Procedure 0310.05
Issued January 6, 1997

SUBJECT: Automated Addressing Guidelines

APPLICATION: Executive Branch Departments and Sub-units, the Judicial and Legislative Branches of State Government.

PURPOSE: To explain addressing requirements that must be met to qualify mail for automation discounts.

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SUMMARY: This section contains guidelines for preparation of letter mail for successful processing on high-speed automated mail sorting equipment.

APPLICABLE FORMS: None

PROCEDURES:

General Information:

- To take advantage of postal discounts offered by the U.S. Postal Service (USPS), the Mailing Services operates a mail-sorting equipment that has a Multi Line Optical Character Reader (MLOCR). The equipment barcodes and presorts one, two, and three ounce letters that are in compliance with USPS automated mail standards. Discounts received are credited back to the user departments. Departments are charged a processing fee.

- Mailing Services has prepared a brochure and a sample envelope that illustrate the information contained in this procedure. To receive a copy, contact the Mailing Services mail consultant at (517) 322-6469.

- To be accepted by the USPS for automation discounts, mail must be properly designed and formatted. To ensure conformance to USPS regulations, agencies are encouraged to consult with the Mailing Services mail consultant prior to designing any mail piece. The Mailing Services consultant can also assist with mail piece make-up, address standards and can have the mail piece tested for acceptance by USPS.

- Both postcards and letter size mail (including self-mailers up to three ounces) can be processed on the equipment.

- All mail must contain complete address information. It's preferable to have mail addressed by mechanical means such as typewritten or machine printed. This results in the best address read rates. Handwritten addresses can be processed, however the address read rate is much lower, thus generating less postage discounts.

Mail is processed by the mail sorting equipment in the following manner:

- The equipment scans a 3.5" vertical portion of a mail piece, locating and reading the bottom 4 lines of the address.

- The equipment then interprets the address, looks it up in a national address database, determines the appropriate +4 portion of the ZIP+4 ZIP Code and simultaneously corrects any errors in the 5-digit ZIP Code.

- After determining the appropriate +4 portion of the ZIP+4 ZIP Code, an in-line ink jet printer sprays the corresponding POSTNET Delivery Point Barcode (DPBC) on the mail piece.

- The POSTNET DPBC is then verified by an in-line barcode reader/verifier, confirming the match between the addresses read by the equipment and the barcode sprayed on the mail piece.

- Confirmed mail pieces are then mechanically sorted by ZIP Codes according to the equipment's zip code sort scheme.

- Rejected mail pieces are reprocessed. Mail pieces that are rejected for a third time are manually processed at the full postage rate for that class and weight of mail.

Specifications:

- Address readability standards have been established to ensure that the greatest number of mail pieces are successfully processed, thus generating the maximum postage savings. Following is a list of general specifications that each mail piece must meet in order to be successfully processed by the equipment. Detailed information is available upon request from the Mailing Services mail consultant.
    - Physical characteristics of letter mail for automation:
        - Height 3.5" Minimum 6.125" Maximum
        - Length 5" Minimum 11.5" Maximum
        - Thickness 0.025" Minimum 0.25" Maximum

    - Print quality:
        - Printed characters should reflect the highest contrast to the envelope background.
        - Printed characters should be 'clean and sharp'. Smudges, fill-ins, breaks within a character, overlapping of characters, and anything else that obscures the address must be avoided.
        - Print contrast between characters should be uniform.
        - Printing equipment should be carefully maintained and adjusted to achieve the best print quality.

    - MLOCR readable fonts:

- Although the MLOCR reader is a multi-font reader, capable of reading over 100 different types of fonts simultaneously, the preferred font is *Sans Serif* ranging between 8 to 12 points. Common examples of *Sans Serif* fonts are Arial and Helvetica. Gothic, italicized, highly stylized or script fonts should not be used. Avoid using a Dot Matrix printer since these printers cause the letters to “bleed” making it more difficult for the MLOCR to read the address, thus reducing postage savings.

- Address block:
  - The entire address should be located within the following boundaries:
  - Top of address block: 2 3/4" from the bottom of the mail piece.
  - Sides of the address block: 1/2" from the left side of the mail piece and 1/2" from the right side of the mail piece.
  - Bottom of address block: 5/8" from the bottom of the mail piece.
  - To ensure that the MLOCR identifies and reads only the delivery address, non-address printing that must appear inside the MLOCR read area must be positioned above the delivery address. Within the MLOCR read area, the spaces below and on either side of the delivery address line, should be clear of all printing and other markings, which are not actually part of the delivery address. Otherwise the mail piece will not be read, eliminating any postage discount.

- POSTNET Delivery Point Barcode:
  - After reading the address, the MLOCR will print the appropriate POSTNET DPBC on the bottom of the mail piece. However, if any extraneous printing including markings, colored borders, appears in the 5/8" x 4 3/4" barcode clear zone (measuring from the bottom right corner of the mail piece), the address will probably not be read and the mail piece will be rejected, eliminating any postage discount.

- Address formats:
  - Upper case (all capitals) letters should be used.
  - Format all lines with a uniform left margin.
  - The second to last line of the address (delivery address line) should contain the street address, post office box, rural route, etc. Apartment, suite or room numbers should appear immediately after the street address, on the same line.
  - The last line of the address block should always be the city, state abbreviation and ZIP Code. One or two spaces should be allowed between the last letter of the state abbreviation and the ZIP Code.
  - The name of the recipient (business or individual) should appear on the line above the delivery address line.
  - Non-address data (accounting numbers, subscription codes, etc.), if used, should appear on the top line of the address, above the name of the recipient.
  - If the +4 Code portion of the ZIP Code is added to the mail piece, omit all punctuation in the ZIP code except the hyphen between the 5-digit ZIP Code and the ZIP+4 Code. The +4 Code portion of the ZIP Code is not required to be applied by the agency since the MLOCR will ignore it anyways, determine what it should be and spray it on the mail piece.
  - Desktop address software does not necessarily assign or apply the ZIP+4 or the POSTNET Delivery Point Barcode according to USPS

guidelines. Some desktop address software actually assigns +4 combinations (such as 4 zeros (0000) or 4 nines (9999)). These combinations are unacceptable to USPS and will result in the loss of postage discounts. Therefore, when preparing mail using desktop software, DO NOT assign the +4 portion of the ZIP Code or a bar code. The equipment will correctly assign them.
    - The skew of the address should not be more that (+/-) 5 degrees.

- Window envelopes
    - Ensure inserts for window envelopes are designed so that the entire address is visible but extraneous (non-address) printing is not visible, even when the insert is moved to its full limits inside the envelope. Non-address data that is part of the address block should appear on the top line. Placing the address so that there's at least 1/8" clearance between the address block and top, bottom, and sides of the window will ensure that no part of the address will be hidden even if the insert moves within the envelope. .
    - Envelope windows should be covered with a clear or transparent material glued securely on all edges. The window must be free of wrinkles, streaks, fogging or other conditions that can obscure the address. Clear plastic (either glossy or matte finish) is generally acceptable for the window material. Glassine should not be used since it tends to blur the address image.
    - If open windows are used, the size of the opening should be kept to a minimum consistent with the requirement for clearance between the address and the edges of the window.

- Address area background:
    - White backgrounds are preferred. However, light pastel colors can be used as long as they conform to USPS reflectance guidelines. Contact the Mailing Services mail consultant and provide a sample of any backgrounds other than white so the mail piece acceptability can be determined.
    - Note that some inserts such as lined forms or other forms (ex: warrants) are printed with a background pattern that can interfere with MLOCR read capability. For best results, lined forms should not be used.

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