STATE AND LOCAL ELECTION MAIL— USER'S GUIDE

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How to Use This Guide

You will find eight sections in this guide. Each of the following sections provides information that election officials must consider before they mail:

I. Determining the Appropriate Class of Mail.

II. Using Reply Mail.

III. Preparing Your Address List.

IV. Planning Your Mailing.

V. Filing for Postage Discounts and Other Mailing Services.

VI. Designing Your Mailpiece.

VII. Arranging and Presenting Your Mailing.

VIII. Election Mail Checklist.

Each of the sections in this guide contains a brief description of the topic, the most pertinent items to consider, and references for additional information. You can access the information in this guide and additional resources on *https://www.usps.com*.

See the following resources:

- The Election Mail website at *https://www.usps.com/electionmail* contains material for preparing mailings, and direct links to the additional references mentioned in this guide.
- Postal Explorer at *https://pe.usps.com* contains resources to aid in making informed decisions.
- *Mailing Standards of the United States Postal Service*, Domestic Mail Manual (DMM) at *https://pe.usps.com/DMM300/Index* contains domestic mail information and requirements.
- Quick Service Guides at *https://pe.usps.com/text/qsg300/q000.htm* contain concise explanations and useful illustrations covering most Postal Service requirements.
- Postal Pro at *https://postalpro.usps.com/* is an online informational source available to postal customers.

Section I.
Determining the Appropriate Class of Mail

The class of mail you use to send your pieces depends on the following:

- What are you mailing (e.g., ballots, voter registration cards, absentee voting applications)?
- Does your mailpiece contain personal information?
- How are the mailpieces designed (e.g., dimensions, weight, card vs. envelope)?
- How quickly do you need the pieces delivered?
- How many pieces do you have?
- Do you want free forwarding and/or return service (if pieces cannot be forwarded)?
- Will you require extra services (e.g., Certified Mail service, which provides you with mailing receipt and delivery status)?

The main classes of mail you will want to consider are First-Class Mail and USPS Marketing Mail. Completed ballots mailed by voters are First-Class Mail, regardless of whether they are prepaid by election officials or mailed with a stamp affixed by the voter. The only situation where completed domestic, non-military ballots are not First-Class Mail is when the voter opts instead to pay for a premium service like Priority Mail or Priority Mail Express.

The Postal Service strongly recommends that election officials use First-Class Mail to mail ballots and other Election Mail to voters. When First-Class Mail is used with USPS visibility tools, like uniquely serialized Intelligent Mail barcodes (IMb) and the Official Election Mail logo, it allows for faster and more efficient processing while maintaining high visibility as Election Mail moves through the mailstream.

While we continue to recommend the use of First-Class Mail, it has been the longstanding practice of the Postal Service to prioritize Ballot Mail that is entered as Marketing Mail, regardless of the paid class, when capacity permits and when mailpieces are identifiable as Ballot Mail. Ballot Mail that is identifiable through the use of green Tag 191 or other Postal Service visibility indicia may then receive First-Class Mail delivery timeframes similar to First-Class Mail, even when it is mailed as Marketing Mail.

The following table summarizes the important features of each class of mail

Class of Mail	Speed of Service*	Free Forwarding and Return	Secure Destruction	Extra Services	Presort Discounts	Single Piece	IMb
First-Class Mail	1–5 days	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
USPS Marketing Mail	4–7 days	No	No	Only for Parcels	Yes	No	Yes

**Actual delivery times may vary depending on mail entry origin and destination. To view expected delivery times for domestic mailing services, visit https://www.usps.com/service-standards/.*

What You Are Mailing

First-Class Mail: You may send mailable matter using First-Class Mail service. Some types of mail must be sent using First-Class Mail service (or Priority Mail or Priority Mail Express). Examples include bills and statements of account, most mail containing handwritten or typewritten material, or mail that contains information specific to the addressee or has the character of personal correspondence. First-Class Mail service is sealed against postal inspection. For a full definition of what must be sent using First-Class Mail service, see DMM 133.3.0 at *https://pe.usps.gov/text/dmm300/133.htm*.

USPS Marketing Mail: USPS Marketing Mail is available for mailable matter that is not required to be sent as First-Class Mail, including advertising and solicitations. For a full definition of what you can send as USPS Marketing Mail, see DMM 243.2.0 at *https://pe.usps.gov/text/dmm300/243.htm*.

Nonprofit USPS Marketing Mail: Under the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA), state and local voting registration officials may use USPS Marketing Mail to mail certain materials that are authorized or required by NVRA. Such mailings are eligible for Nonprofit USPS Marketing Mail prices, which are lower than the regular USPS Marketing Mail prices.

For further information on which organizations are eligible to use Nonprofit prices and what kind of mail can be sent at Nonprofit prices, refer to DMM 703.1.0 at *https://pe.usps.gov/text/dmm300/703.htm* and Publication 417, *Nonprofit USPS Marketing Mail Eligibility: Nonprofit and Other Qualified Organizations* at *https://pe.usps.com/text/pub417/welcome.htm*. Applicable customer support rulings, such as PS-323, "Computer-Prepared Mailpieces Entered by Authorized Nonprofit Mailers," can provide additional guidance and can be found online at *https://pe.usps.com/CustomerSupportRuling/Index*.

How Your Mailpieces Are Designed

The contents, weight, size, and design of your mailpiece will determine the category (e.g., letters, cards, and flats) and class of mail. First-Class Mail may weigh up to 13 ounces. USPS Marketing Mail, including Nonprofit USPS Marketing Mail, must weigh less than 16 ounces.

Various discounts apply to both First-Class Mail and USPS Marketing Mail. Additional discounts are available for automation pieces, provided the mailpiece meets the applicable automation compatibility requirements. For further information, see DMM 201.3.0 (cards/letters) at *https://pe.usps.gov/text/dmm300/201.htm#ep1042622* and 201.6.0 (flats) at *https://pe.usps.gov/text/dmm300/201.htm#ep1097107*.

How Quickly You Need the Pieces Delivered

Most First-Class Mail is delivered within 1–5 days. Most USPS Marketing Mail pieces take between 4–7 days (overseas territories 10–27 days) to be delivered.

Actual delivery times may vary depending on mail entry origin and destination. To view expected delivery times for domestic mailing services, visit *https://www.usps.com/service-standards/*.

How Many Pieces You Are Sending

There is no minimum for the number of pieces that may be sent at First-Class Mail single-piece prices. If you have at least 500 pieces in the same size category [letter-size or oversize envelopes (flats)], you may be able to send them at lower First-Class Mail presort prices. For further information, see DMM 233 at *https://pe.usps.gov/text/dmm300/233.htm*. To send USPS Marketing Mail, you need to have at least 200 pieces or 50 pounds in the same size category. For further information, see DMM 243 at *https://pe.usps.gov/text/dmm300/243.htm*.

Whether You Want Free Forwarding and Return

The Postal Service offers three options for how it treats mail that cannot be delivered to the address on the envelope. Mail can be forwarded to the new address, returned to you, or discarded; however, the third option is not available for Ballot Mail.

a. Use the **Forwarding Service Requested** ancillary endorsement to have Ballot Mail or other Election Mail forwarded. The mailer must request forwarding service through a printed ancillary service endorsement and/or select the proper forwarding Service Type IDentifier (STID). If the mailpiece cannot be delivered and it does not have a printed ancillary service endorsement nor a STID requesting the correct forwarding address correction option, the mailpiece will be returned to the sender.

b. Utilize **Return Service Requested** to have Ballot Mail or other Election Mail automatically returned to the election office. The mailer must request return service through a printed ancillary service endorsement and/or select the proper return STID for the mailpiece.

c. For most types of Election Mail, except Ballot Mail, First-Class Mail may be discarded when **Change Service Requested** is provided. Secure Destruction is available for First-Class Mail that contains personally identifiable information. Learn more about Secure Destruction on PostalPro at *https://postalpro.usps.com/mailing/secure-destruction*.

If you use First-Class Mail, the forwarding and/or return services are free. First-Class Mail may be discarded only when Change Service Requested is provided via Address Change Service (ACS) (see Section III *Preparing Your Address List – Move Update Options)*. Change Service Requested is not available for use on Ballot Mail. Note that fees may apply for this service.

Undeliverable as addressed (UAA) USPS Marketing Mail is typically discarded. If you want the mail forwarded or returned, the mailpiece must have the appropriate ancillary service endorsement printed on the address side of the mailpiece, and you will be charged for each mailpiece that is returned. Additionally, for Ballot Mail sent USPS Marketing Mail, you must use the appropriate STID so that the Postal Service knows whether to forward UAA Ballot Mail or to return it to the appropriate election office.

For more information about ancillary service endorsements and address correction services available, contact the ACS Help Desk via email at *ACS@usps.gov* or by phone at 877-640-0724 (select option 1 for Address Change Service) and see DMM 507.1.5 at *https://pe.usps.gov/text/dmm300/507.htm*.

If You Need Extra Services

The Postal Service has several service enhancements, called extra services, available for use with First-Class Mail service. Extra services can be purchased for an additional fee. The extra service that is generally of most interest to election officials is Certified Mail service. The service provides the sender with a mailing receipt and, upon request, electronic verification that the Postal Service delivered or attempted to deliver the mailpiece. For further information, see DMM 503.3.0 at *https://pe.usps.gov/text/dmm300/503.htm#1_0*.

Section II.
Using Reply Mail

Qualified Business Reply Mail with Intelligent Mail barcode Accounting

If you provide return Ballot Mail envelopes to voters, consider using Qualified Business Reply Mail (QBRM) with Intelligent Mail barcode Accounting (IMbA). QBRM is a First-Class Mail service that enables you to pay the return postage (including a per-piece fee) for those mailpieces returned to your election office. IMbA is an automated solution for the counting, rating, invoicing, and billing processes. Using the Intelligent Mail barcode (IMb) on a mailpiece allows mailpiece counts based on processing equipment scans to be linked to the mailer and sent directly to *PostalOne!* QBRM utilizes the enhanced processing capability of IMbA to reduce processing times and ensure QBRM mailers receive reply mail and invoices quickly.

QBRM with IMbA provides you with discounted pricing, including waiver of quarterly and/or annual fees; however, it applies only to automation-compatible cards and letter-size mail weighing up to and including 3.5 ounces. The design must be approved by a Postal Service Mailpiece Design Analyst before distribution, and there are requirements for advance deposits and accounting fees.

For more information on QBRM with IMbA, see the *Qualified Business Reply Mail with Intelligent Mail barcode Accounting (IMbA) Fact Sheet* for Election Mail located within Kit 600 and DMM 505.1.1.3 and 505.1.6 at *https://pe.usps.gov/text/dmm300/505.htm#1_0.*

Mailing Standards of the United States Postal Service

Balloting materials for any election, whether disseminated in hardcopy or electronically, must indicate in a prominent location the proper amount of First-Class Mail postage that must be applied, except in certain circumstances for balloting materials for military and overseas voters or where postage is prepaid. This information must be included in the balloting materials (i.e., on the ballot, ballot instructions, mailing instructions, or the envelope) with the marking "First-Class Mail postage must be applied."

Alternatively, the marking "Apply First-Class Mail postage here" could be printed in the upper-right corner of the address side of the envelope used by the voter to return the marked ballot to election officials. The Postal Service will also accept approved variations of the indicia enumerated above.

The marking requirements will not apply to balloting materials that meet one of the following exceptions:

- The balloting materials fall under the special exemptions for military and overseas voting.
- The ballot is returned using Business Reply Mail.
- Return postage is guaranteed through a postage due account.
- Postage on the Ballot Mail envelope is prepaid by stamps, meter, or Permit Reply Mail.

For additional information on Ballot Mail, review DMM 703.8.0 at *https://pe.usps.gov/text/dmm300/703.htm#ep1174014*.

Short Paid and Unpaid Ballot Mail

All Ballot Mail envelopes, except those outlined in the following section, require postage. Nonetheless, short paid and unpaid Ballot Mail addressed to an election office will not be returned to the voter for additional postage. Postage is instead collected from the election office upon delivery or at a later date in order to not delay delivery of Ballot Mail with insufficient postage.

Balloting Materials for Military Personnel and Overseas Voters

You may send balloting materials through the mail without prepayment of postage for certain elections in order to enable persons in the following categories to apply for registration and vote by ballot when absent from their place of voting residence and otherwise eligible to vote absentee:

- Members of the Armed Forces in active service and their spouses and dependents.
- Members of the U.S. Merchant Marine and their spouses and dependents.
- U.S. citizens residing outside the territorial limits of the United States and the District of Columbia and their spouses and dependents residing with or accompanying them.

For this special exemption, you must prepare balloting materials in accordance with DMM 703.8.8 at *https://pe.usps.gov/text/dmm300/703.htm#ep1174014*.

Section III. Preparing Your Address List

Having an updated, correct, and complete address list will help ensure accurate and timely delivery of your mail. By maximizing your address quality, you can also minimize your mailing costs. The Postal Service has established minimum standards for address quality for certain postage prices.

Accurate and standardized addresses will help reduce the amount of UAA pieces in your mailings. To learn more about the correct way to standardize your addresses, contact the ACS Help Desk via email at *ACS@usps.gov* or by phone at 877-640-0724 (select option 1 for Address Change Service) and see Publication 28, Postal Addressing Standards, online at *https://pe.usps.com/text/pub28/28c2_001.htm*.

Address Hygiene Tools

The Postal Service has a variety of products and services that will help improve the accuracy of your mailing lists, increase the quality of the physical addresses, and provide Move Update information. These hygiene tools are available through either the Postal Service or private mail service providers licensed or certified by the Postal Service. For information about address hygiene, go to: *https://postalpro.usps.com/address-quality*.

Physical Address Hygiene and Quality

The following four products will help ensure that all your addresses are deliverable — and identify those with address deficiencies:

a. **Coding Accuracy Support System (CASS):** CASS-certified address matching software will help standardize your addresses and update your files with ZIP+4. You can get CASS-certified software from numerous mail service providers or have your own CASS-certified software. Having ZIP+4 on your mail improves the speed and efficiency of your mail delivery and can reduce postage prices.

b. **Delivery Point Validation (DPV):** DPV can confirm the existence of an address on a mailing list as a valid delivery point and helps you identify inaccurate or incomplete addresses. You must use the DPV product in conjunction with CASS-certified address matching software. DPV is available from various vendors or can be acquired by the end user.

c. **Address Element Correction (AEC):** AEC is an entirely computerized address correction process which uses logic routines to assist in ZIP+4 coding previously un-coded addresses, allowing mail to qualify for discounted automation prices.

d. **Address Element Correction II (AEC II):** AEC II is for addresses that AEC cannot resolve electronically. In AEC II, addresses are sent to delivery personnel, carriers, and clerks in local Post Offices for resolution.

Move Update Options

Mailers are required to update all addresses on discounted First-Class Mail and USPS Marketing Mail within 95 days before a mailing. The Postal Service makes the following Move Update options available to mailers at reasonable costs. You need to determine which of the following methods work best for your organization:

a. **NCOA^{Link} Systems:** The NCOA^{Link} process provides change of address (COA) data, submitted by customers who have moved and have notified the Postal Service of a COA. Updated 18- or 48-month computerized COA information is provided on a regular basis to the NCOA^{Link} licensees by the Postal Service. NCOA^{Link} is very effective because it corrects your addresses before you send your mailpieces.

NCOA^{Link} — The NCOA^{Link} product is a secure dataset of approximately 169 million permanent COA records consisting of names and addresses of individuals, families, and businesses who have filed a change of address with the Postal Service. Developed with secure data store technology to increase security of postal customer data and

protect the privacy of this information, the NCOA^{Link} product enables mailers to process mailing lists and update lists with new addresses prior to mailing. The NCOA^{Link} data is provided on a regular basis to companies that have been licensed by the Postal Service. For assistance with NCOA^{Link}, email *NCOALink@usps.gov* or call 800-589-5766.

b. **Address Change Service:** ACS is an address correction service that provides mailers with a cost-effective means of obtaining current COA information when mail is UAA. ACS allows you to update address files electronically, eliminating the cost, time, and errors of manual keying. ACS provides a data file that includes new address information or the reason your mail cannot be delivered (examples: "Attempted – Not Known" or "Insufficient Address"). The Postal Service will charge an electronic or automated address correction fee for each address correction record provided, unless mailers use Full-Service ACS. With ACS, you get corrected information for your mailpiece after the mailing. For more information about ACS, go to *https://postalpro.usps.com/address-quality/ACS*.

c. **Ancillary Service Endorsements (ASE):** ASEs are used to request an addressee's new address and to provide the Postal Service with instructions on how to handle your mail if it is UAA. "Address Service Requested," "Change Service Requested," and "Return Service Requested" endorsements meet the Move Update standards and provide you with the new address or the reason the mail cannot be delivered through a separate address correction notice. Manual address correction fees for return postage may apply. For more information on ASE, see DMM 507.1.5 at *https://pe.usps.gov/text/dmm300/507.htm#ep1223780*.

NOTE: ACS and ASE are post-mailing updates, and do not meet the Move Update requirement the first time you use it for the mailing. For an address to meet the Move Update requirement using ACS or an ASE, you must mail to your customers at least once every 95 days and update the addresses used on the mailpieces prior to the next mailing. You must use an approved pre-mailing method or mail the pieces at the single piece First-Class Mail rate if it is more than 95 days in between your mailings, or if this is the first time you will mail to an address not obtained directly from the addressee (in the last 95 days).

Additional information on how to comply with the Move Update standard can be found in the *Guide to Move Update* at *https://postalpro.usps.com/moveupdate/guide* and DMM 602.5 at *https://pe.usps.com/text/dmm300/602.htm*.

More Addressing Tips for Election Mailers

If you are required by law to include certain non-address related information on the outside of an envelope, it must be placed outside the Optical Character Reader (OCR) area to avoid interfering with the readability of the delivery address and/or barcode. If voter information must appear in the delivery address block area (i.e., if address labels are used for both the voter information and the delivery address), then the voter information line must appear above the recipient line of the delivery address.

A Postal Service Mailpiece Design Analyst (MDA) can help you, at no charge, with this and other aspects of proper mailpiece design. For help with mailpiece design, submit a design review request at *https://electionmail.usps.com/s/election-mail-review* or call 877-672-0007 (select option 3 for mailpiece). Hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Central Time (closed federal holidays). Also, mailpiece design information is available on PostalPro at *https://postalpro.usps.com/mailing/mailpiece-design-analyst-mda-customer-service-help-desk*.

For more information on Postal Service addressing products and services, visit *https://pe.usps.com/BusinessMail101/Index?ViewName=Addressing* or contact:

NATIONAL CUSTOMER SUPPORT CENTER
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
225 N HUMPHREYS BLVD STE 501
MEMPHIS TN 38188-1001

TEL: 800-238-3150
FAX: 901-767-8853

Addressing Election Mail to Military Personnel and Overseas Voters:

Foreign addresses except Canada: The last line of the address on mail, including Election Mail, being sent to a foreign country must contain the country name printed in full, using capital letters. No abbreviations are permitted. When using a foreign postal code, place it on the line above the country of destination.

Example:

MR THOMAS CLARK
117 RUSSELL DRIVE
LONDON WIP 7HQ
ENGLAND

Canadian addresses: For mail addressed to Canada, the last line of the address must show only the country name, written in full (no abbreviations) and in capital letters. There must be two spaces between the province abbreviation and the postal code, as shown below between ON and K1A OB1.

Example:

MRS HELEN K SAUNDERS
1010 CLEAR STREET
OTTAWA ON K1A 0B1
CANADA

For additional information on addressing mail to foreign countries, consult *Mailing Standards of the United States Postal Service,* International Mail Manual (IMM) 122 available online at *https://pe.usps.com/text/Imm/welcome.htm*.

Military addresses: Overseas military and diplomatic addresses must be formatted to conform to domestic addressing standards, while also including the correct Air Force and Army Post Office (APO), Fleet Post Office (FPO), or Diplomatic Post Office (DPO) and AA, AE, or AP designations. AA, AE, and AP designations are used for addresses with the 3-digit ZIP Code prefixes 340, 090-099, and 962-966, respectively. APO/FPO/DPO addresses must not include a foreign city and/or country name.

Mail must be addressed to an individual or job title such as "Commander," "Commanding Officer," or other charges. Mail addressed to "Any Service Member," or similar wording such as "Any Soldier," "Sailor," "Airman," or "Marine"; "Military Mail"; or any other vague description, is prohibited.

The correct format and correlating examples are as follows:

a. Line 1: Job Title and Full Name, or Full Name only.

b. Line 2: The delivery line (the second line from the bottom in the address) must show the word "UNIT", "CMR", "PSC", "OMC", or "UMR" and number; as well as the box number assigned.

c. Line 3: The bottom line must contain the APO/FPO/DPO ("city") designation and the appropriate two-letter AA, AE, or AP ("state") abbreviation followed by the ZIP Code or ZIP+4.

SEAMAN JOHN DOE
UNIT 100100 BOX 4120
FPO AP 96691-0041

JOHN DOE
PSC 5698 BOX 2002
APO AE 09400-0020

Department of State addresses: Overseas mail addressed to Department of State personnel must show on the top line: full name, including first and last name with middle name or initial. The delivery line must include unit, number, and box number assigned. The bottom line must contain DPO "city" designation and the appropriate two-letter "state" abbreviation (AA, AE, or AP), followed by the ZIP Code or ZIP+4.

Example:

JANE T DOE
UNIT 9900 BOX 0500
DPO AE 09701-0500

Section IV.
Planning Your Mailing

Consult with Your Local Postal Service Manager, Customer Relations

Contact your local Postal Service Manager, Customer Relations (MCR) to arrange a meeting by submitting an inquiry at https://electionmail.usps.com/s/contact-local-mcr. You may also want to have direct contact with all local Post Offices within your jurisdiction to help coordinate your mailing. In the meeting, include the following people:

- All your personnel involved in ordering, designing, addressing, and preparing mail.
- Any outside mail service providers or suppliers you are using.

In the meeting, your MCR will discuss the logistics of your mailings with you, including the following:

- **Delivery date:** When planning the date, you will want to consider the size of the mailing, the time sensitivity of the contents, and the class of mail (e.g., First-Class Mail, USPS Marketing Mail). For Ballots Mail, take into consideration holidays and 3-day weekends so that ballots will not sit in mailboxes over a long weekend. The Postal Service delivers 6 days a week, Monday through Saturday, but does not deliver on federal holidays. The Postal Service strongly recommends using First-Class Mail for all Election Mail, especially for Ballot Mail.
- **When to give the mailpieces to the Postal Service:** The Postal Service can help schedule a time that allows for the immediate acceptance of your mailing. If more than one jurisdiction is involved, it is important to coordinate the time of acceptance for each.
- **Where to give the mail to the Postal Service:** Typically, you will give your mail to a Business Mail Entry Unit, but larger Post Offices may need to direct the mailing to a specific dock area.
- **Your current plan for the upcoming election:** Discuss any new or anticipated changes to state elections procedures, especially changes to your deadlines.
- **Bulk preparation supplies and equipment you will need:** Talk with your MCR about Postal Service supplies (e.g., forms, tags, trays, and sacks) and how you can order them. There are no charges for these items. The Postal Service recommends the use of Tag 191, *Domestic and International Ballots,* on tray and sack containers to identify official Ballot Mail upon entry. Tag 191 cannot be used to identify other types of Election Mail such as sample ballots, voter registration cards, absentee voting applications, and polling place notifications. Tag 191 can be ordered online at https://about.usps.com/forms/ps1910.pdf.
- **Required eDocs and mailing profiles:** Electronic documentation is required if you want to mail at discounted postage prices for First-Class Mail, USPS Marketing Mail, or Nonprofit USPS Marketing Mail.
- **Options for mail that cannot be delivered:** Discuss how you want the Postal Service to handle mail that is UAA. For more information on ACS and ASE, see Section III *Preparing Your Address List – Move Update Options*.
- **Return Ballot Mail address options:** You should determine the best method for receiving return Ballot Mail envelopes, options include:
  - Use your office address and ZIP+4.
  - Rent a Post Office box. This service allows you to pick up your mail during the hours the box lobby is open.
  - Use Caller Service. Caller Service is a premium service available for a fee, which allows you to pick up mail at a Post Office call window or loading dock when the office is open.
- **The importance of Election Mail visibility:** Using unique Intelligent Mail barcodes (IMb) on Election Mail gives you the ability to track the delivery and return of Ballot Mail. A uniquely serialized IMb also allows the Postal Service to research and resolve potential delivery issues.
- **Prepaid postage options on return Ballot Mail:** Discuss how you presently manage mass mailings and review the pre-paid postage options available such as QBRM with IMbA.

Section V.
Filing for Postage Discounts and Other Mailing Services

The forms you will need are available through your local Post Office and at *https://about.usps.com/forms/welcome.htm*.

Postage Discounts Form

If you want to send your mail using First-Class Mail or USPS Marketing Mail and receive discounts based on the volume and preparation of your mailings, you will need to obtain a permit from the Postal Service. This can be done by using PS Form 3615, *Mailing Permit Application and Customer Profile,* or through the Business Customer Gateway at *https://gateway.usps.com/*.

Authorization for Nonprofit Status Form

To qualify for Nonprofit USPS Marketing Mail prices, a nonprofit authorization with the Postal Service must be obtained by submitting PS Form 3624, *Application to Mail at Nonprofit USPS Marketing Mail Prices,* with supporting documentation.

For more information, see Publication 417, *Nonprofit USPS Marketing Mail Eligibility: Nonprofit and Other Qualified Organizations* at *https://pe.usps.com/text/pub417/welcome.htm*, and DMM 703.1.0 at *https://pe.usps.gov/text/dmm300/703.htm#ep1114977*.

QBRM with IMbA Forms

Complete Part A of PS Form 3615, *Mailing Permit Application and Customer Profile,* to establish a QBRM permit. Complete Section 1 of PS Form 6805, *BRM/QBRM Application for ZIP+4 Code Assignment/Validation and QBRM*, to establish a unique QBRM ZIP+4 code assignment/validation for the QBRM address. The forms must be submitted via email to the Mailing & Shipping Solution Center — Mailing Requirements Department at *MSSC@usps.gov* for processing. Any questions can be directed to the MSSC at 877-672-0007 (option 2 for mailing requirements).

Once you have your permit approved, you can give permission to an authorized representative to distribute and receive QBRM pieces at other Post Offices using your permit number. For further information, see DMM 505.1.1, 505.1.3, and 505.1.6 at *https://pe.usps.gov/text/dmm300/505.htm#1_0*.

Post Office Box Form

Election officials may rent a Post Office Box (PO Box) for a fee to pick up returning Ballot Mail each day. This service allows you to pick up your mail during the hours the postal facility's box lobby is open.

You can apply for PO Box service by completing PS Form 1093, *Application for Post Office Box Service*, at a Post Office, any postal retail facility, or online. To learn more about PO Boxes, see DMM 508.4.0 at *https://pe.usps.gov/text/DMM300/508.htm#ep1052479*.

Caller Service Form

If your election office anticipates receiving more return mail than can be delivered to the largest installed PO Box in your local facility, Caller Service could be a potential solution. Caller Service is a premium service available for a fee, which allows you to pick up Election Mail at a Post Office call window or loading dock when the office is open.

Apply for Caller Service by completing PS Form 1093, *Application for Post Office Caller Service,* and submitting it to any postal facility that provides retail service. Learn more about Caller Service by reviewing DMM 508.5.0 at *https://pe.usps.gov/text/DMM300/508.htm#ep1069278*.

Section VI.
Designing Your Mailpiece

Mailpiece design is one of the most critical components for ensuring your mailpiece is processed efficiently and determining your mailing costs. Properly designed mail can reduce processing issues, minimize delivery delays, allow you to receive automation price discounts, and increase the operational likelihood that Ballot Mail envelopes receive a postmark. Questions regarding mailpiece design can be answered by a Postal Service Mailpiece Design Analyst (MDA).

Consult with a Mailpiece Design Analyst Before Printing Your Envelopes

Prior to printing, please consult with an MDA to discuss the design for the envelope or cover of every mailpiece you plan to mail (e.g., postcards, envelopes, or larger mail such as manila envelopes, also known as flats). This service is free of charge, and it can save significant costs for your mailing operation as well as help prevent unforeseen delays in delivery.

Physical or electronic examples can be submitted to an MDA for review. Electronic samples must be provided as a PDF file with crop marks and borders at 100% (no scaling). Files should be submitted using the Election Mail Design Review Request portal at *https://electionmail.usps.com/s/election-mail-review* for evaluation and feedback prior to printing.

Physical samples are **required** for testing reflectance, barcode quality, and print/contrast ratio. For QBRM approval, 10 samples must be submitted. Once samples are received, the MDA will check to see if they meet current Postal Service standards for automation (e.g., envelope dimensions, paper stock, and ink colors for readability) and general mailability. Mailpiece review typically occurs within 48 hours of submission.

Request that the MDA does the following:

- Provide guidance and feedback on mailpiece design for outgoing and return envelopes to ensure the design meets automation-compatibility standards.
- Review for use of proper verbiage and placement of postal markings and endorsements on your envelopes.
- Review the blueline or PDF file of your envelopes, postcards, and other mail to provide recommendations for enhanced processing prior to printing.

Customers can receive assistance from an MDA by submitting a design review request at *https://electionmail.usps.com/s/election-mail-review* or calling 877-672-0007 (select option 3 for mailpiece design). Hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Central Time (closed federal holidays).

More Design Tips for Election Mailers

- The Postal Service strongly recommends the use of the Official Election Mail logo on all Election Mail. Use the Official Election Mail logo on any mailpiece created by an election official that is mailed to or from a citizen of the United States for the purpose of participating in the voting process. This includes ballots, sample ballots, voter registration cards, absentee voting applications, and polling place notifications. Use the logo on all classes of mail and all processing categories. The Official Election Mail logo serves to identify official Election Mail for Postal Service workers and distinguishes it from the millions of other mailpieces that are processed daily.
- Consider possible weight limitations. Printing instructions and information on both sides of forms will reduce the amount of paper and overall weight of your mail, saving postage costs.
- Some ink and paper colors will not work well on automated postal equipment. Consider different colors for different ballot types, districts, elections, parties, or inserts. Instead of colored envelopes, also consider using colored bands (avoid using a green color that resembles Certified Mail) that encircle only part of the envelopes or borders placed away from postal elements such as the delivery address, postage area, and Facing Identification Mark (FIM). A FIM is a nine-bit binary code represented by vertical bars (with a corresponding space element) that serves to orient and separate certain types of First-Class Mail during the facing-canceling process. The only way to determine if a certain paper color and/or ink will be read by automated postal equipment is by submitting physical samples to an MDA for testing.
- Outgoing envelopes [except for Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee (UOCVA) pieces, which must contain FIM C] **must not** contain a FIM A or FIM C, but they should have pre-

barcoded IMbs to route the mailpieces. Information on the different FIM patterns is available in DMM 202.8.2 at https://pe.usps.gov/text/DMM300/202.htm#ep1123678.

- The Postal Service strongly recommends that return Ballot Mail envelopes contain a FIM A or FIM C and be pre-barcoded with serialized IMbs and 11-digit ZIPs. This will assist with correct facing and sortation on automated postal equipment. Serialized tracking codes also allow individual mailpiece tracking.
- The address and pre-barcodes must match. If not, there is a chance for a mismatch between the IMb code and address lookup, which can cause delivery delays.
- Follow DMM rules for address and barcode placement. The address should be left-justified and in the OCR area. IMb barcodes must be properly located in the address block or lower-right barcode clear zone.
- On return Ballot Mail envelopes, do not include the original IMb code on the front or back of the return envelope. It is recommended that the return address printed on the front of the envelope be the same as the election office delivery address, if permitted by your jurisdiction.
- Return addresses should be on the top, left corner of the envelope.
- Minimize the use of any data matrix, QR, or other width modulated codes on the back of the envelope. If placed on the addressed side, no QR code may be placed in the barcode clear zone or postage area and should be placed 2 inches to the left of the address block.
- Avoid extraneous data or markings in the address area that would affect readability.
- You must prepare Ballot Mail in accordance with Postal Service mailing rules and regulations, including DMM 703.8.0 available at https://pe.usps.gov/text/dmm300/703.htm#ep1174014.

Design Resources

Other sources of information include:

- Quick Service Guides (QSGs) provide information on the design of letters, cards, flats, and various reply forms for automation compatibility, along with schematics. Find them at https://pe.usps.com/text/qsg300/q000.htm.
- PostalPro offers mailpiece design information at https://postalpro.usps.com/mailing/mailpiece-design-analyst-mda-customer-service-help-desk.
- Postal Explorer shares mailpiece design guidance at https://pe.usps.com/MailpieceDesign/Index.
- Publication 28, *Postal Addressing Standards* is available at https://pe.usps.com/cpim/ftp/pubs/Pub28/pub28.pdf.
- Publication 631, *Official Election Mail — Graphic Guidelines and Logos* is available at https://about.usps.com/publications/pub631.pdf.
- Election Officials' Mailing Resources page is available at http://www.usps.com/electionmail.

Section VII.
Arranging and Presenting Your Mailing

Finalize Your Plans At Least 45 Days Before Election Day (and Preferably Earlier)

- Let your Postal Service Election Mail team know if you want to pick up returning Ballot Mail at a Postal Service facility each day or have it delivered to your election office with your regular mail. If you choose to pick up your mail, please coordinate with your Postal Service MCR to arrange and determine the best time for pick up. This option will allow you to collect the Ballot Mail envelopes as early as possible. This is another reason to consider using a Post Office Box or Caller Service.
- Inform your MCR of your cut-off time for receiving return Ballot Mail envelopes. Arrange the latest time when an election official may pick up last-minute returns by submitting an inquiry at *https://electionmail.usps.com/s/contact-local-mcr*.
- Obtain pallets, trays, sacks, labels, tags, and stickers. If you use a mailing service, be sure to verify that the service will provide all the needed supplies or can obtain them for you.
- Depending on what you are mailing, present one or more of the following forms to the Postal Service along with your mail:
  - PS Form 3600, *Postage Statement*, series for First-Class Mail.
  - PS Form 3602, *Postage Statement*, series for USPS Marketing Mail (Regular or Nonprofit).
  - When completing the Postage Statement forms, check either the "Election Mail – Official Ballots" or "Election Mail – Non-Ballot Materials" box for each mailing presented for acceptance. This provides the Postal Service with important insight into Election Mail and Ballot Mail volume by entry point that may help with future Postal Service capacity planning.
- These forms are available on the Postal Service's website at *https://about.usps.com/resources/forms.htm*.
- All domestic commercial mailings must use an approved electronic method to transmit a postage statement to the *PostalOne!* system.
- The Postal Service provides free means of electronic postage statement submission through the Intelligent Mail for Small Business (IMsb) Tool and Postal Wizard. There are also approved third party software options available on PostalPro at *https://postalpro.usps.com/*.

Section VIII. Election Mail Checklist

This suggested checklist will help ensure a successful mailing.

Step 1. Call your Postal Service Manager, Customer Relations.

See Section IV *Planning Your Mailing* and the Election Officials section on the Postal Service's Election Mail webpage at: *https://about.usps.com/what/government-services/election-mail/#election-officials*.

- ☐ Discuss the specific purpose for the mailing (e.g., polling place notifications, ballots, or voter registration).
- ☐ Discuss when you intend to present the mail to the Postal Service.
- ☐ Discuss your delivery date requirements.
- ☐ Determine where and when the mailpieces must be presented to the Postal Service to meet your desired delivery dates.
- ☐ Discuss if this is a Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act-eligible mailing.
- ☐ Determine the volume of the mailing.
- ☐ Determine the mail class for your mailing. The Postal Service strongly recommends using First-Class Mail for Election Mail.
- ☐ Use the USPS Transit Time Map to view expected delivery times for all domestic mail based on USPS service standards at *https://www.usps.com/service-standards/*.
- ☐ Consult with your mailing requirements clerk to determine if your mailing is eligible for USPS Marketing Mail or Nonprofit USPS Marketing Mail rates if you choose not to follow the recommendation to use First-Class Mail.
- ☐ Contact the Mailing and Shipping Solutions Center (MSSC) by emailing *MSSC@usps.gov* or calling 877-672-0007 (select option 2 for mailing requirements). Hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Central Time (closed federal holidays).
- ☐ Determine the best method of receiving return mail (e.g., street delivery, PO Box, or Caller Service).
- ☐ Determine the best time to pick up the mail each day.
- ☐ Determine the latest time when an election official can pick up return mail.
- ☐ Determine the final date for receiving marked return Ballot Mail.
- ☐ Determine the necessary postal equipment and supplies needed.
- ☐ Determine the postage payment method.
- ☐ Determine what forms are needed for mail entry and postage payment.
- ☐ Determine if the mailing must meet address hygiene or Move Update requirements.
- ☐ Determine if the mailing needs to have an ancillary service endorsement (e.g., Return Service Requested).
- ☐ Determine if the mailing needs any Extra Services (e.g., Certified Mail, Return Receipt Requested, and Registered Mail).

Step 2. Determine if the mailing needs to include a reply piece (See Section II *Using Reply Mail*).

- ☐ Decide if you plan to use Qualified Business Reply Mail (QBRM) with Intelligent Mail barcode Accounting.

Step 3. Prepare your address list (See Section III *Preparing Your Address List*).

- ☐ Decide who should receive the mailpieces.
- ☐ Compile your address list.
- ☐ Ensure proper address list hygiene.
- ☐ Validate physical mailing address accuracy.
- ☐ Validate that you meet the Move Update standard, if applicable.

Step 4. File required forms for postage discounts and other mailing services (if needed) (See Section V *Filing for Postage Discounts and Other Mailing Services*).

- ☐ PS Form 3615, *Mailing Permit Application and Customer Profile* (for QBRM permits) is available at *https://about.usps.com/forms/ps3615.pdf*.
- ☐ PS Form 3624, *Application to Mail at Nonprofit USPS Marketing Mail Prices* is available at *https://about.usps.com/forms/ps3624.pdf*.
- ☐ PS Form 3623, *Request for Confirmation of Authorization (or Pending Application) to Mail at Nonprofit USPS Marketing Mail Prices* is available at *https://about.usps.com/forms/ps3623.pdf*.
- ☐ PS Form 1093, *Application for Post Office Box Service* is available at *https://about.usps.com/forms/ps1093.pdf*.
- ☐ PS Form 1093-C, *Application for Post Office Caller Service* is available at *https://about.usps.com/forms/ps1093c.pdf*.
- ☐ PS Form 6805, *BRM/QBRM Application for ZIP+4 Code Assignment/Validation and QBRM Approval* is available at *https://about.usps.com/forms/ps6805.pdf*.

Step 5. Review mailpiece design.

The Postal Service recommends that election officials always have all Ballot Mail envelope designs reviewed by a Mailpiece Design Analyst (MDA), each year prior to printing. This includes both new designs and designs that were previously used. Mailpiece review typically occurs within 48 hours of submission. Election officials have, in some instances, made design decisions without consulting an MDA, which can result in processing issues and delivery delays. Some uninformed decisions have resulted in envelopes that were not automation-compatible and thus did not produce the best results.

- ☐ Get assistance with mailpiece design by submitting a design review request *https://electionmail.usps.com/s/election-mail-review* or calling 877-672-0007 (select option 3 for mailpiece design). Hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Central Time (closed federal holidays).
- ☐ Look up additional mailpiece design information online at *https://postalpro.usps.com/mailing/mailpiece-design-analyst-mda-customer-service-help-desk*.

MDAs are trained to do the following:

- ☐ Provide pre-mailing design consultation.
- ☐ Provide technical assistance to printers, graphic designers, and envelope manufacturers.
- ☐ Review outgoing and reply mailpieces for adherence to Postal Service standards.
  - ☐ Ensure that the location of the elections office/agency related text and graphics does not interfere with Postal Service regulations or processing.
  - ☐ Perform tests and reviews of physical mailpiece samples for reflectance, thickness, size, shape, weight, color, flexibility, and Intelligent Mail barcode (IMb) tolerances.
  - ☐ Analyze readability of actual mailpieces.
  - ☐ Aid with mailpiece design evaluations of Election Mail.
  - ☐ Verify:
    - ☐ Accuracy of printed delivery address for reply mailpieces.
    - ☐ Official Election Mail logo size and placement.
    - ☐ Format and placement of endorsements and other postal markings.
    - ☐ Barcode content includes a Service Type IDentifier (STID), Mailer ID, serial number, and Routing Code or ZIP+4.
- ☐ Before artwork is sent to a printer, finalize design with an MDA and submit a pre-production proof.

Postal Service design recommendations.

The Postal Service highly recommends that local election officials use available Postal Service support resources such as your local Manager, Customer Relations and MDA that can help you with design elements.

- ☐ Use letter-size reply envelopes. The Postal Service recommends the use of letter-size reply envelopes. The use of letter-size reply envelopes will increase the operational likelihood that the Ballot Mail receives a postmark.
- ☐ Consider appropriate colors, weight limitations, proper wording, placement of postal markings, etc.
  - ☐ Use pastel colors (adhere to the Postal Service's guidance on automation-compatible colors to use).
  - ☐ Local election offices should standardize the use of color for each election type (e.g., primary/general/special/school).
  - ☐ Instead of colored envelopes, consider using colored bands (avoid using a green color that resembles Certified Mail) that encircle only part of the envelopes or borders placed away from postal elements (such as delivery address, FIM, and postage area).
- ☐ Follow First-Class Mail "best practices".
  - ☐ Use First-Class Mail for outbound Election Mail. Most First-Class Mail is delivered within 1-5 days.
  - ☐ Use USPS-approved practices to maximize postage discounts for First-Class Mail (e.g. presort First-Class Mail).
  - ☐ Create an Informed Delivery interactive campaign to enhance and extend the voter's experience with the Election Mail.
    - ☐ Include custom images, known as representative and "ride-along" images, and a target URL that directs the user to a digital experience.

Postal Service DMM requirements.

- ☐ Include the appropriate postage markings.
  - ☐ Indicate, in a prominent location, the specific amount of First-Class Mail postage required for the return of the marked ballot to election officials.
  - ☐ Alternatively, print the marking "Apply First-Class Mail postage here" in the upper-right corner of the address side of the envelope used by the voter to return the marked ballot to election officials. The Postal Service will also accept approved variations of the described above marking.
  - ☐ Check to see if the marking requirements apply or not to balloting materials that are qualified under the special exemptions specified by USPS (see DMM 703.8.0 at *https://pe.usps.gov/text/dmm300/703.htm#ep1174014*).
- ☐ Follow reply envelope design guidance.
  - ☐ Use the Official Election Mail logo on all Election Mail because voters recognize the mail as important and Postal Service workers can distinguish the mailpiece from the millions of other mailpieces processed daily.
  - ☐ Use a uniquely serialized IMb to increase the electronic visibility of Ballot Mail in the mailstream which allows the Postal Service to quickly identify and process on-hand Ballot Mail throughout the network.
  - ☐ Ensure that the IMb includes the proper Ballot Mail STID. The three-digit STID codes are listed on PostalPro: *https://postalpro.usps.com/mailing/service-type-identifiers*.
  - ☐ Use Informed Visibility Mail Tracking and Reporting, a free service which provides near-real-time mail tracking data, the ability to better plan Election Mail mailings and resources, and flexible data provisioning and data delegation.

Step 6. Inform voters what to expect if they choose to use the mail to vote.

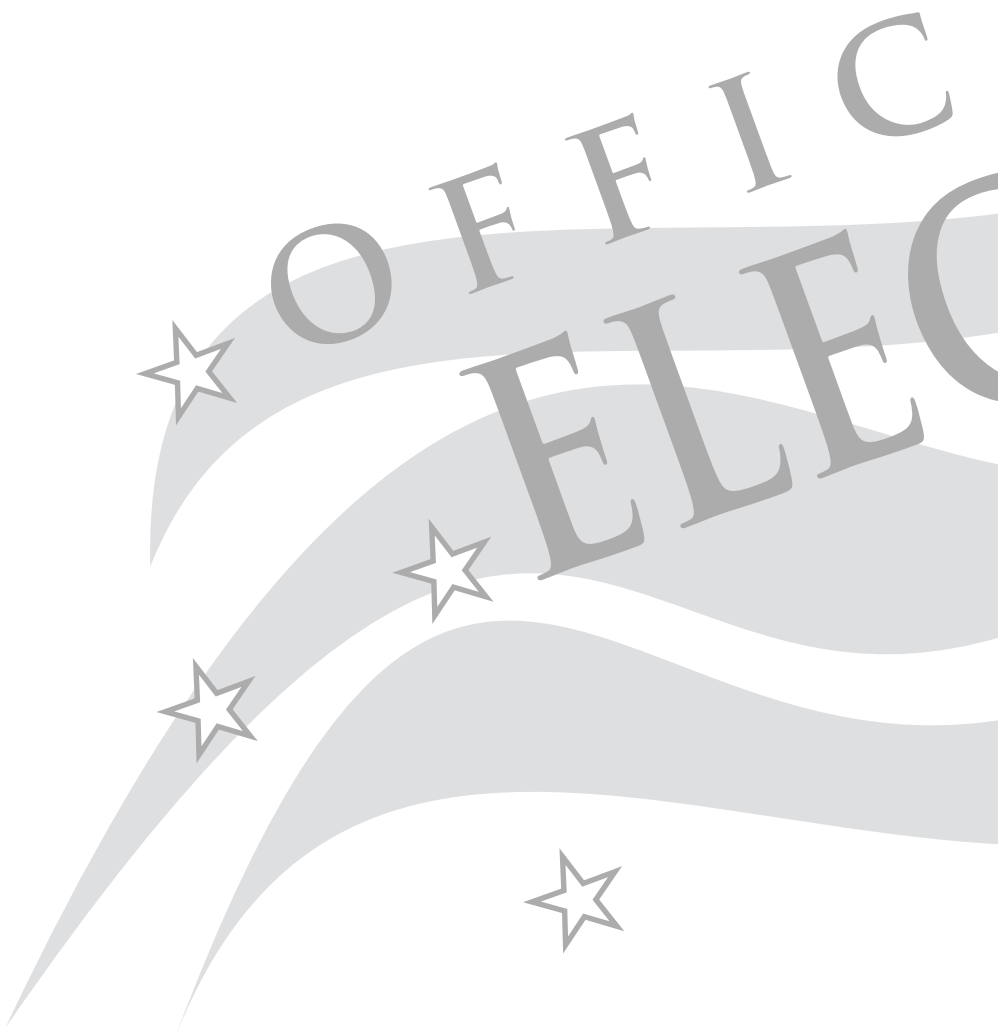
- ☐ For domestic, non-military voters who choose to use the mail to return their completed ballot, the Postal Service recommends that they mail their completed ballot before Election Day, and at least one week prior to the deadline by which their completed ballot must be received by their election office. Some states may recommend allowing even more time for mailing completed ballots. Election officials should consider advising voters about the Postal Service's recommendations.
- ☐ For APO/FPO/DPO addresses, the Postal Service recommends that military personnel serving overseas voters follow the return-by-mail date for their location published at *https://usps.com/electionmail*.
- ☐ If domestic voters want to ensure that a postmark is applied to their return Ballot Mail envelope, and that the date on the postmark aligns with the date of mailing, they should visit a Postal Service retail location and request a manual (local) postmark at the retail counter when tendering their Ballot Mail for mailing. The manual postmark will be applied free of charge.

Step 7. Prepare and present the mailing (See Section VII *Arranging and Presenting Your Mailing*).

- ☐ Print your mailing in time for preparation and delivery to the Post Office facility.
- ☐ Obtain postal supplies and equipment (e.g., trays, sacks, labels, stickers, and tags).
- ☐ Prepare your mailing for delivery to the Post Office.
- ☐ If applicable, obtain a form from *https://about.usps.com/resources/forms.htm* and complete postage statements to be presented with the mailing:
  - ☐ If using First-Class Mail, use one or more of PS Form 3600-FCM, *Postage Statement – First Class and USPS Ground Advantage*.
  - ☐ Present the mailing, postage statement, and, if necessary, a check (payment) for funding your postage account.
  - ☐ If using USPS Marketing Mail, use one or more forms in the 3602 series.
  - ☐ Mark the "Election Mail – Official Ballots" or "Election Mail – Non-Ballot Materials" box on the postage statement for each mailing presented for acceptance.
- ☐ Affix Tag 191, *Domestic and International Ballots*, on all trays and sacks of Ballot Mail. This bright green tag provides a high degree of visibility on Ballot Mail as it enters Postal Service processing centers.
  - ☐ Obtain Tag 191 by contacting your Business Mail Entry Unit which can be found at *https://postalpro.usps.com/node/1623*.
  - ☐ Or complete the form at *http://about.usps.com/forms/ps1910.pdf*.

NOTE: Tag 191 can be applied ONLY to Ballot Mail; it cannot be used for any other type of Election Mail.

Note: The following are amongst the many trademarks of the United States Postal Service®: ACS™, AEC II®, CASS™, Certified Mail®, DMM®, DPV®, First-Class Mail®, IMM®, IMb®, IMbA®, IMM®, Informed Visibility® Mail Tracking and Reporting, Intelligent Mail®, NCOALINK®, PO Box™, Post Office™, Postal Explorer®, Postal Service™, PostalOne!®, Priority Mail Express®, Qualified Business Reply Mail™, QBRM™, Registered Mail™, USPS.com®, USPS®, USPS Eagle logo, USPS Marketing Mail®, ZIP Code™, ZIP+4®.



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