 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 [6.7.2](#) through [6.7.5](#), 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.