

Mailing Standards of the United States Postal Service, Domestic Mail Manual

Reports about ballots being mailed back to election officials with insufficient postage are on the rise. Each election cycle presents a different set of parameters for ballot creation and for the size and weight of the return mailpiece. As a result, many voters do not know the correct amount of postage required to return their ballots by mail.

Effective October 7, 2013, the Postal Service™ revised *Mailing Standards of the United States Postal Service, Domestic Mail Manual (DMM®)* (<https://pe.usps.com/>) 703.8 requiring that the **balloting materials for all types of ballots, whether disseminated in hardcopy or electronically, must indicate in a prominent location the proper amount of First-Class Mail® postage that must be applied.** 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 ballot to election officials. The Postal Service will also accept approved variations of the above markings.

Additionally, balloting materials must indicate, in a prominent location, the specific amount of First-Class Mail postage required for the return of the ballot to election officials. The marking requirements will not apply to balloting materials that meet one of the following exceptions:

- The balloting materials are qualified under the special exemption for military and overseas voting.
- The ballot is returned under Business Reply Mail® service.
- Return postage is guaranteed through a postage due account.
- Postage on the ballot is prepaid by stamps, meter, or Permit Reply Mail.

Election officials should consult with Postal Service officials to assist with mailpiece design and barcode placement and to determine the proper amount of postage required for mailing ballots to voters and the return of ballots to election officials.

Noncompliant Mailings

For mailers who submit election ballot mailings that are noncompliant with current return postage requirements, the following acceptance procedures are to be observed: The mailer can submit a written request to the manager, Business Mail Entry, requesting a one-time-exception to allow the mailing to be accepted. The Pricing and Classification Service Center will review the exception request.