STATE AND LOCAL ELECTION MAIL— USER'S GUIDE

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OFFICIAL
ELECTION MAIL
Authorized by the U.S. Postal Service
®

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE ®
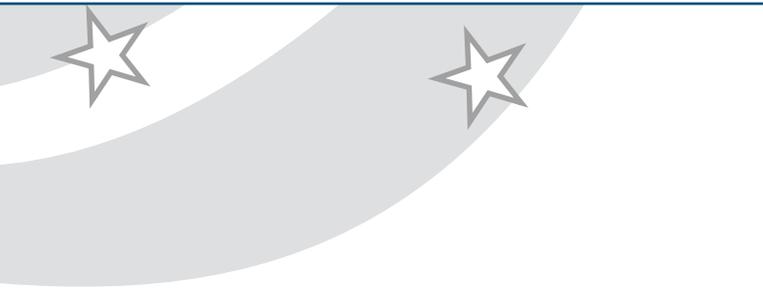
Contents

How to Use This Guide

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

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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 *usps.com*.

See the following resources:

■   The Election Mail website at *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.

Section I.
Determining the Appropriate Class of Mail to Use

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

■ What are you mailing (e.g., ballots, newsletters, voter registration)?

■ 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 (if pieces cannot be forwarded)?

■ Will you require extra services (e.g., Certified Mail service, which provides you with a 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 where the voter opts instead to pay for a premium service like Priority Mail or Priority Mail Express.

As for blank ballots and other Election Mail mailed to voters, the Postal Service continues to recommend that election officials use First-Class Mail. Using First-Class Mail allows for faster service while maintaining high visibility as the ballot moves through the mailstream [when used with USPS visibility tools, like serialized Intelligent Mail barcodes (IMb)]. Nevertheless, the Postal Service has long engaged in several practices to prioritize ballots that are entered as Marketing Mail, regardless of the paid class, when capacity permits and when the mailpieces are identifiable as ballots by the Official Election Mail logo or other Postal Service indicia.

The Postal Service will continue to process and deliver ballots expeditiously, as we have done in past elections, with the result being that ballots commonly receive delivery timeframes similar to First-Class Mail even when they are mailed as Marketing Mail.

The following table summarizes the important features of each.

Class of Mail	Speed of Service*	Free Forwarding and Return	Secure Destruction	Extra Services	Presort Discounts	Single Piece	IMb
First-Class Mail	2–5 days	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
USPS Marketing Mail	3–10 days	No	No	Only for Parcels	Yes	No	Yes
Nonprofit USPS Marketing Mail	3–10 days	No	No	Only for Parcels	Yes	No	Yes

Actual delivery times may vary depending on mail entry origin and destination.

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*.

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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 the NVRA, and such mailings are eligible for at the Nonprofit USPS Marketing Mail prices, which are lower than the regular USPS Marketing Mail prices.

For further information on what 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 Organizations," 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 presort 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 2–5 days. Most USPS Marketing Mail and Nonprofit USPS Marketing Mail pieces take between 3–10 days (overseas territories 13–18 days) to be delivered.

Work closely with your Postal Service Area and District Customer Relations Managers to determine the most likely delivery times for your mailing.

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 Postal Service does not forward ballots. If a ballot cannot be delivered, it will be returned to the sender.

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) and note that fees may apply. Secure Destruction is available for First-Class Mail that contains personally identifiable information.

Undeliverable as addressed (UAA) USPS Marketing Mail is generally discarded. If you use USPS Marketing Mail and 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. For more information about ancillary and address correction services available, 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.*

Section II.
Using Reply Mail and Sending Mail to Armed Forces Personnel and Overseas Voters

Business Reply Mail (BRM) and Qualified Business Reply Mail (QBRM): If you provide return envelopes for mail such as ballots, consider using BRM or QBRM service. BRM is a First-Class Mail service that enables you to pay the return postage (including a per-piece fee) for those mailpieces returned to you. You can distribute BRM cards, envelopes, self-mailers, cartons, or labels and have them returned to you at any Post Office. The mailpieces you distribute need to conform to a specific format, including use of a unique ZIP+4 code assigned by the Postal Service.

QBRM is best if you are anticipating an annual return mail volume of approximately 621 or more return letters, or 547 or more cards. QBRM service provides you with discounts on postage and per-piece fees; however, it applies only to automation-compatible cards and letter-size mail weighing up to and including 2 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 BRM and QBRM, see Quick Service Guide 505, *Business Reply Mail* and *Qualified Business Reply Mail Fact Sheet for Election Mail* located within Kit 600, and DMM 505.1.1.3 to 505.1.2 and 505.1.6 at *https://pe.usps.gov/text/dmm300/505. htm#1_0.*

Courtesy Reply Mail (CRM): CRM consists of pre-addressed postcards or envelopes that you provide to voters both to expedite their responses and to ensure their responses are sent to the correct return address. CRM differs from BRM in that the voter is responsible for applying the correct postage when mailing back the reply piece and it does not require a permit account or payment of fees. For further information, see Courtesy Reply Mail Quick Service Guide 505a, *https://pe.usps. com/text/qsg300/Q505a*.

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."

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 service.

■   Return postage is guaranteed through a postage due account.

■   Postage on the ballot is prepaid by stamps, meter, or Permit Reply Mail.

Shortpaid and Unpaid Absentee Balloting Materials: Shortpaid and unpaid absentee balloting materials will not be returned to the voter for additional postage. Postage is collected from the election office upon delivery or at a later date. The Postal Service will not delay delivery of balloting materials with insufficient postage.

Absentee Balloting Materials for Military Personnel and Overseas Voters: You may send absentee balloting materials through the mail without prepayment of postage for certain elections when the absentee balloting materials allow eligible persons in the following categories to apply for registration and vote by absentee ballot when absent from their place of voting residence:

■   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.

You must prepare balloting materials in accordance with DMM 703.8.0 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, see Publication 28, *Postal Addressing Standards* online at https://*pe.usps.com/text/pub28/ welcome.htm*.

Address Hygiene Tools

The Postal Service has a variety of products and services that will help improve the accuracy of your mailing lists, 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: *postalpro.usps.com/address-quality*.

Physical Address Hygiene and Quality

The following four products will help ensure that all your addresses are deliverable — and also 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 codes. You can get CASS-certified software from numerous mail service providers or have your own software CASS-certified. Having ZIP+4 codes 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 160 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.

b. **Address Change Service:** ACS is an address correction service that provides mailers 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 either a separate address correction notice (PS Form 3547, *Notice to Mailer of Correction in Address)* or the return of your mail. Manual address correction fees or 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 Read 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, contact the Mailing & Shipping Solutions Center (MSSC) between 7:00AM – 7:00PM Central Time by emailing *MSSCAdmin@usps.gov* or calling toll-free at 1-877-672-0007 (select option 2 for mailing and shipping, then option 2 for MDA). 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 Official Election Mail to Persons Overseas and in the Military

Foreign addresses except Canada: The last line of the address on mail, including Election Mail and ballots, 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 *pe.usps.com.*

Military addresses: Overseas military and diplomatic addresses must conform to domestic addressing standards format, while also including the correct Air Force/Army Post Office (APO), Fleet Post Office (FPO), or Diplomatic Post Office (DPO) and AA, AE, or AP designation. AA, AE, and AP are used for addresses with the 3-digit ZIP Code prefixes 340, 090-098, 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/or Full name.

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 code.

> SEAMAN JOHN DOE
> UNIT 100100 BOX 4120
> FPO AP 96691

> JOHN DOE
> PSC 5698 BOX 2002
> APO AE 09400

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 code.

Example:

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

Section IV.
Consulting with a Postal Service Area and District Customer Relations Managers to Plan the Mailing

Consult with Your Local Postal Service Area and District Customer Relations Managers

Contact your local Postal Service Area and District Customer Relations Managers to arrange a meeting. 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 Postal Service Area and District Customer Relations Managers 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, 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 Election Mail, and especially for ballots.

■ **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 Postal Service Area and District Customer Relations Managers 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.

■ **Required forms and mailing profiles:** Forms are 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. See ACS and ASE in Section III for more information.

■ **Return ballot address options:** You have several options where completed ballots will be mailed back, including the following:

  – Use your office address and ZIP+4 code.

  – Rent a Post Office box and use caller service. 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 pieces gives you the ability to track the delivery and return of ballots. A unique IMb also allows the Postal Service to research and resolve potential delivery issues.

■ **Prepaid postage options on return ballots:** Discuss how you presently manage mass mailings and review the pre-paid postage options available such as Qualified Business Reply Mail, Business Reply Mail, and Courtesy Reply Mail.

Section V.
Required Forms 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*.

For Postage Discounts, Use PS Form 3615

If you want to send your mail using First-Class Mail service 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.*

For Authorization for Nonprofit Status, Use PS Form 3624

In order 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 Organization* at *https://pe.usps.com/text/pub417/welcome.htm*, and DMM 703.1.0 at *https://pe.usps.gov/text/dmm300/703.htm#ep1114977*.

For Business Reply Mail, Use PS Forms 3615 and 6805

To apply for a permit to use BRM, complete Part A of PS Form 3615, *Mailing Permit Application and Customer Profile.*

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

Then Section 1 of PS Form 6805, *BRM/QBRM Application for ZIP+4 Code Assignment/Validation and QBRM Approval*, needs to be filled out to request a unique ZIP+4 Code for the BRM address. The forms must be submitted via email to Mailing & Shipping Solution Center — Mailing Requirements Department at *mssc@usps.gov* for processing. For any questions about the process contact MSSC at 877-672-0007 (select option 2 for mailing and shipping, then option 1 for Mailing Requirements).

If you want to use QBRM, you will also need to complete PS Form 6805. PS Form 6805 is dual-purpose:

1. For obtaining the required unique ZIP+4 codes, whether they are used for BRM or QBRM, and

2. For use as the QBRM-approval form.

For further information, see DMM 505.1.1.3 to 505.1.2 and 505.1.6 at *https://pe.usps.gov/text/dmm300/505.htm#1_0*.

Section VI.
Working with a Mailpiece Design Analyst to Ensure Compliance with Postal Service Standards

Mailpiece design is one of the most critical components in determining your mailing costs. Properly designed mail can allow you to receive automation price discounts.

Consult with a Mailpiece Design Analyst Before Printing Your Envelopes

Most of your questions about mailpiece design can be answered by a Postal Service mailpiece design analyst (MDA).

Prior to printing, 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, and it **can save significant costs** for your mailing operation as well as help prevent unforeseen delays in delivery.

Provide at least 10 (physical or electronic) examples for the MDA to review, using new samples, or if none are available, materials from similar past mailings. An electronic copy of the proof in PDF file with crop marks/ borders at 100% (no scaling) can be emailed to *mda@ usps.gov* for review and feedback prior to printing. Physical samples are **required** for reflectance, barcode quality, print/contrast ratio and QBRM approval.

Once the 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.

Ask the MDA to do the following:

- Provide guidance and feedback on mailpiece design for outgoing and return envelopes to ensure the design meet 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 in order to provide recommendations for enhanced processing prior to printing.

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 balloting materials, voter registration cards, absentee applications, polling place notifications and voter reply mail. 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 that encircle only part of the envelopes or borders placed away from postal elements such as the delivery address, FIM, and postage area. 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 **must not** contain a FIM A or a FIM C but they should be pre-barcoded.

- The Postal Service strongly recommends that return ballot envelopes contain a FIM A or FIM C and be pre-barcoded with serialized tracking codes and 11-digit ZIPs. This will assist with correct facing and sortation on automated postal equipment. Serialized tracking codes also allow individual mail piece tracking.

- The address and pre-barcodes must match. If not, there is a chance of creating 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 read area. IMb barcodes must be properly located in the address block or lower-right barcode clear zone.

■ On return ballots, 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.

■ Avoid extraneous data or markings in the address area that would affect readability.

■ Do not include the words "return to sender" on the envelope unless required by your jurisdiction.

■ You must prepare balloting material mailings 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 covering design of letters, cards, flats, and various reply forms for automation compatibility, along with schematics. Find them at *pe.usps.com*.

■ Postal Explorer provides resources you need to make informed decisions at *pe.usps.com*.

■ PostalPro offers mailpiece design information at *https://postalpro.usps.com/mailing/mailpiece-design-analyst-mda-customer-service-help-desk*.

■ Publication 25, *Designing Letter and Reply Mail* is available at *https://about.usps.com/publications/pub25.pdf*.

■ Publication 28, *Postal Addressing Standards* is available at *https://pe.usps.com/cpim/ftp/pubs/Pub28/pub28.pdf*.

■ Publication 177, *Guidelines for Optimizing Readability of Flat-Size Mail* is available at *https://about.usps.com/publications/pub177.pdf*.

■ Publication 178, *Recommendations for Designing Flat-Size Mail* is available at *https://about.usps.com/publications/pub178/welcome.htm*.

■ 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 *www.usps.com/electionmail*.

Section VII.
Preparing and Presenting the Mailing

At Least 2 Weeks Before Election Day (and Preferably Earlier), Finalize Your Plans

■   Let your Postal Service Election Mail team know if you want to pick up returning ballots at a Postal Service facility each day or have them delivered to your election office with your regular mail. If you choose to pick up your mail, coordinate with your Postal Service Area and District Customer Relations Coordinators to see if this can be arranged and determine the best time for pick up. This option will allow you to get the Election Mail as early as possible. This is another reason to consider using a Post Office box or caller service.

■   Let your Postal Service Area and District Customer Relations Coordinators know your cut-off time for receiving returned ballots. Arrange the latest time when an election official may pick up last-minute returns.

■   Obtain pallets, trays, sacks, labels, tags, and stickers. If you use a mailing service, be sure to verify that the service will be providing 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).

■   These forms are available on the Postal Service's website at https://*about.usps.com/forms/all-forms.htm*.

Section VIII:
Election Mail Checklist

This suggested checklist will help ensure a successful mailing.

Step 1. Call your Postal Service Area and District Customer Relations Coordinators.

See Section IV and link:
https://about.usps.com/gov-services/election-mail/

☐ Discuss the specific purpose for the mailing (e.g., voter information, ballots, and 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 mailings.

☐ Determine the class of mail for your mailing. The Postal Service recommends using First-Class Mail for Election Mail. If you choose not to follow this recommendation, consult with your mailing requirements clerk to determine if your mailing is eligible for Marketing Mail or Marketing Mail Non-profit rates.

☐ Determine the best method of receiving return mail (e.g., street delivery, PO Box, or caller service). Caller service is a premium service available for a fee to any customer who:

    ☐ Requires more than free carrier service.

    ☐ Receives or plans to receive more mail than can be delivered to the largest available PO Box at the facility.

☐ Determine the best time to pick up the mail each day.

☐ Determine the latest time when an election official can pick up returns.

☐ 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).

☐ Decide if you plan to use Qualified Business Reply Mail, Business Reply Mail, or Courtesy Reply Mail.

Step 3. Prepare your address list (See Section III).

☐ 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).

☐ PS Form 3615, *Mailing Permit Application and Customer Profile* (for Permit Imprint and BRM 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 envelope designs reviewed by a mailpiece design analyst, 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.

For assistance with mailpiece design, contact the Mailing & Shipping Solutions Center (MSSC) between 7:00AM – 7:00PM Central Time by emailing *MSSCAdmin@usps.gov* or by either calling toll-free at 1-877-672-0007 (select option 2 for mailing and shipping, then option 2 for MDA). Also, mailpiece design information is available 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 piece 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 location of 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.

    ☐ Provide assistance with mailpiece design evaluations of Election Mail.

    ☐ Verify:

        ☐ Accuracy of printed delivery address for reply mailpieces including the BRM ZIP+4.

        ☐ Official Election Mail logo size and placement.

        ☐ Format and placement of endorsements and other postal markings.

        ☐ Barcode content including Service Type ID, Mailer ID and Routing Code or BRM ZIP+4.

☐ Before artwork is sent to printer, finalize design with an MDA and submit pre-production proof.

Postal Service design recommendations.

The Postal Service highly recommends that local election officials use available Postal Service support resources such as Area and District Customer Relations Coordinators and MDAs 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 receives a postmark.

☐ Consider appropriate colors, weight limitations, proper wording, placement of postal markings, etc.

    ☐ Use pastel colors (adhere to Postal Service guidance on automation-compatible colors to use).

    ☐ Local election offices should standardize use of color for each election type (e.g., primary/general/special/school.

    ☐ Instead of colored envelopes, consider using colored bands that encircle only part of the envelopes or borders placed away from postal elements such as delivery address, FIM, and postage area.)

☐ First-Class Mail "Best Practices"

    ☐ The Postal Service recommends that election officials use First-Class Mail for outbound Election Mail. Most First-Class Mail is delivered within 2–5 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 mailpiece.

        ☐ 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.

    ☐ Balloting materials must 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, the marking "Apply First-Class Mail postage here" may 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 described above markings.

    ☐ The marking requirements may not apply 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*).

☐ For the design of reply envelopes the Postal Service recommends:

    ☐ Use the Official Election Mail logo on all Official Election Mail because:

        ☐ Voters recognize the mail as important.

        ☐ Postal Service workers can distinguish the mailpiece from the thousands of other mailpieces processed daily.

    ☐ Use a uniquely serialized IMb to increase the electronic visibility of the ballot in the mailstream and allow the Postal Service to quickly identify and process on-hand ballots throughout the mail network.

    ☐ Ensure that the IMb includes the proper Ballot Mail Service Type Identifier. The three-digit codes are listed on PostalPro: *https://postalpro.usps.com/service-type-identifiers/STID_Table_BallotMail*.

    ☐ Use Informed Visibility Mail Tracking and Reporting, a free service which provides:

        ☐ Near-real-time mail tracking data for letter and flat pieces, bundles, handling units (trays, tubs, and sacks), and containers as mail moves through the mailstream.

☐ Ability to better plan Election Mail mailings and resources, measure success of each mailing, staff efficiently, and instill confidence in voters that use vote-by-mail.

☐ Flexible data provisioning and data delegation, allowing you to receive the data you want, when you want it, and how you want it.

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 before the deadline by which their completed ballot must be received by their local election official. 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 addresses, the Military Postal Service Agency recommends that military personnel serving overseas follow the return-by-mail date for their location published at *https://usps.com/electionmail*.

☐ Voters returning their ballots at a Postal Service retail unit may ask the clerk to postmark their ballot at retail windows. If asked, the retail unit employee must hand-cancel the ballot upon accepting custody of the mailpiece.

☐ Be sure to check collection times posted on collection boxes and at Post Office locations and retail facilities. Also be mindful of when mail is delivered and picked up at your residential mailbox. Ballots deposited after the collection time will not be picked up that day; therefore, they will not be postmarked until the following business day.

Step 7. Prepare and present the mailing (See Section VII).

☐ Print 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 mailing for delivery to the Post Office.

☐ If applicable, obtain and complete postage statements to be presented with the mailing:

　☐ If using First-Class Mail, use one or more forms in the 3600 series.

　☐ If using USPS Marketing Mail, use one or more forms in the 3602 series.

☐ Affix Tag 191 on all trays and sacks with mailings of ballots. This bright green tag provides a high degree of visibility on ballot mail as it enters Postal Service processing centers.

　☐ To obtain Tag 191, election officials should contact their Business Mail Entry Unit which can be found at *https://postalpro.usps.com/locators/find-bme*.

　☐ Or visit *https://about.usps.com/gov-services/election-mail/* to order Tag 191 online.

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

☐ Present mailing, postage statement, and, if necessary, check (payment) for funding postage account.

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