This Processing Operations Management Order (POMO) provides the Service Talks to be used for Election Mail for the 2022 season.

The content of this POMO is intended to provide general information regarding Election Mail processing to all employees in the field. This POMO will provide consistent and standardized communication instruction relative to processing, distribution, and delivery of Election Mail.

All Plant Managers must certify that they understand the requirements of this POMO and acknowledgement that this document has been shared with all employees in their facility.

POMO 001-22 and POMO 002-22 Certification Link

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Attachment: Tag 191, Military & Overseas Ballots, Handling Ballots with Insufficient or No Postage, No Voter-Returned Ballots in PARS. Election Mail BRM Service, Processing Mixed Outgoing Election Mail, Hand Cancellation Quality Talks
Stand-Up Talk: Tag 191 for Ballot Mail

The Postal Service recommends that election officials use the green Tag 191, Domestic and International Ballots, to identify trays and sacks that contain ballot mail. Although use of the tag is optional, it provides greater visibility for us to identify the containers of ballot mail as they enter our processing and distribution operations.

The green Tag 191 may be used only to identify ballots addressed for domestic or international delivery. The tag may not be used to identify containers of other types of Official Election Mail, such as sample ballots, polling place notices, voter registration notices, or other election-related materials. Tag 191 may be used only by election officials and their mail service providers, and may not be used by other organizations or individuals. As information, the mailers are instructed to affix Tag 191 to the mail container as follows:

- Strapped Letter Trays:
  - Using a wire twist tie, attach Tag 191 to the strap at the end of the tray that bears the tray label.

- Non-strapped Letter Trays:
  - For trays permitted to be tendered without strapping, attach Tag 191 to the tray with a rubber band that is double looped through the tray handhold at the end that bears the tray label.

- Sacks with Flat-Size Mail:
  - Depending on the type of sack, attach Tag 191 to either the strap or label holder on the sack.

It is very important that ballots are identified and processed timely to help ensure voters have time to receive and return their ballots.
Stand-Up Talk: Military & Overseas Absentee Ballots

This election season, the Military Postal Service, Department of Defense, and USPS are combining efforts to expedite the delivery of absentee ballots to and from military personnel and citizens residing in foreign countries. The Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act (MOVE Act) and Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) provide a general standard for how the USPS handles military and overseas ballots. The following is a quick summary of the USPS policy on military and overseas absentee ballots based on the DMM, UOCAVA and the MOVE Act:

- Balloting materials for elections for federal office may be sent through the mail without prepayment of postage to enable individuals to participate in the electoral process where they are otherwise eligible to vote and are (1) in active service in the Uniformed Services (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and commissioned corps of the Public Health Service or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration); (2) in the Merchant Marines; (3) a spouse or dependent of a member of the Uniformed Services or Merchant Marines; or (4) a United States citizen residing outside the United States.

- Qualifying mailpieces may be mailed without prepayment of postage by depositing them in the domestic mailstream or mailing them from an overseas U.S. military Post Office (APO/FPO), a Diplomatic Post Office (DPO), or an American Embassy or American Consulate.

- Policy applies to the following elections: general, primary, and special elections for Federal office
- States are generally required to mail absentee ballots to military and overseas voters no later than 45 days before a federal election (September 24 is 45 days before the November 8 election)
- Priority Mail Express service Label 11-DoD may be utilized by absent overseas uniformed services voters when mailed from a Military Post Office, Diplomatic Post Office, or Department of State locations
- Ballots sent to eligible voters with the “39 U.S.C. 3406” indicia do not require postage and are not short paid (DMM 703.8.0)
- Ballots must not be detained or held for postage payment (POM 171.3)
- Acceptance clerks and retail associates must accept this mail
- This mail does not have to be submitted to a BMEU
- Ballots not covered by this policy require postage prior to mailing, but do not detain due to short-paid postage

The following identifying mark may also be present on all absentee ballots.
Handling Ballots with Insufficient or No Postage

From now until the November elections, we can expect to see ballots in the mail. All mail-in ballots, except those bearing the indicia “US Postage Paid 39 USC 3406,” require postage. Nonetheless, some ballots will be shortpaid and some will contain no postage at all. It is critical that this mail is handled correctly to avoid any negative impact on election results or the Postal Service.

Please be aware that balloting materials are handled differently than other unpaid or shortpaid mailpieces as directed by Postal Operations Manual section 171.3.

- Ballots addressed to an election office, with or without sufficient postage, must be delivered.
- Ballots must not be detained or held for postage payment.

All employees must adhere to Postal Service policy as follows:

- Shortpaid and unpaid absentee balloting materials must never be returned to the voter for additional postage. The Postal Service will attempt to collect postage from the election office upon delivery or at a later date. Do not delay delivery of balloting materials.

- Account for ballots with insufficient or no postage using existing procedures for postage due mail. Attempt to collect the postage due from the election office at the time of delivery. However, absentee ballots must be delivered even if the receiving election office refuses to pay.

- If the election office refuses to pay, record the number of ballots and the amount due.

- Military and overseas absentee ballots bearing indicia “US Postage Paid 39 USC 3406” are not shortpaid and no additional postage is needed. DMM 703.8.0

Willful delay of absentee balloting material or other election material is a violation of policy, ethics, and law.

If you have questions or concerns about handling absentee balloting material, contact your supervisor or District Strike Team.

Please do your part to ensure all absentee balloting materials in the mail are handled promptly. With your help, the Postal Service will be able to retain this valuable mail volume.

Refer to the Election Mail Policies POMO and the DMM for further information.
Business Reply Mail — Election Day Processing

Each election cycle, the Postal Service plays a key role in the electoral process. Our role in this process continues to grow as the volume of election mail is increasing. The processing and delivery of election related mail is critical to the American democratic process. Because of its importance, we must be diligent in how we handle this mail.

Our discussion today will focus on Election Day processing of Election Mail Business Reply Mail. On election night (i.e. Nov. 8, 2022), after the final sweeps of Post Offices and plant locations are made, allow the election officials in each state or the District of Columbia to collect any late-arriving Business Reply Mail ballots. The time of the last “sweep” will depend on the state’s return deadline on Election Day, but is typically between 7:30 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.

All Business Reply Mail will be made available to the appropriate election office for collection from their PO Boxes or via Caller Service pickup -- even if the BRM mail has not been invoiced.

The clerk will: 1. Count the mailpieces, 2. Document the mail volume that the election official is taking, and 3. Make two photocopies of the completed PS Form 4830-B

- For PS Form 4830-B:
  - Document the election office’s BRM permit number and number of pieces they are taking
  - For “Reason Mail Not Processed,” state “Election Day final sweep”
  - Give one copy to the BRM Manager
  - Give one copy to the BRM supervisor or manager, or to the acceptance clerk who will post the mail volume to the permit account the next business day

This process is financially compliant for partisan and non-partisan elections.

Please be on the alert for Election Mail throughout the entire election season. Again, Election Mail should be expedited through the network with timely processing.

Thank you for your hard work and dedication to providing a successful election season.
Stand-Up Talk - No Voter-Returned Ballots in PARS

With the 2022 elections fast approaching, ballot mail volume is on the rise. Our customers are depending on USPS to expeditiously deliver all voter-returned ballots to ensure the integrity of the election.

Voter-returned ballots are addressed to election jurisdictions and should never be return-to-sender. It is critical that they are processed in the regular mailstream and do not end up in PARS. This requires vigilance in all steps of the process:

- Delivery must ensure ballots are prepped with stamped mail. Do not hold out separately or tray up with metered mail. For extra security, sleeve or lid PARS mail to avoid comingling.

- Employees working in the collection operation or plant carwash must look out for any ballot mail and ensure it flows with the stamped mailstream.

- Employees prepping PARS and FPARS must check for any voter-returned ballots and redirect as necessary.

- Manual case employees should check RTS (return-to-sender) volumes for any voter-returned ballots and redirect as necessary.

Any mailpiece design or barcode issues should be reported to the local District Strike Team.
Stand-Up Talk - Processing Mixed Outgoing Election Mail

Each Election season, voters and election officials count on the Postal Service to deliver Election Mail as expeditiously as possible. Official Election Mail includes mail-in ballots sent to or from domestic, overseas, and military voters, as well as ballot materials, voter registration cards, ballot applications, and polling place notifications.

Any facility receiving outbound Election Mail to voters in mixed outgoing (MXD or OMX) trays/tubs should process it as First-Class Mail (FCM), regardless of the class in which it is entered (Marketing Mail, Non-Profit, etc.). Mail processing facilities will establish identified containers in their opening units (Collection Platform, Inbound Dock, BMEU, 010, etc.) to isolate and identify all bundles, trays, or sacks of outbound Election Mail received. Processing facilities will containerize Election Mail letters and flats in separate containers, with letter mail containers flowed directly to the outgoing FCM primary letter operations (DBCS/DIOSS 271, 481, 891, etc.) and flat mail flowed directly to the outgoing FCM primary flat operations (AFSM 141, 331, 461, etc.). If no automated/mechanized equipment is available, the volumes will be processed in the outgoing FCM manual letter operation or outgoing FCM manual flat operation. DO NOT induct letter trays or flat trays of Election Mail across tray sorters, ATUs, Gantry robots, or TMS. Election Mail volumes will be isolated, identified, and flowed directly to the FCM outgoing distribution operation.

Any facility receiving Election Mail volume where there are no outgoing FCM letter or flat operations (destination plants, NDCs, separate BMEUs, etc.) will identify and containerize the Election Mail as FCM and route the container to their designated outgoing processing facility on the next available trip for distribution.

Any Network Distribution Center (NDC) receiving Election Mail will isolate the Election Mail for processing as First-Class Mail (FCM), regardless of class. NDC will establish identified containers in their opening units (Inbound Dock, BMEU, etc.) to isolate and identify all bundles, trays (extracted from MXD NDC Pallets), or sacks of Election Mail received. Each facility will identify and containerize the Election Mail as FCM and route the container to their designated outgoing processing facility on the next available trip for distribution. DO NOT mix Election Mail with other classes of mail (Marketing Mail, Package Services, etc.) when dispatching to the outgoing processing facility.
Hand Cancellation Stamp

Ballot Mail volume has increased in recent years, and we can expect to process a high volume of ballot mail in the 2022 Election season. Some election officials rely on the postmark as proof that a return ballot was timely mailed, so it is essential that every returning ballot gets a postmark with the correct date – meaning the date that the Postal Service accepted custody of the ballot. Stamped and metered letters and flats, BRM, Express/Priority/SPRs, and all manual mail should all be postmarked where they contain a return ballot. This is especially important in states where mail-in ballots must be postmarked by a certain date and received by a certain later date in order to be counted.

Each plant should keep a supply of manual date stamps to postmark any uncancelled volumes during origin processing. The stamp should be updated to the current date each day at the designated rollover time (06:59), and not before. Uncancelled volumes may come from, but are not limited to:

- AFCS fine cull
- AFCS flat extractor
- AFSM rejects
- Oversized flats
- Manual case
- Package sorters

**DO NOT apply a second postmark if a ballot already has a postmark.**

Every effort should be made to postmark any uncancelled ballots in the outgoing operation, including by hand-cancellation. If any unpostmarked ballots are found in the destinating operation after such ballots have gone through the outgoing operation, a postmark should not be applied to those ballots. This is because the postmark is the Postal Service’s official statement of the date on which it accepted custody of a mailpiece, and a destinating operation cannot reliably make that determination after the mailpiece has gone through the outgoing operation.
Hand Cancellation Quality

Ballot Mail volume has increased in recent years, and we expect that large numbers of election officials and voters will continue using the mail as part of the electoral process this year. Some election officials rely on the postmark as proof that a return ballot was timely mailed, so it is essential that every returning ballot gets a postmark with the correct date — meaning the date that the Postal Service accepted custody of the ballot. This is especially important in states where mail-in ballots must be postmarked by a certain date and received by a certain later date in order to be counted.

Each plant should keep a supply of manual date stamps to postmark any uncancelled volumes during origin processing. The stamp should be updated to the current date each day at the designated rollover time (06:59), and not before. The quality of the postmark should be checked to ensure the date is legible. This is essential to help ensure ballots can be counted. If there is an issue with stamp quality, use a backup stamp or replenish the ink in the stamp.