

FDA Staff Manual Guides, Volume III - General Administration

Administrative Services - Mail Management

Selection of U.S. Postal Service Mail Classes and Services

Effective Date: January 25, 2024

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this Guide is to establish Agency policy and guidelines to assure more efficient and economical use of the services provided by the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) when mailing official government material.

2. General

With continual increase of USPS postage rates, an increased effort by FDA employees to use the most economical method to send mail is critical. Waste and inefficiency in mailing practices can result in the unnecessary use of funds.

3. Policy

All offices in the Food and Drug Administration should use the most economical class and type of mail service consistent with their operating requirements.

4. Mail Classes and Services

- A. **First-Class Mail.** First-class is used for items weighing 13 ounces or less which require handling in a timely manner. Items weighing 13 ounces or less will automatically be charged first-class rates unless endorsed otherwise.
- B. **Priority Mail.** Priority is used for first-class and other mail weighing less than 70 pounds which requires expeditious handling and transportation. The word "Priority" must be placed prominently on each mail piece.

1. **Bulk Rate.** In general, bulk third-class rates may be applied to mailings of identical pieces separately addressed to different addresses in quantities of not less than 200 pieces or 50 pounds. In addition, there are two further levels of discount rates: (1) five-digit presort; and (2) carrier route presort.

C. **International Mail.** There are three basic categories for international mail: 1. Global Express Guaranteed; 2. Express Mail International; and 3. Priority Mail International. All items should be endorsed "Airmail."

D. **Certified Mail.** This service provides evidence of mailing and record of delivery. Mail to be certified must be sent as first-class or priority.

E. **Insured Mail.** Numbered insured service provides a method to obtain evidence of mailing and a record of delivery for third- and fourth-class penalty mail. It is also required, if return receipts or restricted delivery service is desired, for third-class and fourth-class matter. Insurance amounts available under the Penalty Mail Program are \$20.01 minimum and \$50.00 maximum.

F. **Registered Mail.** This service provides added protection for mail requiring it, plus evidence of mailing and delivery. Mail to be registered must be sent as first-class or priority mail. Indemnity is not provided for registered penalty mail. Agencies desiring to obtain insurance on registered mail must prepay all postage and fees. Claims for indemnity will not be processed unless proof is furnished that correct postage and fees were prepaid.

G. **Return Receipts.** Return receipts provide the mailer evidence of delivery. Return receipts may only be obtained for mail that is sent c.o.d. or express mail and is insured for more than \$50 or is certified or registered. Return receipts, requested after mailing, are not available under the Penalty Mail Program. Agencies desiring such service must prepay the required postage and fees.

H. **Restricted Delivery.** Restricted delivery permits the mailer to direct that delivery be made only to the addressee or his agent. It may be obtained only for mail which is insured for more than \$50 registered or certified.

For more detailed information concerning any of the above classes of mail or USPS services and their requirements, please contact the FDA Mail Manager.

5. Practices for Achieving Economy in Mailing

A. First-Class Mail.

1. Use an envelope that is only slightly larger than the material being mailed and which meets the dimensional standards established by the USPS; that is, is not less than 3-1/2 inches high, 5 inches long, or seven-thousandths (.007) of an inch thick and does not fall within the over-size or odd-shaped category.

2. Send bulky attachments to correspondence under separate cover at lowest postal rates whenever it is practical.
 3. Do not send printed or manual material by first-class or priority mail unless immediate delivery is necessary.
- B. **Third-Class Mail.** Any items not required to go as first-class and that weigh more than 4 ounces and less than 16 ounces should be mailed at the less expensive third-class rates. Endorse all items as follows: "Third Class."
- C. **Express Mail.** Express mail service is the most expensive service offered by the USPS; therefore, it should only be used when speed of delivery is critical.
- D. **Certified Mail.** The use of certified mail should be restricted to irreplaceable correspondence and documents requiring evidence of delivery.
- E. **Registered Mail/Registered Mail - Return Receipt Requested.** Use of registered mail or registered mail-return receipt requested should be limited to that material for which specific law provisions require dispatch by that type of service and/or when proof of delivery must be made a matter of record.
- F. **Special Delivery.** Special delivery should not be used between Government stations.
- G. **Special Handling.** For faster than normal fourth-class delivery utilize the special handling service. This gives the mailer a quicker delivery with less postage costs than priority mail.
- H. **Consolidated Mailings.** All first-class mail directed to the same address should be consolidated and, as volume permits, dispatched in one envelope. Mail to installations for which your mail facility is authorized to make consolidated mailings should be forwarded to the dispatch point in messenger envelopes.

6. Effective Date

The effective date of this guide is January 25, 2024.

7. Document History – SMG 2250.4, “Selection of U.S. Postal Service Mail Classes and Services”

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