United States Mail Rate Classifications

Policy 508.5

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4.1 Classifications

The United States Federal Postal Service has established various rate classifications to facilitate the handling of mail passing through its system. Each classification denotes the priority a piece of mail is given as it passes through the postal system. Thus, the higher the priority a piece of mail is given, the more it costs to process it.

The following mail classifications are defined to assist you in processing outgoing mail:

4.1.1 First Class

4.1.1.1 First Class/Priority Mail - First Class mail consists of mailable matter wholly or partially in writing or typewritten, including identical copies prepared by an automatic typewriter and manifold or carbon copies of such matter. Any piece of mail sealed against postal inspection is considered first class by the Post Office, unless there is a statement to the contrary on the outside.

4.1.2 Business Mail

4.1.2.1 Business Reply mail is a type of First Class Reply mail which deserves special consideration. Specially printed business reply cards, envelopes, cartons, and labels may be distributed for use by mailers in sending mail to the distributor without prepayment of postage. The distributor guarantees payment on delivery of postage on returned Business Reply mail. Postage is collected on each piece of Business Reply mail at the time it is delivered. Use correct zip codes on business reply mail.

- 1 oz. letter: 28607-9989
- 2 oz. letter: 28607-9959
- Post Card: 28607-9960

4.1.3 Standard Sizes

4.1.3.1 The U.S. Postal Service has established size standards for first class mail weighing one ounce or less. Pieces not meeting these standards are either not mailable or subject to a surcharge in addition to the standard first class rate. All pieces must be rectangular in shape.

4.1.3.2 Minimum Standards Height: 3 1/2 inches Length: 5 inches Thickness: .007 inch

4.1.3.3 Pieces smaller than the minimum standards cannot be accepted for mailing.

4.1.3.4 Maximum Standards Height: 6 1/8 inches Length: 11 1/2 inches Thickness: .25 inch

4.1.3.5 A surcharge will be applied to any piece of mail which satisfies any one of the following conditions:

1. Meets the minimum size but does not meet the height-to-length ratio established by the U.S. Postal Service. A template may be obtained from the Postal Service Office to use in determining if pieces meet the height-to-length ratio.
2. Exceeds the maximum standard size.
3. Exceeds the maximum thickness.

4.1.3.6 Items such as keys and identification devices are not subject to the minimum standards except for the thickness requirement.
4.1.4 Second Class

4.1.4.1 Special Items - Second Class mail consists of special items approved by the U.S. Postal Service for second class privileges.

4.1.5 Third Class

4.1.5.1 Light Weight Low Priority - Third Class mail consists of circulars and other printed matter, merchandise weighing less than 16 ozs., and books or catalogs of 24 pages or more weighing less than 16 ozs.

4.1.5.2 Printed matter is paper on which words, letters, characters, figures, images, or any combination thereof, not having the character of personal correspondence, having been reproduced by any process other than handwriting or typewriting. Sealed envelopes containing third class mail should be endorsed "Contains Third Class Mail."

4.1.5.3 Single piece third class mail weighing two ounces or less must meet the same size standards which apply to first class mail weighing one ounce or less. See description of first class mail in this policy statement for details.

4.1.6 Fourth Class

4.1.6.1 Heavy Weight Low Priority - Fourth Class mail consists of merchandise, books, and printed matter weighing 16 ozs. or more. Sealed envelopes containing fourth class mail should be endorsed "Contains Fourth Class Mail."

4.1.7 Insured Mail

4.1.7.1 Protection Against Loss - Insured Mail protects the sender against loss of or damage to the article being mailed. Insuring applies only to third and fourth class mail or first class which contains third or fourth class matter. Sealed envelopes should be endorsed, "Contains Third Class Mail" or "Contains Fourth Class Mail."

4.1.7.2 At the time of mailing, mailers may direct that a parcel insured for more than $50.00 be delivered only to the addressee or to someone named by him/her in writing. The mail is endorsed, "Restricted Delivery"; an additional fee is charged for this service.

4.1.8 Special Delivery

4.1.8.1 Preferential Handling - Special Delivery mail is given preferential handling to the extent practicable in dispatch and transportation. Payment of a special delivery fee does not insure safety of delivery or provide for reimbursement for loss or damage.

4.1.9 Certified Mail

4.1.9.1 Record of Delivery - Certified mail service provides a receipt to the sender and a record of delivery to the office of address. The sender can also request that proof of delivery be returned to him/her by requesting a "Domestic Return Receipt." Normally no record is kept at the Post Office at which mailed. The University Post Office will keep records for one year on certified mail handled through the mailroom if certification form is completed and attached to mail piece. Certified mail will be dispatched and handled in transit as ordinary mail. No insurance coverage is provided. Forms for certified mail must be completed by the addressee.

4.1.10 Special Handling

4.1.10.1 Special Attention in Handling - Special handling service is available for third and fourth class mail only. It provides preferential handling to the extent practicable in dispatch and transportation, but does not provide special delivery.

4.1.10.2 The special handling fee must be paid on all parcels that must be given special attention in handling, transportation, and delivery, such as parcels containing fragile or breakable items, live plants, or laboratory specimens.

4.1.11 Registered Mail

4.1.11.1 Evidence of Mailing and Delivery - Registered mail provides added protection for valuable and important mail plus evidence of mailing and delivery. All registered mail must be prepared at the first class or airmail rate plus fee for registration. Registered Mail must be delivered to the Post Office by addressee for processing. Padded envelopes cannot be sent registered
4.1.11.2 Acceptable Sealing - The sender must seal envelopes securely. Self-sealing envelopes and window envelopes are not acceptable. Packages containing currency or securities must first be sealed with mucilage or glue, and then sealed with brown paper tape.

4.1.11.3 Postal employees are not permitted to assist in the preparation or sealing of mail to be registered. Envelopes or packages that appear to have been opened and sealed, or which are improperly sealed, will not be registered.

4.1.12 Express Mail

4.1.12.1 Mail which must be delivered by a guaranteed time should be sent by Express Mail. Express Mail will be processed through the Contract Station window. The departmental budget code must be submitted for appropriate billing.

4.1.12.2 Any questions concerning the proper rate classification for a particular piece of mail should be referred to the Postal Supervisor, 262-2242.

5 Additional References

6 Authority

7 Contact Information

8 Original Effective Date

9 Revision Dates