

**FDA STAFF MANUAL GUIDES, VOLUME III - GENERAL ADMINISTRATION**

**ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES**

**MAIL MANAGEMENT**

**SELECTION OF U.S. POSTAL SERVICE MAIL CLASSES AND SERVICES**

Effective Date: 01/10/2003

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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 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 12 ounces or less which require handling in a timely manner. Items weighing 12 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.
- C. Second-Class Mail.** Periodical is used for mailing such as, media, library items, newspapers or publications that are mailed in intervals which meet certain USPS requirements. Approval from the USPS is required prior to mailing a publication at second-class rates.
- D. Third-Class Mail.** Third-class is used for printed material and parcels weighing less than 1 pound which are not required to be mailed first-class nor entered as second-class. Two basic categories of third-class mail are available.
- 1. Single Piece Rate.** The single piece rate is applied to each piece according to its weight. There is no savings involved at third-class single piece rate until an article weighs over 4 ounces; therefore any material weighing 4 ounces or less should be mailed at first-class rates and receive the advantage of quicker delivery. No special preparation or presort is required. All pieces should be endorsed "Third-Class," but items weighing less than 12 ounces must be endorsed to receive third-class rates.
  - 2. 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.
- E. Fourth-Class Mail.** Consists of mailable matter not mailed or required to be mailed at first-class, weighing 16 ounces or more but not over 70 pounds, and not entered as second-class mail. There are four categories available to Federal agencies as follows:
- 1. Single Piece Zone Rate (Parcel Post).** All fourth-class items may be mailed at this rate. It is recommended that packages be endorsed "Parcel Post."
  - 2. Bulk Zone Rates (Parcel Post).** Mailings of 300 or more pieces of fourth-class mail of identical weight may be mailed at this rate. Mailers must separate pieces by zone, prepare mailings under permit imprint procedures and format, and present USPS Form PS 3605 to the post office at time of mailing.
  - 3. Special Fourth-Class (Books).** Must contain at least 24 pages, at least 22 of which are printed and consist wholly of reading matter and

no advertising. Qualifying items include, but are not limited to, books, sound recordings, films, etc. Items must be endorsed "Special Fourth-Class Rate."

4. **Bound Printed Matter.** Fourth class items which weigh 1 pound or more but less than 10 pounds, are securely bound by permanent fastenings, and meet other USPS requirements may be endorsed "Bound Printed Matter" and mailed at these rates.
- F. Presort Rates.** The following presort rates are available for mailings which meet specific requirements:
1. Presort First-Class
  2. Carrier Route First-Class
  3. Zip + 4 Presort
  4. Special Fourth-Class Rate Bulk Presort Discount
- G. International Mail.** There are three basic categories for international mail: (1) Letters and Letter Packages for items of a personal handwritten or typed nature; (2) Printed Matter and Small Packets for items not considered personal correspondence such as documents, samples, and merchandise; and (3) Parcel Post for large packages. Any category may be sent by air or surface transportation. If speed of delivery is desired, items should be endorsed "Airmail."
- H. Express Mail.** This is a high speed and high reliability service available for shipment of any mailable material to selected cities throughout the U.S. and internationally. Maximum weight for domestic shipments is 70 pounds and varies for international shipments. Four basic services are available: Same Day Airport, Custom Designed, Next Day Delivery, and International. For more detailed information concerning USPS Express Mail please refer to Staff Manual Guide FDA 2250.2.
- I. Certified Mail.** This service provides evidence of mailing and record of delivery. Mail to be certified must be sent as first-class or priority.
- J. 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.

- K. 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.
- L. 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.
- M. 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.
- N. Special Delivery.** Mail sent special delivery is given expedited delivery after arrival at the destination post office. It is also given preferential handling to the extent practicable in dispatch and transportation.
- O. Special Handling.** Special handling provides preferential handling in dispatch and transportation for third- and fourth-class mail.

For more detailed information concerning any of the above classes of mail or USPS services and their requirements, please contact the FDA Mail Manager, Division of Facilities Operations (HFA-215)

## 5. PRACTICES FOR ACHIEVING ECONOMY IN MAILING

- A. Oversize and Odd-Shaped Pieces of Mail.** Care should be exercised in selecting envelope sizes. The USPS has imposed a surcharge for oversized and odd-shaped pieces of mail. Subject to the surcharge is first-class mail weighing 1 ounce or less and single piece third-class of 2 ounces or less that exceed any of the following dimensions:

6-1/8 inches in height  
11-1/2 inches in length  
1/4-inch in thickness

Also subject to the surcharge are odd-shaped pieces within the weight units noted above. The acceptable size ratio for such pieces is: the length must be between 1.3 times and 2.5 times the height.

**B. 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.

**C. 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."

**D. 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. (See Staff Manual Guide FDA 2250.2 U.S. Postal Service Express Mail for instructions on use.) Prior approval by the FDA Mail Manager is required.

**E. Certified Mail.** The use of certified mail should be restricted to irreplaceable correspondence and documents requiring evidence of delivery.

**F. 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.

**G. Special Delivery.** Special delivery should not be used between Government stations.

**H. 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.

**I. 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 10, 2003.