



September 30, 2026

ALL EMPLOYEES

SUBJECT: 2026 General Election Extraordinary Measures Memorandum

The Postal Service is fully committed to the appropriate handling and timely delivery of the nation's Election Mail. In addition to our ongoing regular procedures for this federal election cycle, we will once again be implementing extraordinary measures beyond our normal course of operations during the week before (and in some cases after) Election Day, Tuesday, November 3, 2026. This memorandum addresses the specific extraordinary measures that are authorized and required to be used for Logistics (CLO), Processing and Distribution Operations (CPDO), and Retail and Delivery Operations (CRDO).

From past elections, we know that Ballot Mail to and from voters will enter the mailstream close to, or on, Election Day. Consistent with our practices in past election cycles, extraordinary measures beyond our normal course of operations are authorized and expected to be executed by local management to accelerate the delivery of mailpieces that the Postal Service is able to identify as containing ballots. Extraordinary measures must begin Saturday, October 24, 2026, and will continue nationwide through Election Day (Tuesday, November 3, 2026). In states that have extended ballot-acceptance deadlines after Election Day, the extraordinary measures will remain in place in those states through the relevant state deadline. In certain circumstances, such as a runoff election, the measures can be extended further if authorized.

Further details are provided in the two attached appendices for Retail and Delivery Operations (Appendix 1) and Processing and Distribution Operations and Logistics (Appendix 2). Keep in mind that the instructions included in the attached appendices represent the procedures in place for the 2026 General Election only and may deviate from standard policies and practices.

Upon receipt of this memorandum, please take time to fully explain to your direct reports the extraordinary measures discussed in the attached appendices. Be sure to consider which measures are relevant to each direct report, taking into account their individual responsibilities. A copy of this memorandum will be posted on the Postal Service Intranet at blue.usps.gov and usps.com/electionmail. Headquarters will also distribute a mandatory Stand-Up Talk to all employees discussing this memorandum.

Thank you for your hard work and dedication in delivering the nation's Election Mail.

Sincerely,

E-SIGNED by ELVIN MERCADO
on 2026-09-30 11:23:52 EDT

Elvin Mercado
Chief Retail & Delivery Officer
and Executive V.P.

E-SIGNED by ISAAC.S CRONKHITE
on 2026-10-01 09:39:49 EDT

Isaac Cronkhite
Chief Processing &
Distribution Officer and
Executive V.P.

E-SIGNED by PETER ROUTSOLIAS
on 2026-09-30 11:13:32 EDT

Peter Routsolias
Chief Logistics
Officer and
Executive V.P.

Appendix 1: Retail and Delivery Operations Extraordinary Measures for the 2026 General Election

This appendix includes specific guidance for administering and managing extraordinary measures related to Retail and Delivery Operations between Saturday, October 24, 2026, and continuing nationwide through Election Day (November 3, 2026) and extending through the last day in each state that Boards of Elections (BOEs) will accept completed mail-in ballots as timely. These measures are designed to accelerate the delivery of Ballot Mail when the Postal Service is able to identify the mailpiece as containing a ballot.

These extraordinary measures include, but are not limited to, expedited handling, extra deliveries, and specials pickups, as used in past elections, to connect blank ballots entered by BOEs to voters, or completed ballots returned by voters and entered close to (or on) Election Day to their intended destination (e.g., Priority Mail Express, Sunday deliveries, specials deliveries, hubbing collected ballots to Boards of Elections on Election Day, etc.). These procedures may deviate from standard policies and procedures, including those found in the Postal Operations Manual, and other Handbooks.

Retail – Ballot Mail Acceptance

Below is a list of examples of the types of extraordinary measures that are available and authorized to be used beginning Saturday, October 24, 2026. If your office would like to employ any of these extraordinary measures, please contact your Retail & Delivery Operations Command Center (RDOCC) Analyst. Also contact your RDOCC Analyst if you would like to employ a Ballot Mail acceptance measure not listed below. Your RDOCC Analyst can be found on Blue at <https://blue.usps.gov/delret/delivery-ops/operations-command-center.htm>.

- Offices may establish a “Ballot Postmark ONLY” line at retail counters, which should be staffed at all times, beginning on Saturday, October 24, 2026, and continuing through Election Day, Tuesday, November 3, 2026.
- Offices may employ a daily “soft opening” and “soft closing” concept, extending retail hours by 30 minutes on both ends in designated sites across each city/town/locality, beginning Saturday, October 24, 2026, and running through November 3, 2026.
- If necessary to manage high volumes, offices may establish at least one drive-through Ballot Mail postmark/drop option, which is staffed during normal operating hours, beginning Saturday, October 24, 2026, and continuing through Tuesday, November 3, 2026.
- Offices may use practices similar to how some offices used to handle “Tax Day” with a clerk outside the facility to both cancel (postmark) and accept drive-up Ballot Mail from customers. Once the envelope is postmarked, it cannot be returned to the customer.

Retail and Delivery – Mandatory Handling of Return Ballot Mail

The following instructions are **mandatory** for Retail and Delivery offices. RDOCC Analysts can assist in identifying offices that serve or are in close proximity to a local BOE and offices that can be utilized as “hub” offices to ensure efficient movement of Ballot Mail.

- Starting Monday, October 26, 2026, and continuing through the last day in each state that BOEs will accept completed mail-in ballots as timely, offices should follow these instructions.
 - If Ballot Mail is destined for the local BOE (i.e., local turnaround):
 - Retrieve local turnaround Ballot Mail from collection mail;
 - Postmark Ballot Mail (round date hand stamp matching the date of acceptance); and
 - Arrange hand-off with BOE.
 - If Ballot Mail is destined for a BOE that is not the local BOE but can be hubbed (i.e., hub and spoke):
 - Retrieve hub Ballot Mail from collection mail;
 - Postmark Ballot Mail (round date hand stamp matching the date of acceptance); and
 - Follow Standard Work Instructions for your hub transportation.
 - If Ballot Mail is destined to a BOE that is not the local BOE and is outside of the hub transportation plan:
 - At retail, if customer requests, postmark Ballot Mail (round date hand stamp matching the date of acceptance); or
 - Send Ballot Mail loose in collection mail to your respective plant (for cancellation and further processing).
- All Ballot Mail envelopes postmarked at Retail must have designated managerial oversight.
- For Ballot Mail that is turned around locally or hubbed, make sure to properly account for any Business Reply Mail.
- For Regional Transportation Optimization (RTO) offices, to the extent the instructions differ, please follow the instructions in the RTO-specific instructions.

Retail and Delivery – Mandatory Instructions for Regional Transportation Optimization Offices

Starting Monday, October 26, 2026, and continuing through the last day in each state that BOEs will accept completed mail-in ballots as timely, RTO offices should follow these instructions:

- Every collection box served by the Post Office will be opened, collected, and scanned at or after posted scheduled time.
- All Postmasters must clear the Collection Point Management System (CPMS) (to include AM/PM all clear survey) each night with assistance from Field Maintenance Operations (FMO) as necessary.
- Any collection boxes/receptacles unable to be accessed require an immediate phone call to the District Manager and HQ Command Center.
- Return Ballot Mail (completed ballots mailed by voters) destined for BOEs will be culled out of mail collected and brought back by carriers, and from all retail counters and all collection boxes/receptacles.
- Return Ballot Mail will be separated for BOE sites and postmarked (hand-cancelled) by managers on the day they are collected.
- Transport of Return Ballot Mail will be made by units to local BOEs each day.
- Centralized hubs will be utilized to transport Return Ballot Mail to BOEs that are outside of the local destination so long as delivery can be made to the BOE before the office closes.
- To maintain strict accountability, all movement of Ballot Mail will be memorialized on a compliance survey with stringent HQ oversight.
- Postmasters will record all issues on the Electronic Election and Political Mail Log daily.
- Local management, in coordination with the District Manager Customer Relations, will continue outreach to local BOE offices.
- Local management will intercept and deliver Ballot Mail with known mailer misprints in the Intelligent Mail barcode containing the wrong ZIP Code or wrong destination address.

Key Activities for Local Turnaround Completed Ballots – Specific to Hub Locations

- Centralized Hub locations will be established throughout RTO impacted states.
 - Non-BOE sites will relay Ballot Mail to assigned Hub location.
 - Team lead(s) assigned at each hub site must:
 - Identify the number of Ballot Mailpieces.



- Confirm that a postmark has been applied to the Ballot Mail envelope.
- Complete survey to validate receipt/delivery of Ballot Mail from each site.
- BOE hub sites will deliver all Ballot Mail to their local BOE office or processing plant as applicable on the day the Ballot Mail is received.
 - Ballot Mail envelopes will be postmarked by a manager with the current day's date prior to delivery to a BOE.
 - Managers must complete the survey to validate receipt/delivery of Ballot Mail from each site.
 - Indicate the hand-to-hand exchange (EAS) with the plant on the survey.

Retail and Delivery – Mandatory Instructions for Expediting Ballot Mail

During the period between Monday, October 26, 2026, and continuing through the last day in each state that BOEs will accept completed mail-in ballots as timely, offices will conduct handoffs to move missent Ballot Mail. Offices should utilize the Priority Mail Express handoff to move missent Ballot Mail with tracking.

During the period between Monday, October 26, 2026, and continuing through the last day in each state the BOEs will accept completed mail-in ballots as timely. Delivery units should also coordinate with Mail Processing plants using the pitch-catch process by communicating and coordinating efforts, such as alternate transportation options if faster, to connect blank ballots entered by BOEs to voters.

Beginning on Monday, October 26, 2026, you are authorized to use the Priority Mail Express network to expedite the delivery of completed ballots returned by voters. The Priority Mail Express network should be used only when a ballot would not otherwise be able to reach its destination in time to meet the state's deadline if processed in the regular First-Class mailstream or if handled locally.

Additionally, you are authorized to use the Priority Mail Express network on or after Election Day if necessary to support deliveries in the states that have extended Ballot Mail delivery deadlines after Election Day. All Ballot Mail envelopes must be postmarked (round date hand stamp) at the origin facility prior to entry in the Priority Mail Express network.

Additional Mandatory Instructions for Delivery

Saturday, October 24, 2026, through Tuesday, November 3, 2026

Carriers will check every delivery point for outgoing mail, regardless of whether they have incoming or destinating mail. These checks shall entail:

- On mounted routes, visually checking mail receptacle that has the flag up for outgoing mail;



- While serving CBUs, visually checking the outgoing slot;
- On park and loops or dismounts, visually checking the mail receptacle box to determine if outgoing mail is displayed outside for pick up.

Saturday, October 31, 2026

Carriers will continue to check all residential and open businesses' delivery points for outgoing mail, regardless of whether they have incoming or destinating mail, following the instructions above.

All offices will run early collections, with the local postmark reflecting the date of entry and turnaround for local Ballot Mail to the BOE. For any BOE that is accepting completed mail-in ballots on Saturday, October 31, 2026, all offices that serve or are in close proximity to a local BOE shall establish a "hub-and-spoke" process for running Ballot Mail to the local BOE. Ballot Mail is to be postmarked in the local retail unit, then hubbed to the BOE, prior to the state's cut-off for the day and no later than the state's Election Day return deadline as specified in your RDOCCC Election Mail training. The "hub-and-spoke" process will also apply on the last day the BOE accepts completed mail-in ballots in each state.

Special Handling for Non-Local BOE Delivery by State Deadlines

For non-local BOE deliveries where it is reasonably possible to effectuate delivery by the BOE's cutoff time for accepting completed mail-in ballots as timely in that state, establish a Ballot Mail "hub-and-spoke" process specifically for transporting Ballot Mail by the cutoff time. Using pre-identified drivers and vehicles staged for running trips. Coordinate the trips around cut-off times to avoid making the same hub/spoke run multiple times per day.

This instruction applies on the following dates:

- Monday, November 2, 2026, in Louisiana.
- Tuesday, November 3, 2026, nationwide.
- The LAST day after November 3, 2026, that any BOE will accept completed mail-in ballots as timely.

Local Management and Postmaster Actions

Below is a list of extraordinary measures that are mandatory for Postmasters and/or Local Management.

- Postmasters should arrange for after-hours handoffs with BOEs (sweeping collection boxes, etc.).
- Postmasters in destinating units serving the address of a BOE must complete a 100% quality riffle of mail destined for the BOE. This is to ensure mail not intended for the BOE (outgoing mail, mail for other BOEs, etc.) is not inadvertently delivered to the BOE. This includes

unique ZIP Codes and caller service units, or wherever the Ballot Mail is finalized before tender to the BOE.

- District leadership will coordinate with BOEs to accommodate concerns or requests to facilitate the timely delivery of Ballot Mail under any special circumstances.
- Postmasters, with the District Manager's oversight, will continue to memorialize all issues on the Electronic Election and Political Mail Log in real time.
- Local management, in coordination with the District Manager Customer Relations, will continue regular outreach and communication with local BOEs, including coordination on the timing and location of Ballot Mail entry and drop-offs, plans for hand-to-hand exchanges, and other activities to support the timely and efficient delivery of Ballot Mail.
- Local management will coordinate with their counterparts within state boundaries (across district lines) to exchange Ballot Mail for all BOEs. They will collaborate with other district partners within the same state multiple times per day to exchange Ballot Mail, on Election Day, Tuesday, November 3, 2026, and on the last day that the BOE accepts completed mail-in ballots as timely in each state.
- Local management will intercept and deliver Ballot Mail with known mailer misprints in the barcode (wrong ZIP Code or address to wrong destination) and establish a pitch/catch to redirect Ballot Mail to the correct BOE.
- Postmasters must ensure timely and accurate MAQ/PAQ reporting and notify the Integrated Operational Plan (IOP) coordinator of any mail processing anomalies for Ballot Mail and will immediately escalate any such anomalies to the HQ Command Center.

Appendix 2: Processing and Distribution Operations and Logistics Extraordinary Measures for the 2026 General Election

This appendix includes specific guidance for administering and managing extraordinary measures related to Processing and Distribution Operations and Logistics. If you have any questions, please contact your manager or supervisor. These instructions represent procedures in place for Election Mail, including ballots, for the 2026 General Election. These procedures may deviate from standard policies and procedures, including those found in the Postal Operations Manual and other Handbooks.

Saturday, October 24, 2026, through Tuesday, November 3, 2026

Plants will use the pitch-catch process to coordinate and connect to connect blank ballots entered by BOEs to voters, or completed ballots returned by voters. In addition to the directives below, early cancellations should be conducted if needed the week before Election Day to ensure all collected Ballot Mail is processed timely.

In preparation for Sunday, November 1, 2026, the following steps must be taken to extract Return Ballot Mail.

Each originating plant must designate a DBCS/DIOSS/CIOSS machine that will process the Sunday, November 1, local turnaround mail volumes using Incoming Primary (483/893) or SCF (484/894) sort program. This program will ensure local downflow and that direct holdouts for Return Ballot Mail (completed ballots mailed by voters) is processed and extracted with minimal processing and made available for delivery on Monday, November 2, 2026.

Operating plans must include the following steps:

- Run plans must be updated to ensure the machine and employees are identified on Sunday to process Incoming Primary (483/893) or SCF (484/894) sort program and, if necessary, AFSM 100 programs.
- All originating plants that process letters and flats must update their sort programs to include their service area BOE holdouts. Originating plants may choose one of the options below, based on volume and local operations capability:
 - Hold out individual direct ZIP Codes on Incoming Primary (483/893) or SCF (484/894) sort program or appropriate Long/Short/MUL sort programs to be dispatched directly to the BOE.
 - Jackpot all BOE ZIP Codes into a single bin to downflow to the locally created sort program that will finalize all direct BOE ZIP Codes.

The following steps must be completed regarding sort programs:

- Must be updated no later than 17:00 PM EST Friday, October 30, 2026.
- Must include all holdouts on either the primary or downflow sort programs.

- Individual BOE holdouts for letters must use CIN 167 for letters. Holdouts must be designated on Incoming Primary (483/893) or SCF (484/894) sort program letter sort programs, LONG/SHORT and, if used locally, the MUL programs must ensure we capture all Return Ballot Mail for local delivery.
- Jackpot BOE holdouts for letters must use CIN 174. Holdouts must be designated on Incoming Primary (483/893) or SCF (484/894) sort program letter sort programs, LONG/SHORT and, if used locally, the MUL programs to ensure we capture all Return Ballot Mail for local delivery.
- AFSM-100 Primary and/or downflow programs must be updated to add 9-digit holdouts for local service BOEs. CIN 173 will be used for direct 9-digit holdouts for flats.
- These sort programs will be used in processing operations through Tuesday, November 3, 2026, and later, if necessary, to support deliveries in the states that have extended Ballot Mail delivery deadlines after Election Day. (A charge identifying such states will be separately provided closer to Election Day). The mail flow changes must be communicated to all employees, supervisors, and management staff to include all consolidation and dispatch plans.

Sunday, November 1, 2026

Delivery units will run regular collections on Sunday (Monday-Friday schedule). Local plant operations will schedule employees and supervisory staff to ensure that we can cancel and process collection letters and flats on Sunday to extract Return Ballot Mail to the BOE. In the collection operation, the following steps must be taken:

- All stamped and metered flat trays and tubs must be riffled to extract flats mail with the Official Election Mail logo.
- Flats with the Official Election Mail logo will be cancelled using the hand stamp and flow to a manual case to ensure each office receives their flats mail. If the volume warrants, AFSM-100 operations can be used to sort the mail.
 - If volume dictates, AFSM-100, IJC 1 should be used to place a date stamp on the flats. Sort programs with the appropriate holdouts will be used on Sunday if volume dictates to capture the Ballot Mail flats.
 - AFSM-100, IJC date stamps will reflect November 1, 2026.
- Riffle trays/tubs from the manual or machine process for the Official Election Mail logo to ensure legible date stamps are on all flats mailpieces.
- Hold out local service area Return Ballot Mail and those of the originating partner sites in any manual or AFSM-100 sort program to ensure early clearance.

All AFCS 200 and AFCS OCR sites will cancel letter mail using the Dual Pass Rough Cull (DPRC) system. Upon completion of the letter cancellation operations on AFCS, follow the processing steps:



- Collections should be processed to ensure Ballot Mail is captured into DIRECT FIRM holdout bins wherever possible based on density and available discretionary bins.
- If there are not enough discretionary bins or low volume, use a “jackpot” MIXED FIRM bin with CIN 174.
- Flow jackpot trays to a locally created 893/4/6/7 sort program to consolidate Ballot Mail if needed. Use CIN 167 for all DIRECT BOE holdouts.
- Riffle each tray for the Official Election Mail logo to ensure a legible date stamp is visible on each letter mailpiece.
- Local mail from AFCS operations will be staged, identified, and processed first on an Incoming Primary sort program Monday morning. Appropriate measures must be taken as necessary on Monday morning to ensure state requirements are met to deliver local Ballot Mail prior to the state’s cut-off for the day and no later than the state’s Election Day return deadline (November 2, 2026, deadline in Louisiana). This will also apply to the LAST day that the BOE accepts ballots in each state.

Monday, November 2, 2026, and Tuesday, November 3, 2026

Early Monday morning, originating plants must ensure that all local mail extracted from AFCS is dispatched to partner sites. Additionally, the receiving plants must ensure that Ballot Mail is identified and processed first in their local Incoming Primary operations.

Plant managers will be required to certify by 10:00 AM local time on Monday that Ballot Mail is clear. All plants that process incoming primary letters and flats must put plans in place to clear their local letters and flats by Monday DOV to delivery offices and/or local pickup. Additionally, letters and flat mail processed after DOV on Tuesday, or Return Ballot Mail identified in collections, will require extraordinary measures to ensure the ballots will be delivered by the designated time on election Day, November 3, 2026.

Processing of collection mail will be accomplished as normal for Monday, November 2 through Tuesday, November 3. We will follow the process outlined for Sunday, November 1 for direct holdouts to expedite the handling of Ballot Mail for originating letters and flats operation for delivery or pick up.

We will continue to keep the direct holdouts in each plant on November 3, until the final date of acceptance for the states with extended Ballot Mail delivery deadlines after Election Day serviced by the originating plant.

All outgoing plants will coordinate a “Last Date of Election” mail process with delivery on:

- November 3 for deliveries in all states (November 2 in Louisiana) based on the state’s Election Day deadline, AND
- The final date for ballot receipt for each state that allows mail-in ballots to be delivered on a date later than November 3.



Each plant must be knowledgeable of the deadlines in each state for which the plant is cancelling local mail. Detailed information about each state's Election Day deadline and any extended Ballot Mail delivery deadlines will be provided closer to Election Day. If there are any questions on a state's deadlines or other requirements, contact the Election and Government Mail Services team for clarification.

Plants must NOT allow Return Ballot Mail to flow to DPS programs on November 3 (November 2 in Louisiana). All measures must be in place to identify primary outgoing and incoming programs to ensure efficient and early delivery of Ballot Mail.

Special Handling for Delivery by November 3, 2026

Special procedures must be put in place to ensure we deliver every ballot possible by the local cutoff time on Election Day (November 2 in Louisiana), even in "postmarking" states that allow for later delivery.

All processing plants, transportation, and retail and delivery units must coordinate to ensure the effective implementation of Election Mail policies and procedures, including those enumerated in this document.

All plant operations must process all early arriving collection mail to extract all Ballot Mail for turnaround by the cutoff time. Sites may serve multiple states and time zones, so special attention must be made to the states your plants serve.

Each plant with an originating or destinating sort program should familiarize themselves with the specific requirements and establish a process to deliver mail by the required time on November 3 (November 2 in Louisiana), AND on the final date that a state accepts mail-in ballots (if later than November 3). We will continue to deliver the mail daily regardless of the deadlines for each state.

Specific deadline information will be provided closer to Election Day. It will include the Election Day deadline and the extended Ballot Mail delivery deadline, if applicable.