



MAILING TERMS AND DEFINITIONS



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Abbreviations

ACS – Address Change Service

ADC – Area Distribution Center

AEC – Address Element Correction

AIDA – Attention, Interest, Desire,
Action (Formula for writing copy DM)

ASF – Auxiliary Service Facility

BC - Barcode

B2B – Business to Business

B2C – Business to Consumer

BMC – Bulk Mail Center

BMEU – Business Mail Entry Unit

BPM – Bound Printed Matter

BRE – Business Reply Envelope

BRM – Business Reply Mail

CAPS – Centralized Account Processing System

CASS Certification – Coding Accuracy Support System

CMM – Customized Market Mail

CMYK – Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Black

COD – Collect on Delivery

CRID – Customer Registration Identifier

CRM – Courtesy Reply Mail

CRRT – Carrier Route

CTP – Computer to Plate

DDU – Destination Delivery Unit

DMM – Domestic Mail Manual

DPV – Delivery Point Verification

FAQ – Frequently Asked Questions

FCM – First Class Mail

FIM – Facing Identification Mark

IMB – Intelligent Mail Barcode

IPP – Irregular Parcel and Pieces

IT – Information Technology

LACS – Locatable Address Conversion System

LOT – Line of Travel (walk sequence)

MCM – Multi Channel Marketing

MID – Mailer Identifier

MSDS – Material Safety Data Sheet

NCOA – National Change of Address System

OCR – Optical Character Recognition

OEL – Optional Endorsement Line

PDF – Portable Document Format

PMS – Pantone Matching System

PO – Post Office

PVDS – Plant Verified Drop Shipment

QBRM – Qualified Business Reply Mail

ROI – Return on Investment

RPN's – Repositionable Note

SCF – Sectional Center Facility

SIC Code – Standard Industrial Codes

STID – Service Type Identifier

UAA – Undeliverable As Addressed

USPS – United States Postal Service

ZIP – Zone Improvement Plan

Glossary

2D Barcode – A Data Matrix code is a two-dimensional matrix barcode consisting of black and white square modules arranged in either a square or rectangular pattern. The information to be encoded can be text or raw data.

A

Address Change Service (ACS) – An automated process that provides change-of-address information to participating mailers who maintain computerized mailing lists. The information is captured in the Computerized Forwarding System (CFS) units and sent to mailer on electronic media, which reduces the volume of manual change-of-address notices.

Address Element Correction (AEC) – A process that identifies and revises incomplete or incorrect computerized address files and then attaches ZIP+4 and carrier route codes. It involves computer matching address records that cannot be coded using CASS-certified address matching software.

Ancillary Service – Forwarding, return, or address correction service included within a mail class. Depending on the mail class, these services are performed at a charge or at no additional charge, if and when the service is actually rendered.

Ancillary Service Endorsement – A marking used by a mailer to request the new address of an addressee and to provide the USPS with instructions on how to handle mail that is undeliverable as addressed.

Aspect Ratio – The dimension of a mailpiece expressed as a ratio of length (the direction parallel to the address) divided by the height. Divide height into width, the answer (aspect ratio) must be between 1.3 and 2.5.

Automation Discount – A postage reduction offered to mailers who prebarcode their mailpieces and meet addressing, readability and other requirements for processing on automated equipment. The discount is relative to the single-piece rate for the mail class.

B

Barcode (BC) – A series of vertical bars and half bars representing the ZIP Code information for the delivery address on a mailpiece. The barcode facilitates automated processing by barcode reader equipment. Each numeric digit is represented by a series of five bars (always a combination of two full bars and three half bars). A complete barcode contains two bars framing the code; the five, nine or eleven digits containing ZIP Code and address information; and a final correction digit that allows the machine to check its reading of the ZIP Code number.

Barcode Clear Zone – A rectangular area in the lower right part of all letter-sized mailpiece that must be kept free of printing and symbols, except for the barcode itself. This requirement allows automated processing machines to read or apply a barcode. (4.25" Preferred)

Barcode Read Area – A small area within the barcode clear zone in which the barcode must be printed. This area is defined by the position of the leftmost bar of the barcode and the bottom edge of the bar.

Business Reply Mail (BRM) – the domestic service that allows a mailer to receive First-Class Mail back from customers and pay postage only for the pieces returned to the mailer from the original distribution. Postage and fees are collected when the mail is delivered back to the original mailer.

By/For Data – the identification of who the mailing was processed by and who it was processed for.

C

Carrier Route Presort Mail – Mail that the mailer arranges by carrier route to qualify for discount postage rates. The mail requires no primary or secondary distribution. The term is a general descriptor of the available rates for this type of preparation, including Enhanced Carrier Route Standard Mail, automation carrier route First-Class Mail, carrier route Periodicals, and carrier route Bound Printed Matter. Except for automation rates, this mail usually does not bear a barcode.

Centralized Account Processing System (CAPS) – It is an electronic postage payment system that provides business mailers a centralized, convenient, and cost effective way to fund postage.

Coding Accuracy Support System (CASS) – A process designed to improve the accuracy of ZIP+4, 5-digit Zip Codes, and carrier route codes that appear on mail pieces. This is required by the USPS for mailing to qualify for the automated discount.

Commingle – To integrate dissimilar material (for example, subscriber and non-subscriber copies, Standard Mail (A) and Standard Mail (B) parcels) into the same mailing; this may require USPS authorization.

Customer Registration Identifier (CRID) – Customer registration identification – unique ID of up to 15 numbers issued by the USPS to identify each customer, not just by name but by physical business location. Used in eDocs to identify the eDoc submitter, permit owner, mail preparer and mail owner.

D

De-dupe – The process of removing duplicate records from one or multiple lists.

Delivery Point Validation (DPV) – Most often performed as part of the CASS process. DPV ensures that an address is a physical destination.

Destination Delivery Unit (DDU) – A postage discount for depositing mail at specific postal facilities that are closer to the final destination of the mail.

Domestic Mail Manual (DMM Book) – This is a book that gives you all the information about mailing a piece, the size and all the postal regulations. It will explain and go through all types of mail.

Drop Shipment – A mailing transported by the mailer or a private (non postal) carrier, from the point of production to a postal facility located closer to the destination. Express Mail and Priority Mail drop shipment, however, are transported by the USPS instead of a private carrier.

E

Encoded Mail – Mail processed on a multiline optical character reader (MLOCR) that has a barcode representation of its ZIP+4 printed on the lower right corner of the mailpiece. USPS optical character reader or remote encoding equipment can barcode the piece, or the customer can preprint the barcode on the piece.

Endorsement – An authorized marking on a mail piece that shows handling instructions, a special service or a request for an ancillary service.

F

Facing Identification Mark (FIM) – A series of five or six vertical bars used by automated postal equipment to identify, orient, and separate reply mail.

First-Class Mail (FCM) – A mail class that includes all matter wholly or partly in handwriting or typewriting, all actual and personal correspondence, all bills and statements of account, and all matter sealed or otherwise closed against inspection. First-Class Mail comprises three subclasses: Post and Postal Cards, Letters and Sealed Parcels, and Priority Mail. Any mailable matter may be sent as First-Class Mail. First-Class Mail is a USPS trademark.

Flat-Size Mail – A mailpiece that exceeds one of the dimensions for letter-size mail (11 ½ inches long, 6 1/8 inches high, and ¼ inch thick) but that does not exceed the maximum dimension for this mail processing category (15 inches long, 12 inches high, ¾ inch thick). The dimensions are slightly different for automation rate eligibility. It may be unwrapped, paper-wrapped, sleeved-wrapped or enveloped.

Full Service Intelligent Mail – A program based on the utilization of technology to improve the operations, communications and service of the USPS, in hopes of making it a more economically viable business.

G

Graphic Inkjetting – Line art, logos, and special fonts can be inkjet imaged. The art can be specific to each record in a database

I

Indicia – An imprinted designation on a mailpiece that denotes postage payment (for example, a permit imprint in place of a postage stamp or a meter stamp).

Inkjet – A method of printing that places ink on the paper by spraying droplets through tiny holes.

Insert – A letter, card or similar item placed inside an envelope or another mailpiece (ie: catalog)

Intelligent Mail Barcode (IMB) – The USPS® Intelligent Mail® barcode (**IMb**) is a barcode used to encode mailing information for letters and flats. It is the successor to the POSTNET barcode. The barcode is composed of 65 vertical bars.

Irregular Parcel and Pieces (IPP) – A mail processing category for a parcel that does not meet the dimensions of machinable parcels and other parcels that cannot be processed by parcel sorters.

K

Knife Fold – A perpendicular fold that is produced by a knife chopping the substrate into the fold rollers.

L

Laser Imaging – The ability to add personalization to a letter whether in the salutation or the body of the letter

Letter-Size Mail – A mail processing category of mailpieces, including cards that do not exceed any of the dimensions for letter-size mail (that is 11 ½ inches long, 6 1/8 inches high, ¼ inch thick).

Live Stamps – Stamps that are machine affixed to the piece for certain customers & jobs.

Local Mail – Mail addressed for delivery within the postal area of the post office where the piece is mailed.

M

Mail Anywhere – a program offered by the USPS which allows approved mailers to use the same permit at every location.

Mail.DAT file – Is a standard database file used by most of the mail production industry and the US Postal Service. Mail.DAT identifies 19 file characteristics that can exist within a mailing.

Mailer Identifier (MID) – Mailer identification – unique 6 or 9 digit number issued by the USPS as a sub-grouping under each CRID. Used as part of the IMB, as well as for identification within the eDocs.

Match Mailing – A mailing in which an outer envelope and one or more inserts contain the same personalization and need to be kept together to form a single mailing package. (2D used for match)

Merge/Purge – The process of merging data from separate files into one file and purging any unwanted information as well as removing any duplicate records.

Meter Imprint – A postage imprint (either on meter tape or as a direct impression) applied in the upper right corner of the envelope, address label or tag. The type, size and style of the imprint must be fixed when the postage meter is approved for manufacture by the USPS. For letter-size mail, the imprint must be set in fluorescent ink.

Meter Tape – The USPS approved tape on which metered postage is imprinted.

Metered Mail – Any mail class (except Periodicals) with postage printed by a USPS-approved postage meter. This mail is entitled to all privileges and subject to all conditions that apply to the various mail classes.

Metered Postage – Postage printed by a mechanical or electronic imprinter directly onto the mailpiece or onto gummed tape or labels affixed to the mailpiece. It may be used on all mail classes except Periodicals.

N

National Change of Address System (NCOA) – A file maintained by the US Postal Service with new addresses of those who have recently moved and notified the Post Office of their new address. Commercial vendors who are licensed by the US Postal Service can match a mailing list against this file to update old lists.

Non-machineable – The incapacity of a mailpiece to be sorted on mail processing equipment because of size, shape, content or address legibility. Such mail must be processed by manual distribution.

Nonprofit Authorization Number – A number provided from the USPS after the approval process to receive Nonprofit rates. The Nonprofit Authorization Number is used on postal paperwork validating your Nonprofit status each time you mail.

Nonprofit Rate – A preferred rate for a mailer who has Nonprofit status and has been approved by the USPS.

Nonprofit Standard Mail – A subclass of Standard mail that is available only to qualified organizations specified by the U.S. statute.

Nonstandard Size Mail – First Class Mail or single-piece Standard Mail (A) and exceeds any of these size limits:

- More than 11 ½ inches long
- More than 6 1/8 inches high
- More than ¼ inch thick
- Does not fit piece Aspect Ratio (See Aspect Ratio)

This type of mail incurs a surcharge.

O

OCR Read Area – A clear area around the text to be read by the OCR to enable the computer to successfully interpret the intended characters.

Open-end envelope – A catalog envelope with the opening across the shorter dimension (not machinable)

Open-side envelope – A booklet envelope with the opening across the longer dimension

Optical Character Recognition (OCR) – The technology that allows computers to “read” the text from physical objects.

Optional Endorsement Line (OEL) – A series of specific printed characters on the top line of the address block that identifies the sortation level of a package or bundle.

P

Palletization – A process of preparing mail on a pallet under specific standards for transportation.

Parcel – Mail that does not meet the mail processing category of letter-sized mail or flat-size mail.

Periodicals – A mail class (formerly called second-class mail) consisting of magazines, newspapers or other publications formed of printed sheets that are issued at least four times a year at regular, specified intervals (frequency) from a known office of publication. Periodicals usually must have a list of subscribers and/or requesters, as appropriate.

Permit – Any authorization required for specific types of preparation or postage payment. Specifically, an authorization to mail without postage affixed by using indicia or an imprint. Payment is made against an advance deposit account that is established with the USPS for postage and special services.

Permit Imprint – Printed indicia, instead of an adhesive postage stamp or meter stamp that shows postage prepayment by an authorized mailer.

Piggy Back Label – A label on which the address is printed and can be pulled off and will adhere to a returnable piece.

Plant-Verified Drop Shipment (PVDS) – A procedure that enables origin verification and postage payment for shipments transported by the mailer from the mailer’s plant to destination post offices for USPS acceptance as mail. It is typically used for mailings for which a destination entry discount is claimed.

Polybag – A packaging solution for multiple pieces and heavier catalogs.

Postage – Payment for delivery service that is affixed or imprinted to a mailpiece usually in the form of a postage stamp, permit imprint or meter impression.

Postage Meter – A mechanical or electromechanical device that can print one or more denominations of an authorized postage indicia. It is available for lease only from designated manufacturers.

Postage Statement – Documentation provided by a mailer to the USPS that reports the volume of mail being presented and the postage payable or affixed and certifies that the mail meets the applicable eligibility standards for the rate claimed.

Postal Logistics – Lists are analyzed to see if the mailing would qualify for Bulk Mail Center or Commingling discounts.

Precanceled Stamp – A postage stamp canceled by marking across the face. Precanceled postage is an optional postage payment method for mailings at Presorted and Automation First-Class Mail rates and at all Presorted Standard Mail rate.

Presort – To sort mail in a mailing according to USPS standards before presenting the mailing at a post office. The sortation is usually by ZIP Code or a carrier route. All automation rate mail is presorted by the mailer.

Presorted Mail – A form of mail preparation, required to bypass certain postal operations, in which the mailer groups pieces in a mailing by ZIP Code or by carrier route or carrier walk sequence.

Priority Mail – A subclass of First-Class Mail that weighs more than 11 ounces and usually consists of flats and parcels. It provides faster delivery than Parcel Post. At the mailers’ option, mail weighing 11 ounces or less may be sent at the Priority Mail rates. Any mailable matter may be sent as Priority Mail. Priority Mail is a USPS trademark.

Q

Quality Control (QC) – The control of various mail processing factors to produce consistent, uniform distribution conforming to specified standards.

QR Codes (Quick Response code) – A two-dimensional bar code that causes a Web page to download into the user's smartphone when photographed with a mobile tagging app in the phone.

R

Reflectivity – A test that is done on the paper stock of the address device to make sure that the barcode can be read by the postal machines.

Refold – Running a flat size saddle-stitched publication thru a knife folder to make the publication an 8.5 x 5.5 mail piece which can lower postage.

Repositionable Note (RPN) – 3x3 Sticky note with 1 inch of repositionable glue

Residual Mail – Matter remaining after completion of a presort sequence. It lacks the volume set by standard to require or permit package, tray or sack preparation to a particular destination. Residual mail usually does not qualify for the presort rate.

Residual Postage – Additional postage due. For bulk stamps or meter jobs, it is the difference between the value of the stamp affixed to the mail piece or the metered amount and the actual postage for the mailing. Paid at the time of the Postal Entry.

S

Sectional Center Facility (SCF) – A postal facility that serves as the processing and distribution center (P&DC) for post offices in a designated geographic area as defined in the first three digits of the ZIP Codes of those offices.

Seed – A unique name that is inserted into a mailing list to verify usage. It is used frequently on purchased lists that are sold for one time use only AKA – Decoy.

Standard Industrial Codes (SIC Code) – It is a numerical numbering system that identifies business types within the national database. For example, SIC 8611 identifies Associations.

Serial number – The Serial Number is a 6-digit or 9-digit field depending on the length of the Mailer ID. The Serial Number can be populated with a number that uniquely identifies each mailpiece, becoming a Unique Mailpiece ID.

Service Type Identifier (STID) – A 3 digit numeric code used within the IMB on a mailpiece. A STID is used to base what type of mail class, address correction option, use IMB tracing and whether the mail contains a Full Service or Basic IMB.

Sort – To separate mail by a scheme or ZIP Code range; to separate and place mail into a carrier case; to distribute mail by piece, package, bundle, sack or pouch.

Sortation – The distribution or separation of mail to route it to its final delivery point.

Standard Mail (A) – Standard Mail matter that weighs less than 16 ounces. It comprises the subclasses of Regular Standard Mail, Nonprofit Standard Mail, Enhanced Carrier Route Standard Mail, and Nonprofit Enhanced Carrier Route Standard Mail and Single-Piece Standard Mail. These subclasses include circulars, printed matter, pamphlets, catalogs, newsletters, direct mail and merchandise. Standard Mail (A) may be sent at presorted rates and at automation rates.

Standard Mail (B) – Usually Standard Mail matter that weighs 16 ounces or more. It comprises four subclasses: Bound Printed Matter, Library Mail, Parcel Post and Special Standard Mail.

T

Tab – A round-circle that keeps two pieces of material together. There are many different types of tabs. A projection, flap or short strip attached to an object to facilitate opening, handling or identification.

U

Undeliverable as Addressed (UAA) – Mail that the USPS cannot deliver as addressed and must forward to the addressee, return to sender, or send to a mail recovery center.

V

Verification – The procedural checks of a mailing presented by a mailer to determine proper preparation and postage payment.

W

Walk Sequence – The order in which a city carrier delivers mail for a route. This order is required for most carrier route presort mail.

Z

Zip Code – The five-digit numeric code of which the first three digits identify the delivery area of a sectional center facility or a major-city post office serving the delivery address area. The next two (the fourth and fifth) digits identify the delivery area of an associate post office, post office branch or post office station. All post offices are assigned at least one unique 5-digit code. ZIP Code is a USPS trademark.

Zip+4 – The nine-digit numeric code, established in 1981, composed of two parts: (a) The initial code: the first five digits that identify the sectional center facility and delivery area associated with the address, followed by a hyphen; and (b) the four-digit expanded code: the first two additional digits designate the sector and the last two digits designate the segment. ZIP+4 is a USPS trademark.

Zone – A number that expresses the distance that a zone rate mailpiece must travel from point of entry to point of delivery. It is based on the air mileage along a great circle line between three-digit ZIP Code prefix areas of dispatch and receipt. This mileage range is converted to a zone number. The USPS uses eight numbered postal zones and one local zone for computing postage on mail.

Data Processing FAQ's

Question? What is NCOA?

Answer: National Change of Address (NCOA) is a consolidated file of move information that on average contains more than 118 million permanent change-of-address (COA) records filed with the U.S. Postal Service. Each record contains the relocating Postal customer's name along with an Old and New address. The Old address is the one compared to the NCOA customers list for matching purposes and the New address is the one returned, if a match is made, to the customer. These records are retained on the file for a three-year period from the move-effective date. NCOA is good for 95 days.

Question? What is CASS Certification and why do I need it?

Answer: CASS is the post office acronym for the Coding Accuracy Support System. A full description of CASS certification can be found on our data processing page