UNITED STATES
POSTAL SERVICE

March 15, 2024

Mr. Ivan Butts
President
National Association of Postal Supervisors
1727 King Street, Suite 400
Alexandria, VA 22314-2753

Dear Ivan:

As a matter of general interest, the Postal Service has published the *United States Postal Service Election Mail & Political Mail Guidebook 2024* (enclosed).

The *United States Postal Service Election Mail & Political Mail Guidebook 2024* provides employees with key resources that explain the longstanding special handling procedures to facilitate the timely processing and delivery of election mail. It also includes the existing policies and procedures for ensuring proper documentation of both election mail and political mail as it moves through the postal network.

Please contact James Timmons at extension 2324 if you have any questions concerning this matter.

Sincerely,

Bruce A. Nicholson
Director
Labor Relations Policies and Programs

Enclosure

United States Postal Service
Election Mail & Political Mail Guidebook
2024

Election Mail and Political Mail Guidebook
Table of Contents

Standard Work Instructions

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Postal Service is responsible for processing, transporting, and delivering the nation's Election Mail. The Postal Service is committed to fulfilling our role in the electoral process when public policy makers choose to utilize the mail as a part of their election system. We provide election officials with a secure, efficient, and effective means to enable citizens to participate in elections. We employ a robust and proven process to ensure proper handling of all Election Mail, including ballots.

This Election Mail and Political Mail Guidebook provides employees with many of the key resources that explain the longstanding special handling procedures required to facilitate the timely processing and delivery of Election Mail. It also includes many of the policies and procedures for ensuring proper documentation of both Election Mail and Political Mail as it moves through the Postal network. Information intended for external stakeholders, such as Kit 600, Publication 631, Publication 632, or other tools for elections officials to better understand how to use the mail as a part of the voting process can be found at www.usps.com/electionmail.

We anticipate seeing high volumes of Election Mail volume during the 2024 General Election cycle. To ensure the Postal Service is operationally prepared to process, transport, and deliver Election Mail and to support Election Mail stakeholders, the Postal Service Election and Government Mail Services team is coordinating Election Mail policies, resources, and preparedness efforts. This document explains the organization and the collaborative cross-functional process the Postal Service has in place to meet our commitments to supporting the nation's Election Mail. We encourage employees to familiarize themselves with this document and to ask their manager if they have any questions about their role in the timely processing and delivery of Election Mail.

Election Mail

Definition

Election Mail is any item mailed to or from authorized election officials that enables citizens to participate in the voting process. Election Mail includes:

- Mail-in ballots
- Balloting materials
- Voter registration cards
- Mail-in ballot applications
- Polling place notifications

Election Mail should not be confused with Political Mail. The Postal Service maintains separate policies and procedures for Election Mail and Political Mail, though certain procedures and documentation tools do overlap.

The Official Election Mail logo

The Official Election Mail logo is a unique registered trademark designed exclusively for inclusion in the design of official Election Mail. Election officials are not required to use the logo, but the logo does appear on most Election Mail. When the Official Election Mail logo appears on a mailpiece, voters recognize the mail as important and distinct from partisan political mailings.

Additionally, the logo serves to identify official Election Mail for Postal Service workers and distinguishes it from the millions of other mailpieces that are processed daily.

The Official Election Mail logo should be used on any mailpiece created by an election official that is mailed to or from a citizen of the United States for the purpose of participating in the voting process, although use of the logo is optional. This includes balloting materials, voter registration cards, ballot applications, polling place notifications and voter reply mail. The logo should be used on all classes of mail and all processing categories. Postal employees should familiarize themselves with the Official Election Mail logo and follow the Election Mail handling procedures described in this document when they see it in the mailstream. Learn more about the Official Election Mail logo in Publication 631, *Official Election Mail— Graphic Guidelines and Logos*, here.

Tag 191, Domestic and International Ballots
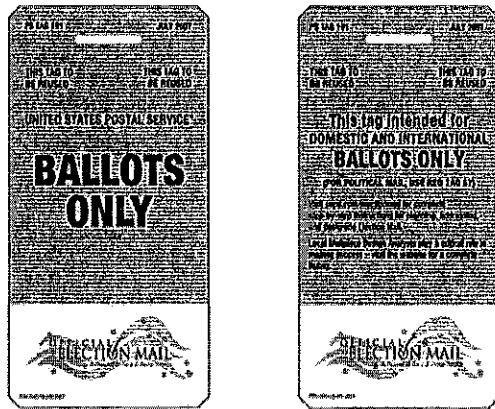
Tag 191, Domestic and International Ballots, is a green container tag that may be used by election officials to identify trays and sacks of ballot mail destined for either domestic or international addresses. It should be used by election officials to help improve the visibility of ballots as they enter processing and distribution operations.

Postal employees should familiarize themselves with Tag 191 and follow the ballot handling procedures described in the relevant operational instructions when they see it in the mailstream. Tag 191 cannot be used for sample ballots.

Service Type Identifiers (STIDs)

The Postal Service makes available specific STIDs for use by election officials on Ballot Mail, which is any piece of official Election Mail that contains a live ballot. These Ballot Mail STIDs may be used only on Ballot Mail and may not be used on other official Election Mail, such as sample ballots, voter registration cards, polling place notifications, etc. The Postal Service strongly recommends the use of Service Type Identifiers (STIDs), especially for ballots to improve Ballot Mail visibility within the automation environment.

As part of the Postal Service's continued effort to provide visibility tools to all election officials, the Ballot Mail STID Table has been revised to better instruct election officials on STID selection for their mailings. Two STIDs requiring hardcopy address correction notice options for Full-Service mailers were retired on July 9, 2023.

On January 21, 2024, five Ballot Mail Change Service Requested STIDs will be retired. This includes First-Class Mail STIDs 719 and 724 as well as Marketing Mail STIDs 739, 745, and 740. Therefore, we do not recommend using these STIDs for Ballot Mail.

Alternative STIDs can be found on Postal Pro at https://postalpro.usps.com/mailing/service-type-identifiers and detailed descriptions of each STID can be found in Appendix A at https://postalpro.usps.com/node/461.

For support, contact the ACS Help Desk via email at ACS@usps.gov or by phone at 877-640-0724, Option 1.

Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act Materials (No Postage Required)

Balloting materials, such as postcard applications, ballots, voting instructions, and return envelopes, may be sent through the mail without prepayment of postage to active military personnel, their eligible spouses and dependents, and U.S. citizens residing abroad. Certain other individuals may be eligible. The absentee ballot provisions for mailing without postage are for elections for federal office. They are not for local elections. For more information, review Mailing Standards of the United States Postal Service, Domestic Mail Manual (DMM) Section 703.8.8.

Political Mail

Definition

Political Mail is any material mailed for campaign purposes by a registered political candidate, campaign committee or committee of a political party, as well as any material mailed by a political action committee or organization engaging in issues advocacy or voter mobilization. According to the DMM, a registered political candidate or party is an individual or organization recognized by a government election control authority (national, state, or local).

Political Mail may be sent for any public election—partisan or nonpartisan—for which there is a ballot. Political Mail may be identified using red Tag 57, Political Campaign Mailing.

Political Mail should not be confused with Election Mail. The Postal Service maintains separate policies and procedures for Election Mail and Political Mail, though certain procedures and documentation tools do overlap.

Tag 57, Political Campaign Mailing

A red container tag designed to provide visibility to any form of Political Mail while it's in the mailstream. It can be used for any political campaign mailing or political message mailing.

Service Type Identifiers (STIDs)
The Postal Service has developed customized Service Type Identifiers (STIDs) specifically for Political Mail to improve mail visibility. These STIDs have proven instrumental in identifying and tracking political mail on-hand and in the mailstream. STID processing leverages Intelligent Mail barcode (IMb) scan data that is available via Informed Visibility (IV) reports. STIDs can be found on Postal Pro at https://postalpro.usps.com/mailing/service-type-identifiers and detailed descriptions of each STID can be found in Appendix A at https://postalpro.usps.com/node/461.

FORMS

Late Arriving Political Mail Report

Report Filing Information

Date Issue Reported: _____   Check One: Letters_____ Flats_____

Person Reporting the Issue: _____

Office Phone _____

Office Name _____   ZIP CODE _____   Office Name
                                                                        ZIP CODE

District Name: _____

Mailpiece Details

Permit No:_____Office Where Permit is Held: _____

Name of Permit Holder: _____

Phone/Address/ Candidate/Committee/ Political Action Committee Name

Contact Name (if known) _____

Acceptance Details

Date and Time Mail Arrived at Office: _____   Red Tag 57 (Y)____ (N)____

Sack/Tray/Tub Count:_____Estimated Number of Pieces: _____

Postage Statement I.D._____

Explain when and how the mail was discovered: _____

_____

Disposition of Mail: _____

Maintain the form in your office for 3 years. If requested, provide a copy as follows:

PLANTS AND OFFICES: Manager, Customer Relations (MCR) for the district.

BMEU/DDU: Manager, Business Mail Entry (MBME)

Attach a copy of both sides of the mailpiece to this report.   Date: 11/29/23

Completing the Late Arriving Political Mail Report:

Instructions: (See also SWI-Late Arriving Political Mail Report)

1. Late Arriving Political Mail is presented/discovered at your unit/dock.
2. Count how many pallets/sacks/trays that contain the mailing.
3. Make a photocopy of both sides of one mailpiece to attach to the report.
4. Record the findings of your investigation on the Late Arriving Political Mail report.
5. Attach the copy of the mailpiece to the report.
6. Retain the report in the unit.
7. If requested, provide a copy of the Late Arriving Mail report to the Mgr. Customer Relations for your district or, if a BMEU, to the Mgr. Business Mail Entry.
8. Mgr. BMEU or Mgr. Customer Relations (or their designee) - Contact the mailer to determine the disposition of the mail.
9. Plant – Work with the Mgr. Customer Relations for your district before contacting the customer.
10. Retain the report for 3 years.

When to use:

Beginning 10 days before an election notify mailers using **USPS Marketing Mail** for Political Mail that every effort will be made to deliver USPS Marketing Mail by Election Day. Beginning 3 days before an election notify mailers sending **First-Class Mail** for Political Mail purposes that every effort will be made to deliver First-Class Mail by Election Day. It is not necessary to document these conversations.

Timeframe for recording the Late Arriving Political Mail Report:
    a.)   All Political mail that arrives the weekend before the election.
    b.)   Political Mail that arrives the day of or after the election.
    c.)   Political Mail that arrives after acceptance hours.
    d.)   Political Mail found unattended on the dock.

After Acceptance Hours: Any Political Mail that a mailer attempts to enter *after* regular business hours must be returned to the mailer for entry during normal business hours. However, a scheduled drop shipment mailing must be accepted.

Mail found unattended on the Dock: When Political mail is found on the dock and the mailer is not available, secure the Political Mail and record this discrepancy on the Political Mail log for your site. In addition, report this mail on the Late Arriving Political Mail Report. Next, notify the mailer of the proper procedure for entering Political Mail during normal business hours.

Delivery Unit Election Mail / Political Mail Log

Please retain copies of each mailing and retain all logs for 3 years

Office/Zip Code: _____

#	Name of Candidate, Committee, or Mailer (Photo Copy Required)	Description of Mailpiece (e.g. Ltr/Flat)	Date & Time of Receipt	Total Number of Pieces (delayed and/or UAA)	Reason for delayed or UAA Mail (*Complete if Applicable)
1)					
2)					
3)					
4)					
5)					
6)					
7)					
8)					
9)					
10)					
11)					
12)					
13)					
14)					
15)					
16)					
17)					
18)					

DDU-election-political-mail-logs_v02_07082022

BMEU Election Mail/Political Mail Log: Used by all BMUEs to log Election and Political Mail

BMEU Election Mail / Political Mail Log

Please retain copies of each mailing and retain all logs for 3-years

Location: _____

Column headers (rotated):

Political Mail (PM)/ Election Mail (EM)	Permit No.	Name of Candidate, Committee, or Mailer (Photo Copy Required)	Date/Time Rec'd at Office	No. of Pieces	Class of Mail (Std, FC, etc.)	Processing Category (Ltr, Flat, etc.)	Empl. who Entered Mail Containers Tagged	PVDS Job. No.	Was Mailing 100% PVDS (Y/N)	Does Mailing Claim Automation Rates?	If mailing claims automation rates, does mailpiece meet auto-compatible standards?	Signature of Supervisor or Employee (2-Approval) Taking Responsibility for the Mail	Date/Time of Dispatch to Workfloor	Workfloor Stage / Location

(For BMEU Operation Only)

Rows numbered 1 through 18.

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BMEU-election-political-mail-logs_v02_11012023

Plant Election Mail/Political Mail Log: Used by all Plants to log Election and Political Mail

Plant Election Mail / Political Mail Log

Please retain copies of each mailing and retain all logs for 3 years

Political Mail or Election Mail [PM] [EM]	Name of Candidate, Committee, or Mailer [Photo Copy Required]	Date/ Time Rec'd at Office	Number of trays, tubs, or pallets	Class of Mail (Std./1st/ Ltc)	Processing Category (e.g. 8 1/n/Flat)	Staged location of mailing in the building	Receiving Employee Printed Name	If PVDS, Initials of accepting employee
1)								
2)								
3)								
4)								
5)								
6)								
7)								
8)								
9)								
10)								
11)								
12)								
13)								
14)								
15)								
16)								
17)								
18)								

plant-political-mail-log v02 07062023

Operational Clean Sweep Search Checklist
Election and Political Mail

The checklist below may be used by CPDO employees conducting ALL CLEARS to assist in their effort to clear all mail processing facilities of Election Mail and Political Mail on a daily basis is thorough and complete.

District:_____ **Date:**_____ **Name:**_____

Check box when checked	Section/Operation: *Defines the work area to be searched.*	Comments: *Specifics: include copies of PMOD label and /or container placard. Names of individuals contacted*
☐	*Incoming dock*	
☐	*BMEU & BMEU Plant Staging*	
☐	*Opening Units*	
☐	*AO/Station dispatch area*	
☐	*Outbound dock*	
☐	*Outgoing Dispatch Area*	
☐	*Trailers in the yard (Yard Check)*	
☐	*MTE Plant Staging Area*	
☐	*MTE Trailers*	
☐	*Site MTESC*	
☐	*PARS Staging and Operations*	
☐	*Rewrap Operations*	
☐	*CFS (if applicable)*	
☐	*BRM/Postage Due*	

Title: _____ **Phone #:** _____

Auditor: _____ **Position:** _____ **Date:** _____

KEY ELECTION MAIL POLICIES & PROCEDURES

With the 2024 General Election fast approaching, the intent of this guidebook is to provide you with resources needed to accept, transport, process, and deliver Election Mail timely and efficiently. It is vital that we adhere to our core policies and procedures as we handle an increased number of ballots this year.

The resources below from the Election and Government Mail Services Blue Page can be printed directly from this file or accessed online from the Election Mail page on Blue. Additional resources will be included in this document as they are developed. Management should ensure that all employees have this information readily available in all postal facilities and that these policies and procedures are strictly adhered to.

## LINKS TO STAND UP TALKS AND STANDARD WORK INSTRUCTIONS ON BLUE

Standup Talks	Standard Work Instructions
AFSM IJC Start Button	AFSM Ballot Handling
AFSM Postmark Validation	All Clear Certification for Delivery Units
Board of Elections Firm Riffle	Business Reply Mail Election Day Processing
Empty Equipment Search Tag 57 and Tag 191	Carrier Responsibilities
Flat BRM Handling	Clearing Election Political Mail Retail Delivery Units
Hand Cancellation Quality	New Completing the BMEU Election Mail Political Mail Log
Hand Cancellation Stamp	New Completing the Delivery Unit Election Mail Political Mail Log
Handling Ballots with Insufficient or No Postage	New Completing the Late Arriving Political Mail Form
Handling Damaged Ballots	New Completing the Plant Election Mail Political Mail Log
Handling UBBM for Election Mail and Political Mail	Election Day Hand to Hand Exchange Local Manager
Mail Anywhere Program	Election Mail F4 Distribution Employee Responsibilities
Military and Overseas Absentee Ballots	Political Mail F4 Distribution Employee Responsibilities
No Voter Returned Ballots in PARS	Handling Mail In Ballots with Insufficient or No Postage
Processing Mixed Outgoing Election Mail Ballots	Handling Missent Ballots
Processing Political Mail	Handling UBBM Election Mail and Political Mail
Return Ballots with No Address	Military and Overseas Absentee Ballots
Tag 191 for Ballot Mail	Pitch Catch Clear Process for Election Ballots
	PM Backdoor Audit and Vehicle Check Election and Political Mail

Stand Up Talk: Handling Damaged Ballots

We expect that large numbers of election officials and voters will continue using the mail as part of the electoral process this year. While every effort is made to deliver ballots intact, unfortunately some pieces will be damaged in mail processing equipment.

If a ballot is damaged, every effort should be made to quickly locate all the pieces of the ballot. If the ballot can be reassembled, carefully tape the pieces and place in a damaged mail bag or envelope for delivery. If only part of the ballot can be found, place in a damaged mail bag or envelope and deliver what is possible.

Facilities must stay current with processing damaged mail and should not incur delays. Handle the damaged mail as soon as it is generated. The sooner it is handled, the better the chance of locating all the pieces.
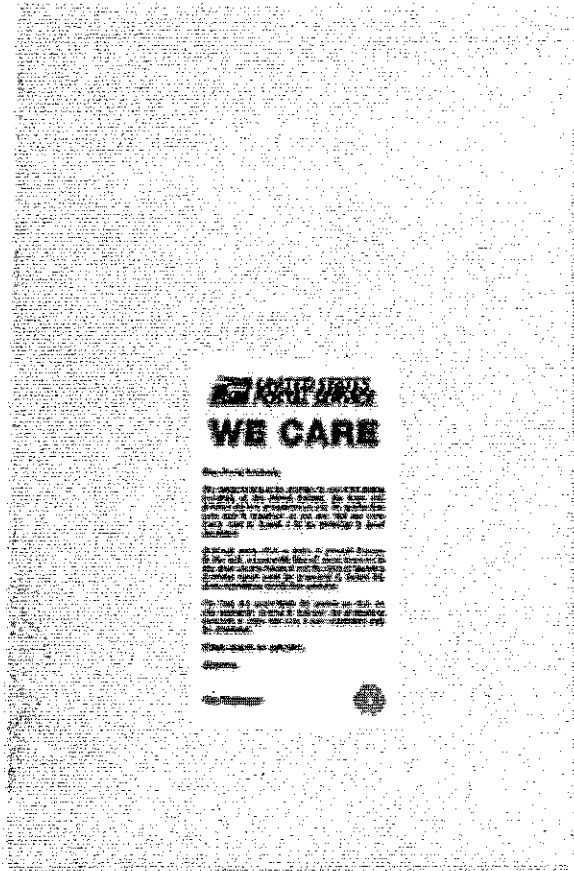
Stand-Up Talk: Handling Undeliverable Bulk Business Mail (UBBM)
for Election Mail and Political Mail

During the 2024 Election season, Election Mail and Political Mail volume will increase. Some of these mailpieces will be undeliverable as addressed, and it is critical that they are handled correctly to protect the sanctity of the election and maintain the public's trust in the Postal Service.
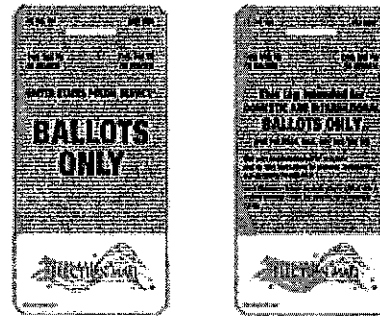

IMAGE 1 – Official Election Mail Logo
Ballots

IMAGE 2 – Tag 191, Domestic and International

Election Mail is any item mailed to or from authorized election officials that enables citizens to participate in the voting process — including ballots, voter registration cards, absentee voting applications and polling place notifications. Election Mail can be sent by election officials to voters using First-Class Mail or Marketing Mail and can be visually identified in the mailstream by the Official Election Mail Logo, which is authorized for use only on official Election Mail.

Election Mail should not be confused with Political Mail, which is any material mailed for campaign purposes by a registered political candidate, campaign committee or committee of a political party, as well as any material mailed by a political action committee or organization engaging in issues advocacy or voter mobilization. Political Mail can be sent using First-Class Mail, USPS Marketing Mail, Every Door Direct Mail (EDDM) or as Share Mail and can be visually identified in the mailstream by Red Tag 57
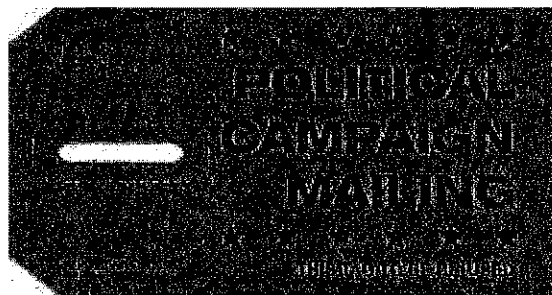

IMAGE 3 - Tag 57

Undeliverable Bulk Business Mail (UBBM) is Marketing Mail that is undeliverable as addressed and does not contain an ancillary service endorsement. Ancillary service endorsements are used by mailers to give direction on whether they want electronic or manual notification of the customer's updated information as well as the reason the piece is undeliverable. They also provide the Postal Service with instructions on how to handle undeliverable mailpieces. The endorsements consist of one of the following keywords: "address," "forwarding," "return," or "change," followed by the two words "service requested." UBBM includes mail which has no human-

readable ancillary service endorsement as well as mail which is endorsed Electronic Service Requested (ESR) but has no mailer-applied Intelligent Mail barcode (IMb). It also includes ESR where the IMb is completely obliterated.

Normally, UBBM is sent to the local plant for recycling, but there are special handling processes in place for Election Mail UBBM.

For Election Mail UBBM: Extra precautions must be taken to ensure Election Mail is handled in accordance with the needs and expectations of the relevant Board of Election. Delivery Unit Employees and CIOSS Host Site Waste Mail Verification Employees should give Election Mail UBBM to their Supervisor or Manager. Because of the importance of this volume, it is advised to collect all UBBM Election Mail in a designated central location properly identified as UBBM Election Mail. Delivery Units must log all UBBM Election Mail according to *"Completing the Delivery Unit Election & Political Mail Log"* SWI. The supervisor and/or manager will contact the District Manager of Customer Relations who will, in turn, reach out to the appropriate Board of Elections and determine a course of action.

For Political Mail UBBM: Delivery Unit employees should validate that the piece is undeliverable USPS Marketing Mail and contains no ancillary service endorsements. Log all UBBM Political Mail according to the *"Completing the Delivery Unit Election & Political Mail Log"* SWI. Once it is confirmed and logged appropriately, Political Mail UBBM should be handled in the same manner as other UBBM and sent to the local plant for recycling.
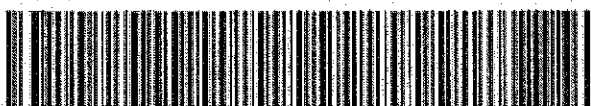
Stand Up Talk: Mail Anywhere Program

As a reminder, The Postal Service has launched the "Mail Anywhere" service that allows a customer to use the same permit at every mailing location across the country.

This service is available to customers who have mailed at 90% Full-Service for the customer's given business location and have met the electronic Full-Service verification criteria during the month before they requested to participate in the Mail Anywhere program.

The "Mail Anywhere" program is a benefit to Full-Service customers and allows them to use a single permit to present Full-Service or mixed Full-Service mailings at any Business Mail Acceptance site. This simplifies permit management and enables the customer to maintain a single permit to enter and pay for mailings.
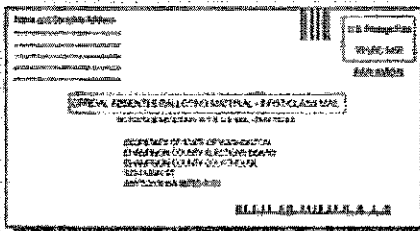
As a result of this program, mailers may enter origin mailings whose labels do not match the site at which their mailings are entered. For example, the mailing below was entered at North Metro P&DC with an OMX Albany label. This was not a crossdock pallet to Albany, but rather an Origin Mixed mailing containing trays for a variety of destinations. **It is important for drop shipment personnel and others who come in contact with this mail to understand that the OMX and MXD mailings are working containers, regardless of the site name on the mailing. They must be processed at the local OMX and MXD site respectively.**

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 21 is 45 days before the November 5 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

Absentee Ballot with 39 USC 3406 in Postage Box

Absentee Ballot with Priority Mail Express Label from Military Post Office

The following identifying mark may also be present on absentee ballots.

Stand-Up Talk: No Voter-Returned Ballots in PARS

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.
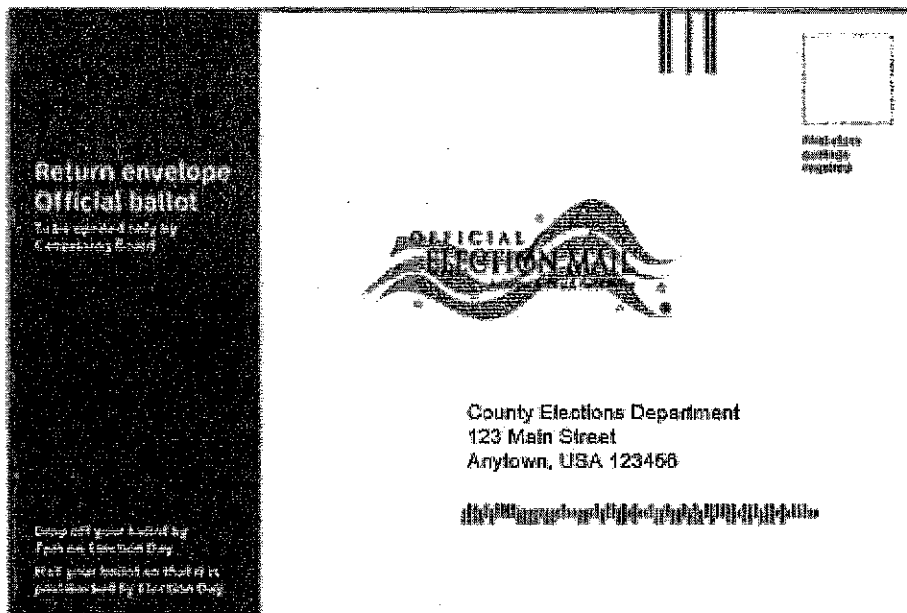
Stand-Up Talk: Processing Mixed Outgoing Election Mail

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 Election Mail volume received at facilities without 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.

Stand-Up Talk: 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 from 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.

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.

Stand-Up Talk: AFSM IJC Start Button

Our customers depend on USPS to provide legible postmarks on collection mail. This is particularly important during the election season. Some election officials rely on the postmark as proof that a return ballot was timely mailed.

All flat-shaped collection mail should be identified and processed on an AFSM 100 canceller module with the canceller turned on. **It is absolutely imperative that the IJC (Ink Jet Canceller) START button is pressed before beginning the cancellation run.** Once the START button is depressed, the green light will stay on solid and any mailpiece that passes through the infeed, crossing the photosensor, will receive a cancellation mark.
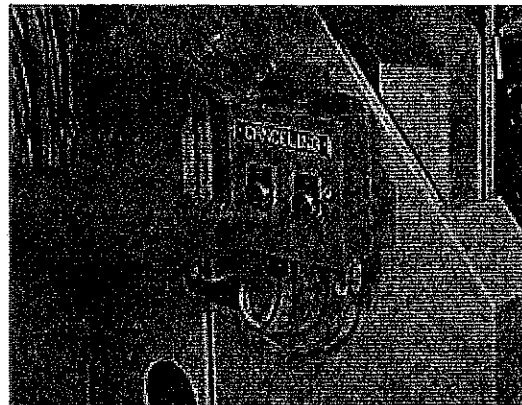
Collection mail **must not** be processed on an AFSM 100 module without an IJC. Operations and Maintenance should validate that the canceller is printing a legible date on the postmark. Maintenance must follow all parts of MMO-127-12 Operational and Preventive Maintenance Guidelines for Automated Flat Sorter Machine 100 Ink Jet Canceller (IJCAFSM). The IJC STOP button should be pressed once it is confirmed that all collection flats have been processed.

A green light on top of the IJC indicates that the job is loaded and started and that the printhead is fully engaged. A yellow/amber light shows that there is a non-fatal fault such as low ink or low temperature. A red light indicates a fatal fault that causes cancellation to halt. Refer to the table below.

Control Panel Lamp Indicators

LAMP COLOR	INDICATOR	MEANING
Green	Blinking	Job Loaded, Job Started and Printhead Fully Engaged, IJC Ready to Press IJC Control Panel Start Button
	Steady On	Job Loaded and Job Started, Printhead Fully Engaged, IJC Control Panel Start Button Pressed
	Blinking or Steady on but Printhead Not Fully Engaged	Fatal Fault, Cancelling Halts
Amber	Lit	Non-Fatal Fault such as low ink or low temperature
Red	Lit	Fatal Fault, Canceling Halts

Stand-Up Talk: AFSM Postmark Validation

From now through the general election on Tuesday, November 5, 2024, we can expect to process a high volume of ballot mail. 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 legible postmark.

Postmarks from the AFSM IJC (Ink Jet Canceller) should be spot-checked daily for legibility. If the date is not readable, cancellation must stop immediately until the issue is resolved. Work with Maintenance to address any problems. If the issue is unable to be resolved prior to dispatch, hand cancellation must be used as a contingency.

Stand-Up Talk: Board of Elections Firm Riffle

We expect to see high volumes of ballot mail during the 2024 election season. We must focus on the timely and accurate delivery of ballots to election jurisdictions.

Destinating units serving the address of the Board of Elections (BOE) must complete a 100% quality riffle of mail destined for the BOE. This is to ensure mail not intended for the BOE (outgoing mail, mail for other BOEs, etc.) is not inadvertently delivered to the BOE. This includes unique ZIP codes and caller service units, or wherever the ballots are finalized before tender to the BOE.
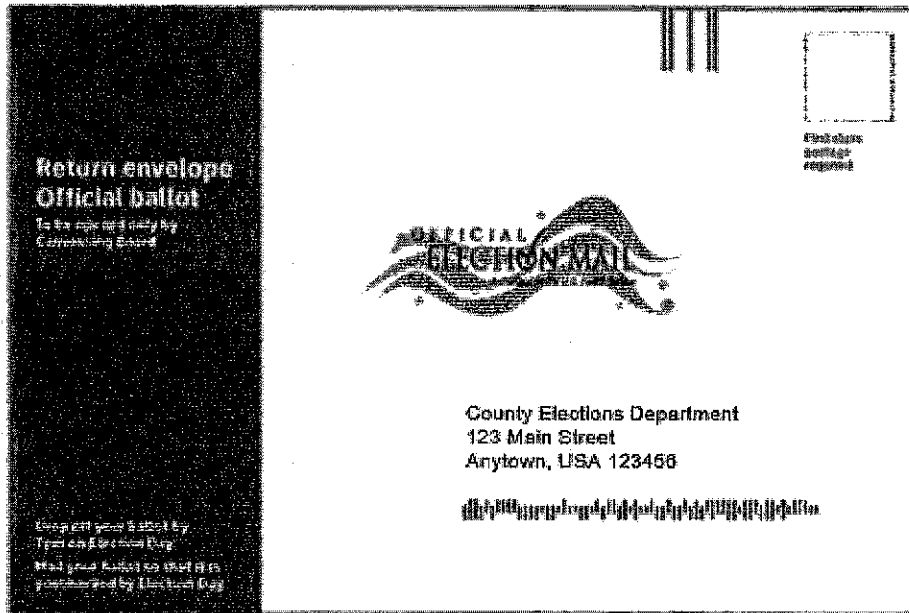
Stand-Up Talk: Processing Political Mail

From now until the general election on Tuesday, November 5, 2024, we can expect to process a high volume of Political Mail as the campaign season intensifies. Today, I am sharing information from the *Postal Operations Manual* (POM) section 492, and mailers' use of PS Tag 57, *Political Campaign Mailing*, that identifies Political Mail for processing and distribution.

First, let's define a political mailing, which is distinct from Election Mail. Political Mail can be Political Campaign Mail or Political Message Mail. Political Campaign Mail is any material mailed at First-Class Mail or USPS Marketing Mail postage rates for political campaign purposes by a registered political candidate, a campaign committee, or a committee of a political party. This type of mailing normally uses the address of a candidate's campaign committee or political party committee as the return address. Political Message Mail is any material mailed at First-Class Mail or USPS Marketing Mail prices by a PAC, super-PAC, or other organization engaging in issue advocacy or voter mobilization.

Now, let's familiarize ourselves with PS Tag 57. "Political Campaign Mailing" is printed on the red tag. Six black stars are above and below those words. Use of Tag 57 with eligible political mailings is optional. Tag 57 may be used for all Political Mail, including Political Message Mail. Please remove Tag 57 from trays after the campaign mail has been processed.

The Postal Service is responsible for providing information to assist in the preparation and deposit of political mailings, as well as for the proper acceptance, processing, delivery, and recording of these mailings. Our job is to ensure that each mailing is handled properly and with equal care and attention. Any delay in processing political mailings must be documented. Be alert for the red Tag 57. We must properly handle and timely deliver any political mailing.

In summary, the key points from today's service talk are:

- - We will handle all political mailings properly and timely.
- - Be alert to the red Tag 57, even though its use is optional for eligible mailers.
- - Tag 57 must be removed once the political mail has been processed.
- - Any delays in processing of political mail must be reported.

Thank you for keeping our country strong by ensuring messages from registered political candidates, committees, parties and other issue advocacy groups are processed in a timely manner so they can be delivered to America's voters.
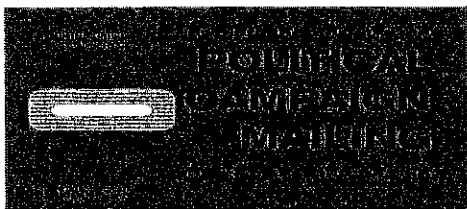
Stand-Up Talk: Return Ballots with No Address

During an Election season, you may encounter voter-returned ballots with no Board of Elections address, such as the example below.

If you find any such pieces, please contact the Political & Election Mail Strike Team for instructions on how to handle.
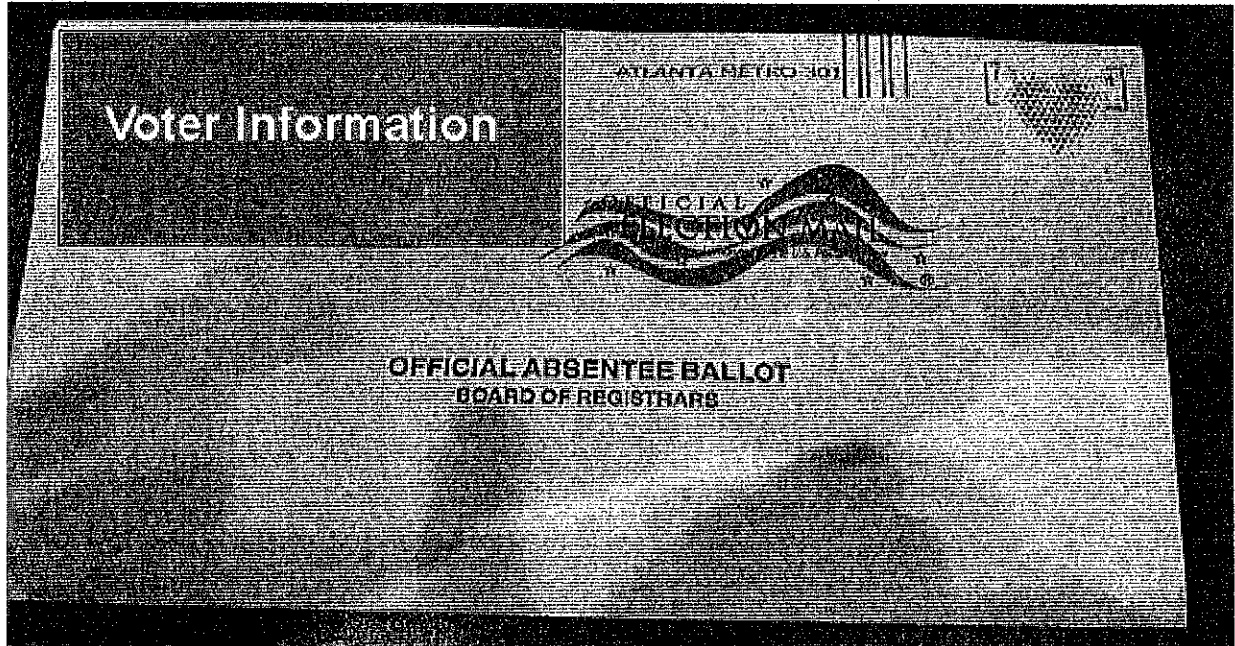
Stand-Up Talk: Tag 191 for Ballot Mail

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 to 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:**

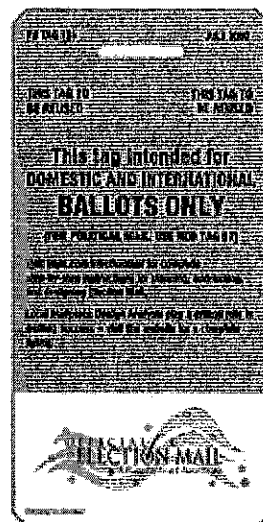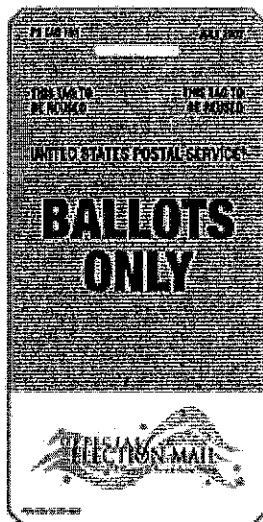   · Using a wire twist tie, attach Tag 191 to the strap at the end of the tray that bears the tray label.

· **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: Empty Equipment Search and Tag 57/191 Handling

As the 2024 Election season gets underway, it is crucial that all political and election mail pieces are delivered timely. Some pieces may be overlooked due to being stuck in equipment that appears to be empty. We must avoid this at all costs by performing a thorough empty equipment search.

Once a piece of equipment has been emptied, it should be inspected visually and physically for any residual mailpieces. Sacks should be turned inside-out, trays and tubs should be turned upside-down, hampers should be swept out, etc.

Some pieces of equipment have a false bottom (i.e. trays or tubs are placed in the bottom of a container to make it easier to reach the contents of the container). These types of containers are especially prone to hidden mailpieces. Check for any mailpieces that may be lying underneath the false bottom.

In addition, empty equipment must not be returned to a Mail Transport Equipment Service Center (MTESC) with a red Political Mail Tag 57 or green Ballot Mail Tag 191 attached. These tags must be removed from the tray/tub/sack as soon as the mail in the container is processed. Do not dispose of the tags; return them to the local Business Mail Entry Unit (BMEU) for reuse.
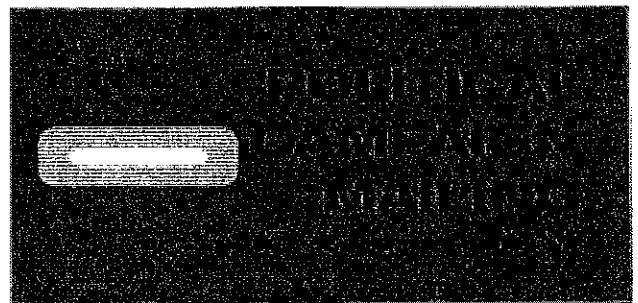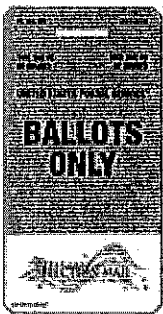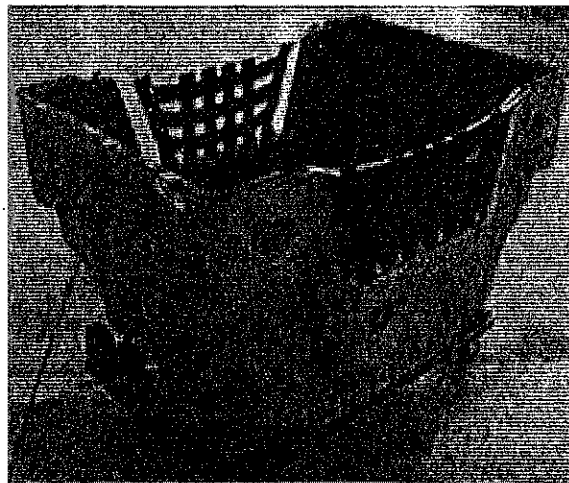
Stand-Up Talk: Flat BRM Handling

Throughout the 2024 election season many voters will be returning flat-shaped ballot envelopes, some of which are BRM (Business Reply Mail). It is critical that all return ballots receive a legible postmark, including BRM envelopes. Some election officials rely on the postmark as proof that a return ballot was timely mailed.
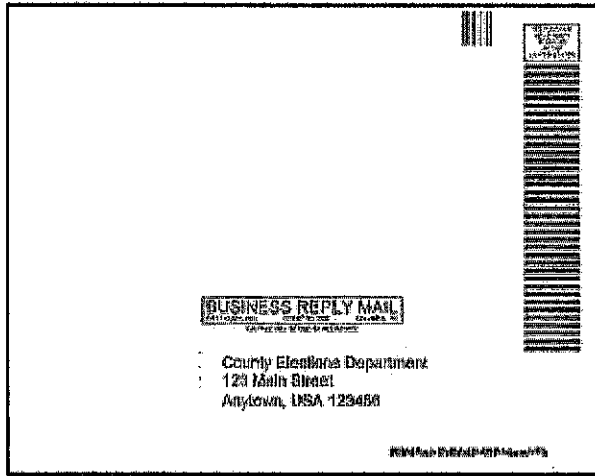

All flat-shaped and oversize letter BRM, including ballots, should be processed with the stamped flat mail flow. If flat BRM is received comingled with metered volume, the BRM must be culled and tubbed up with the stamped flats in the collection operation or plant carwash. **This applies to BRM mail prep always, not just during election season.**

These pieces must be processed on an AFSM 100 canceller module with the IJC (Ink Jet Canceller) turned on. Flat BRM **must not** be processed on an AFSM 100 module without an IJC or during a run where the IJC is not turned on.

Hand Cancellation Quality

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 legible postmark.

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.
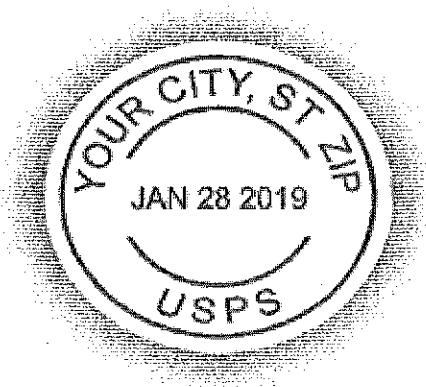
Hand Cancellation Stamp

We can expect to process a high volume of ballot mail in the 2024 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 legible postmark. Stamped and metered letters and flats, BRM, Express/Priority/SPRs, and all manual mail should all be postmarked where they contain a return ballot.

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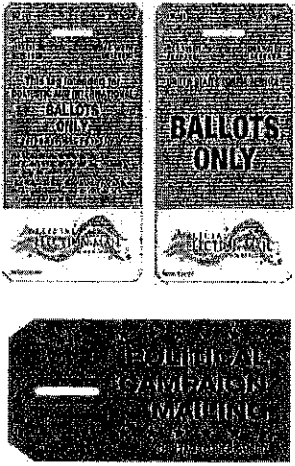
- AFCS fine cull
- AFCS flat extractor
- AFSM rejects
- Oversized flats
- Manual case
- Package sorters

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.

Standard Work Instruction: Handling Undeliverable Bulk Business Mail (UBBM) for Election Mail and Political Mail

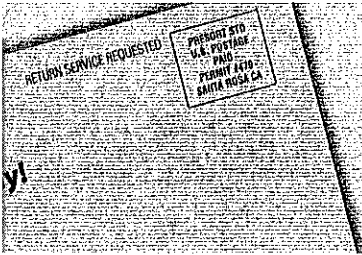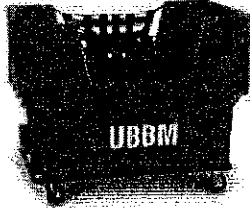|	Important Steps	Key Points	Reasons for Key Points
	1. Identify the volume as Election Mail or Political Mail.	• **Election Mail** is any item mailed to or from authorized election officials that enables citizens to participate in the voting process — including ballots, voter registration cards, absentee voting applications and polling place notifications. • **Political Mail** is any material mailed for campaign purposes by a registered political candidate, campaign committee or committee of a political party, as well as any material mailed by a political action committee or organization engaging in issues advocacy or voter mobilization. This may be identified by the red Tag 57 shown to the left.	
Election Mail UBBM			
	2. **Election Mail** All UBBM Election Mail must be collected by the Delivery Unit employees and CIOSS host site waste mail verification employees and given to their supervisor and/or manager.	• Flat tubs are a good way to collect this volume to give to your supervisor and/or manager.	• Because of the importance of this volume, it is advised to collect all UBBM Election Mail in a designated central location properly identified as UBBM Election Mail.
	3. **Election Mail** Delivery Unit Employees must log all UBBM Election Mail according to "Completing the Delivery Unit Election & Political Mail Log" SWI.	• Access the most current version on Blue: https://blue.usps.gov/marketing/product-solutions/_pdf/election-mail/completing-delivery-unit-election-mail-political-mail-log_swi-fy24.pdf	• Keep a log of all Election Mail and provide a record of UAA volume in case research is necessary in the future.

		4. **Election Mail** The supervisor and/or manager will contact the District Manager of Customer Relations who will, in turn, reach out to the appropriate Board of Elections and determine a course of action.	• District Manager of Customer Relations contact can be found on the Election Mail Blue page. • Do not send UBBM Election Mail to the plant for recycling until the District Manager of Customer Relations has confirmed with the relevant Board of Election. • Supervisors should set a cadence with their employees to handle UBBM Election Mail consistently from day-to- day.	• Election Mail volume should be handled consistently and accurately. • Extra precautions must be taken to ensure UBBM Election Mail is handled in accordance with the needs and expectations of the relevant Board of Election.

UBBM Political Mail
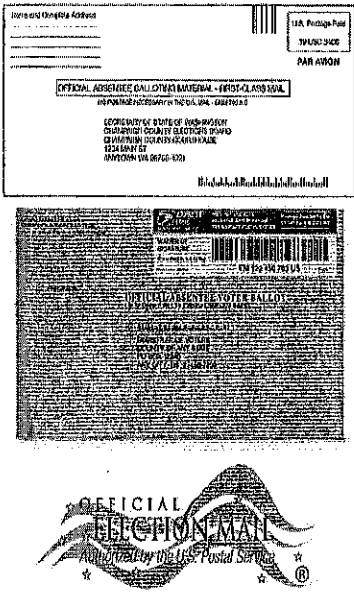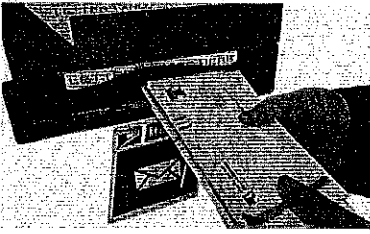
	1. **Political Mail** Delivery Unit employees will validate the piece is undeliverable and contains no ancillary service endorsements	• Ancillary service endorsements are used by mailers to give direction on whether they want electronic or manual notification of the customer's updated information as well as the reason the piece is undeliverable. They also provide the Postal Service with instructions on how to handle undeliverable mailpieces. The endorsements consist of one of the following keywords: "address," "forwarding," "return," or "change," followed by the two words "service requested."	
	2. **Political Mail** Delivery Unit employees must log all UBBM Political Mail according to *"Completing the Delivery Unit Election & Political Mail Log"SWI*	• Access the most current version on Blue: https://blue.usps.gov/ marketing/product-solutions/_pdf/electio n-mail/completing-delivery-unit-election-mail-political-mail-log_swi-fy24.pdf	• Keeping a log of Political Mail will protect the Postal Service and provide a record of UAA volume.
	3. **Political Mail** After it is logged, UBBM Political Mail is handled in the same manner as all other UBBM.	• At this point, political mail volume can be mixed with standard UBBM.	• Once logged, standard processes for UBBM should be followed.

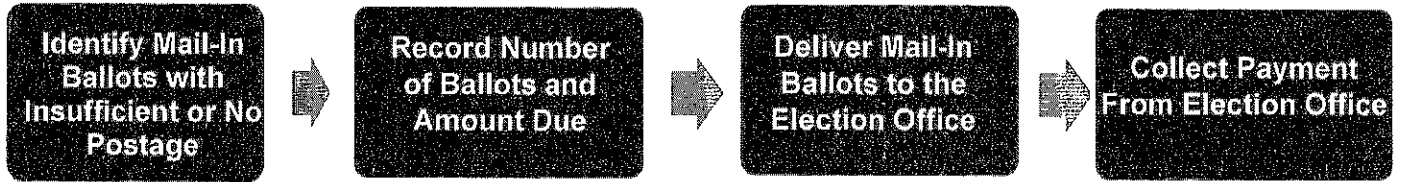# Standard Work Instruction: Military and Overseas Absentee Ballots

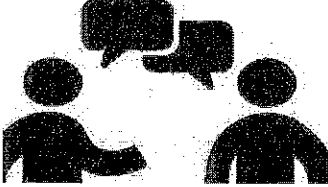| Identify and Accept Military and Overseas Absentee Ballots	→	Deliver
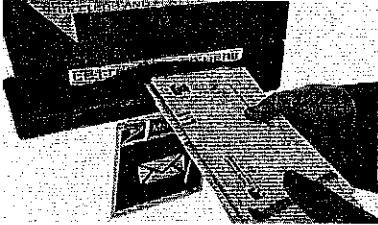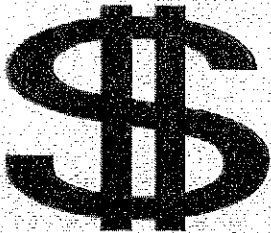
	Important Steps	Key Points	Reasons for Key Points
	1. Identify Military and Overseas Absentee Ballots. The following marks, as shown on the left, may be present and used to identify ballots. 2. Acceptance clerks and retail associates must accept this mail.	• Does not require postage and are not short paid. • Ballots may be mailed without prepayment of postage from Post Offices, collections boxes, overseas U.S. Military and Diplomatic Post Offices, American Embassies, and American Consulates. • Ballots do not have to be submitted to a BMEU.	• This follows DMM 703.8.0.
	3. Deliver Absentee ballots or send to downstream facility.	• Does not require postage and are not short paid. • Never hold ballots for postage payment or return a ballot to the voter.	• UOCAVA ballots do not require postage pursuant to 39 USC 3406.
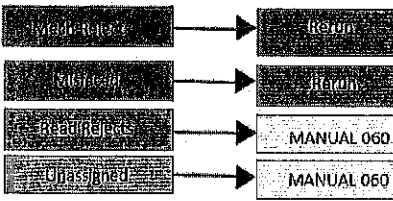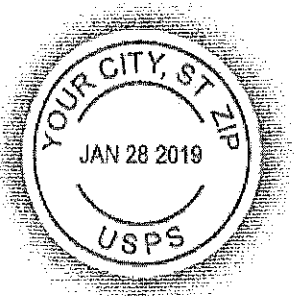
Standard Work Instruction:
Handling Mail-In Ballots with Insufficient or No Postage

Identify Mail-In Ballots with Insufficient or No Postage ⇨ Record Number of Ballots and Amount Due ⇨ Deliver Mail-In Ballots to the Election Office ⇨ Collect Payment From Election Office

	Important Steps	Key Points	Reasons for Key Points
INSUFFICIENT FUNDS	1. Identify mail-in ballots with insufficient or no postage.	• Account for ballots with insufficient or no postage using procedures for postage due.	• To determine the number of ballots with insufficient postage.
	2. Record the number of ballots and the amount due.	• A record is needed so that an appropriate amount is charged to the election office.	• To ensure USPS has a record of how many ballots had insufficient postage and the amount short.
	3. Deliver mail-in ballots to the election office.	• All mail-in ballots addressed to an election office, with or without sufficient postage, must be delivered. • Never detain or hold ballots for postage payment or return a ballot to the voter.	• This follows the handling of short paid balloting materials as directed in Postal Operations Manual Section 171.3.
	4. Collect payment from election office.	• Attempt to collect payment for postage due at the time of delivery. • Deliver ballots even if the office refuses to pay.	• Willful delay of mail-in ballots is a violation of policy, ethics, and law.
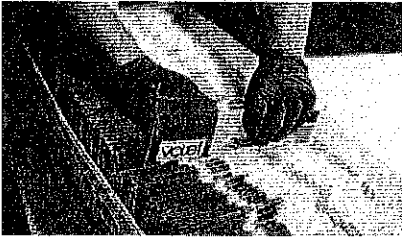
Standard Work Instruction: AFSM Ballot Handling

Run ballots on AFSM canceller module	⇨	Riffle special bins for ballots and handle accordingly	⇨	Postmark any remaining rejects with round-date stamp

	Important Steps	Key Points	Reasons for Key Points
	1. Identify flat-shaped ballot mail from collections and run on AFSM canceller module with canceller on.	• Do not run ballots on any console without canceller capability. • Ensure canceller is turned on and is printing a legible date.	• All returning ballots must receive a legible postmark.
	2. Riffle special bins for ballot mail and handle according to special bin instructions.	• **Mechanical rejects:** return to console for reinduction • **Misfaced:** reface and return to console for reinduction • **Read rejects:** flow to manual • **Unassigned:** flow to manual	• Minimize volume flowing to manual by reinducting mechanical rejects and misfaced pieces. • Ensure canceller is turned on for any rejects being reinducted.
	3. After following the steps above, isolate any remaining ballot rejects and immediately postmark with round-date stamp before flowing to manual.	• Ensure round-date stamp is set to correct date. • Do not place a second postmark on a piece if it already has a postmark.	• All uncancelled ballots must be postmarked during origin processing.

Standard Work Instruction: Election Mail – F4 Distribution Employee Responsibilities

| Examine Mail | ⇨ | Report Discrepancies & High Volumes | ⇨ | Distribute Mail | ⇨ | Remove Tag After Distribution |

	Important Steps	Key Points	Reasons for Key Points
OFFICIAL ELECTION MAIL	1. Identify trays and sacks of Election Mail.	• Look for the Official Election Mail logo for all Election Mail, or a green Tag 191 for ballots. Examine trays and sacks immediately.	• It is crucial for employees to understand which sacks and trays contain Election Mail so they can be properly handled.
	2. Upon examining the trays & sacks, report any issues to immediate supervisor. Report high volumes of Election Mail to immediate supervisor.	• Upon examination, employees need to identify any issues with the sacks and/or trays. • Identify high volumes.	• Supervisor and station management need to be aware of issues with any sacks/trays identified as Election Mail so proper steps can be taken. • High volumes may require changes in operations planning.
	3. Distribute all Election mail to carrier cases and place on carrier's ledge.	• Election Mail to be distributed the same day it is received.	• The Postal Service will continue to process and deliver expeditiously, as we have done in past elections.
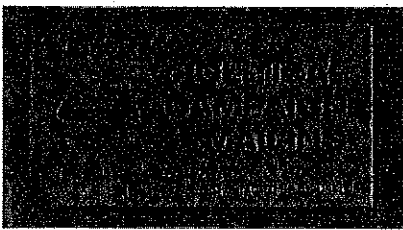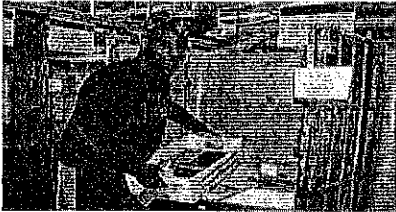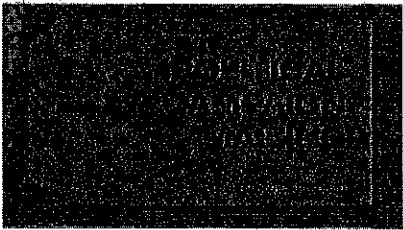
	4. If you receive a tray or sack from processing with Tag 191, remove green Tag 191 for ballot mail once all mail has been distributed and keep tags for reuse. Not all trays and sacks of ballot mail will include the Tag.	• Only remove the green Tag 191 once all mail is in sack or tray has been distributed. • Retain tags for reuse to avoid need for USPS to reorder.	• Removing green Tag 191 only after all mail has been distributed ensures no ballot mail is left unidentified.

Standard Work Instruction: Political Mail
F4 Distribution Employee Responsibilities

Examine Mail	➡	Report Discrepancies & High Volumes	➡	Distribute Mail	➡	Remove Tag After Distribution

	Important Steps	Key Points	Reasons for Key Points
	1. Identify trays and sacks of Political Mail.	• Look for a red Tag 57 for Political Mail and examine trays and sacks immediately.	• It is crucial for employees to understand which sacks and trays contain Political Mail so they can be properly handled.
	2. Upon identifying the trays and sacks, report any issues to immediate supervisor. Report high volumes of Political Mail to immediate supervisor.	• Employees will need to identify any discrepancies with the sacks and/or trays. • Identify high volumes.	• Supervisor and station management need to be aware of abnormalities with any sacks/trays identified as Political Mail so proper steps can be taken. • High volumes may require changes in operations planning.
	3. Distribute all Political Mail to carrier cases after examination and notify supervisor of discrepancies and/or high volumes.	• Examination must be completed prior to distributing volume to carriers.	• Discrepancies and potential issues should be identified prior to distribution to carriers.
	4. Remove red Tag 57 for Political Mail once all mail has been distributed and keep tags for reuse.	• Only remove the red Tag 57 once all mail in sack or tray has been distributed. • Retain tags for reuse to avoid need for USPS to reorder.	• Removing red Tag 57 only after all mail has been distributed ensures no Political Mail is left unidentified.
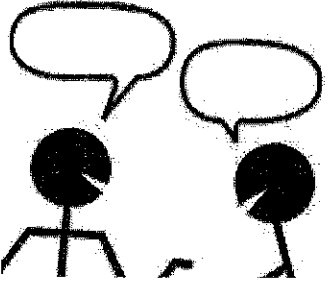
Standard Work Instruction: Election Mail – Business Reply Mail
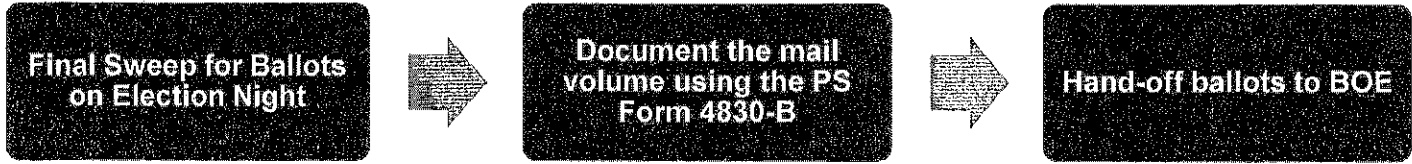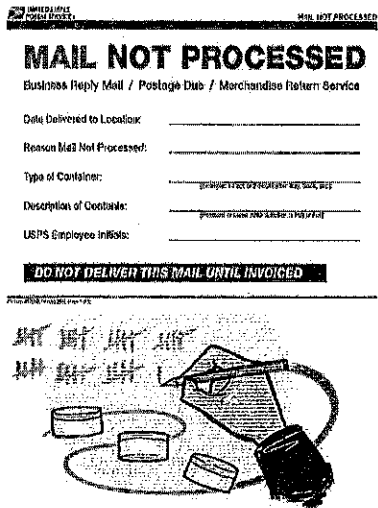## Election Day Processing

Final Sweep for Ballots on Election Night ➡ **Document the mail volume using the PS Form 4830-B** ➡ **Hand-off ballots to BOE**

	Important Steps	Key Points	Reasons for Key Points
FINAL INSPECTION	1. Inspect plants one final time for Ballots on Election night	• Perform last sweep to collect any late-arriving ballots. • Sweep time will vary depending on the states in hand deadlines.	• Allows the election officials to collect any late-arriving Business Reply Mail Ballots. • Time of last sweep determined by State's return deadline
MAIL NOT PROCESSED Business Reply Mail / Postage Due / Merchandise Return Service Date Delivered to Location: Reason Mail Not Processed: Type of Container: Description of Contents: USPS Employee Initials: *DO NOT DELIVER THIS MAIL UNTIL INVOICED*	2. Clerks will count and document the mail volume using the PS Form 4830-B 3. Make two copies of the PS Form 4830-B	• BRM permit number and number of pieces they are taking in "Description of Contents" • Reason Mail Not Processed – Election Day final sweep. • Have the election official sign and date the form. • Give one copy to the Postmaster or Manager Distribution Operations, or the clerk who will post the mail volume to the permit account the next business day.	• Ensures that ballots not invoiced are properly accounted for and documented prior to handoff.
	4. Hand-off any Ballots available to the necessary BOE	• Election Mail should be expedited through the network with timely processing. No ballots will be held for invoicing on election day	• 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

Standard Work Instruction: PM Backdoor Audit & Vehicle Check
Election & Political Mail

Greet Carriers Returning from Route	⇨	Examine Trays, Tubs, and Satchel for Undelivered Mail	⇨	Have a Conversation w/the Carrier on Undelivered Mail	⇨	Check Postal Vehicles for any Trays, Tubs, or Loose Mail

	Important Steps	Key Points	Reasons for Key Points
	1. Supervisor or Postmaster greet carriers as they return from the street on platform or back door and thank them for their hard work.	• Have a presence when/where the carriers return to the office from the street. • Thank the carriers for their continued hard work and dedication to their customers.	• Supervisors and/or Postmasters should be welcoming their employees back to the office. • Increased presence on the floor will increase engagement from both management and craft.
	2. Examine all trays and tubs and carrier satchel to identify any undelivered mail from route.	• As carrier unloads their vehicle on the platform or in the parking lot, identify any undelivered Mail. • Examine tubs, trays and satchel prior to carrier bringing inside to workroom.	• It is easier to track any undelivered mail on the platform during unloading prior to the carrier bringing the mail inside the building and on the workroom floor.
	3. Have a quick conversation with the carrier regarding any undelivered mail to understand the reasons why the mail was unable to be delivered. Record undelivered Election/Political Mail in mail log.	• Start a conversation with the carrier regarding any undelivered mail. • If Election/Political Mail, record the volume and reasons for no delivery.	• The Supervisor or Postmaster must be aware why the mail was not delivered so proper next steps can be taken and accurate recording can be made for Election/Political Mail.
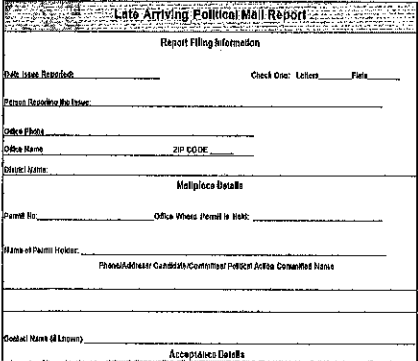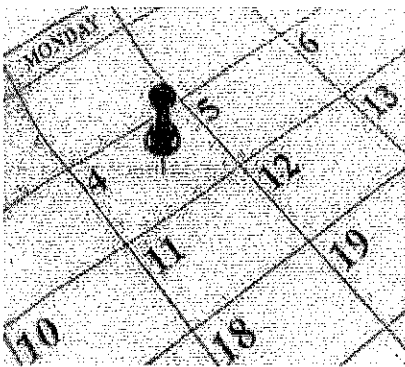
	4. Check all Postal vehicles at the end of the night to ensure no trays, tubs or loose mail exist in the vehicle. If found, bring inside, examine undelivered mail and have conversation with the carrier.	• Walk the parking lot after carriers have returned from their routes to examine all Postal vehicles to ensure no trays, tubs or loose mail is left in the vehicle.	• In order to provide an "All Clear" in the PM, management must be certain no mail is left in the vehicles. • Carriers are held accountable if mail is found in their vehicle.
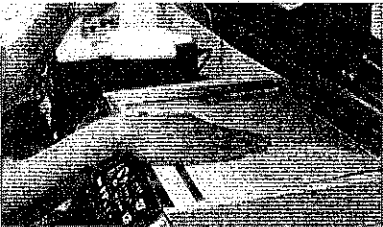
Standard Work Instruction: Completing The Late Arriving Political Mail Report

Late Arriving Political Mail discovered	⇨	Determine volume	⇨	Make a photocopy of a single piece of mail	⇨	Complete the Late Arriving Political Mail Report	⇨	Provide a copy of the report as requested

	Important Steps	Key Points	Reasons for Key Points
	Determine the amount of Political Mail volume that has been presented or arrived late. **Note**: sacks/trays or tubs.	It is necessary to record this information on the Late Arriving Political Mail report. Note whether the mail has **Red Tag 57** on it.	This information will be used to determine if an entire mailing is late or just part of it.
	Make a photocopy of the front and back of the Political mailpiece.	The copy of the mailpiece will be attached to the Late Arriving Political Mail completed report.	The photocopy will serve as proof of the existence of the mailing, the correct version of the mailing and type of mailpiece.
	Record the findings of your investigation on the Late Arriving Political Mail report. Attach the copy of the mailpiece to the report. Retain the report in the unit.	A complete report is vital to the accurate and thorough investigation of any late arriving political mail. The report is found in the Election and Political Mail Guidebook FY 2024.	This report will be used to support claims involving late arriving Political Mail. It documents mail that was entered too late for delivery or found unprocessed in a facility.
	When requested, provide a **copy** of the Late Arriving Mail report to the requesting manager. **Plants and Offices** - Mgr. Customer Relations (MCR) for your district. **BMEU and DDU's** – Mgr. Business Mail Entry (MBME).	Investigations of Late Arriving Political Mail will include induction locations (BMEU, DMU, dropship, DDU, Plants, etc.). Contact the mailer to determine how the late arriving mail should be handled.	Point persons need an accurate report and good investigation to complete the report. The final disposition of the mail will be recorded on this form. Maintain this report for 3 years.

Standard Work Instruction: Completing the Delivery Unit Election Mail / Political Mail Log

| Complete the Lcation field, Record Name of Mailer & Date Received | ⇨ | Sample Photocopy & Description of the Mailing | ⇨ | # Pieces Not Delivered and Reasons Why | ⇨ | Volume of Marketing Mail Sent to Waste | ⇨ | Document UAA Pieces | ⇨ | Store Log and Copies in a Red Binder |

	Important Steps	Key Points	Reasons for Key Points
Field Checklists & Logs • Delivery Unit Election Mail and Political Mail Checklist • Election Mail and Political Mail Logs for Delivery Units, Plants, and BMEUs • Election Mail and Political Mail Audit Checklist • Delivery Unit Political Mail Receipt & Delivery Log	1. Upon arrival of Election and/or Political Mail, use the most recently updated Election Mail/Political Mail Log for Delivery Units found on the Blue Page. Complete the Location Field, name of mailers and the date & time the mailing was received.	• Immediately enter the name of the mailer and date & time received to ensure accuracy. • Entries are still required for days when the unit does not receive any Political/Election Mail. Input date and mark "No Political/Election Mail" for those entries.	• It is critical to document all Political/Election Mail received to ensure proper tracking and handling of the mail.
	2. Photocopy one piece of the mailing to keep for records and enter a description of the mailing.	• Select one mail piece to photocopy to capture a visual of the mailing. • Write a brief description in case the image is difficult to read.	• Capturing an image and writing a brief description allows for quick identification of a mailing if needed once the mailing has gone out for delivery.
	3. If applicable, record the number of pieces not delivered before the state's ballot return deadline and the reasons why the pieces were not delivered.	• Undelivered Political/Election Mail will need to be identified, counted, and recorded once the deadline and the requested delivery date has passed.	• It is the USPS's responsibility to record all undelivered Political/Election Mail volume & provide reasoning why.
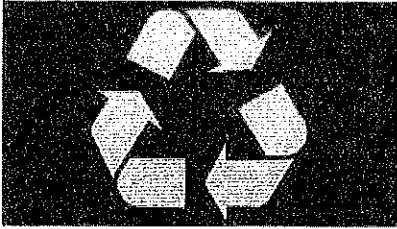
	4. If applicable, record the volume of any USPS Marketing Mail consigned to waste upon instruction by the mailer.	• Prior to consigning to waste, count the approximate number of mail pieces and ensure instruction is given.	• The USPS must record any mail pieces received and not delivered.
	5. Document any Political/Election Undeliverable as Addressed pieces.	• Identify pieces not delivered due to incorrect address and record in log.	• Any pieces not delivered need to be identified and recorded including UAA.
	6. Maintain log daily and store log in a red binder.	• Keep log and all photocopies in a designated red binder.	• The red binder differentiates it from other binders and easy to recognize.
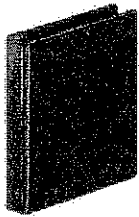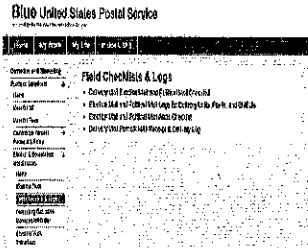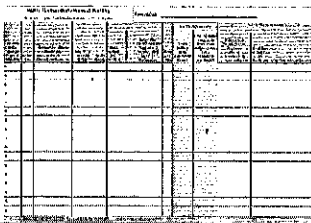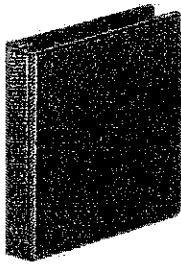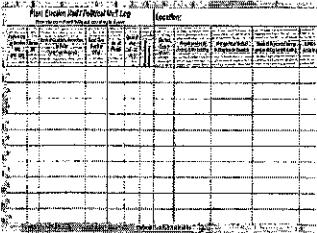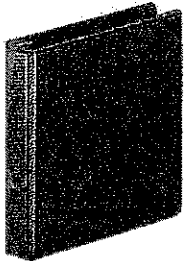
Standard Work Instruction: Completing the BMEU Election Mail / Political Mail Log

Complete the Required Log located on the Blue Page ⇨	**Complete the Location Field** ⇨	**Make entries into the appropriate Field/Section** ⇨ **Retain Copies of completed Logs for 3 Years**

	Important Steps	Key Points	Reasons for Key Points
	1. Use the BMEU Election/Political Mail log. Print extra copies to use during the election season.	• Use the most updated Election/Political Mail log that is found on the Blue Page. The log is used to resolve possible acceptance issues or concerns. https://blue.usps.gov/marketing/product-solutions/electionmail/field-playbook-checklists.htm • Needs the link to the appropriate log.	• The Election/Political Mail BMEU log is required to be completed. It will be used to record acceptance details about Election and/or Political Mail.
Location: _____	2. Complete the Location field at the top of the log.	• Completing the Location field at the top of the log will identify location details.	• Identifying the Location will help locate mail if issues or escalations arise.
	3. Make complete entries into each column of the log that is applicable to the mailing.	• Completing each section of the log will identify necessary details about the mailing. • Co-located BMEU locations must complete the designated fields of the log sheet.	• A properly completed log will provide the information necessary to respond to reported issues or concerns.
	4. Attach a copy of the mailpiece and retain all log for three years	• Retaining copies of log and mailing pieces for three years will help the postal service with future research and reporting.	• Retention of the log will ensure that information is available after the election season has ended.

Standard Work Instruction: Completing the Plant Election Mail / Political Mail Log

Use the Required Log on the Blue Page ➡ **Complete the Location Field** ➡ **Complete Each Field/Section of the Log** ➡ **Retain Copies of Each Mailing and Retain all Logs for 3 Years**

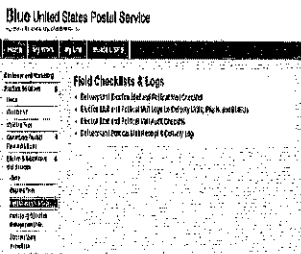|	Important Steps	Key Points	Reasons for Key Points
	1. Use the required log found on the Elections Mail and Political Mail Page on Blue	• The Election & Government Mail Services Team requires usage of the updated and approved logs on the Elections Mail and Political Mail Page on Blue under Field Checklists & Logs • https://blue.usps.gov/marketing/product-solutions/electionmail/field-playbook-checklists.htm	• Using the required logs on the Election & Government Mail Page on Blue will help resolve possible delivery issues or concerns
Location:	2. Complete Location Field at the top of the log	• Completing the Location section at the top of the log will identify location details	• Identifying the Location will help identify and locate mail if issues or escalations arise
	3. Complete each field/section of the log	• Completing each section of the log will identify necessary details about the mailing • Co-located BMEU locations must complete the designated fields of the log sheet	• This will help resolve possible issues or concerns with the mailing, and will help resolve possible escalations and/or legal issues
	4. Attach a copy of the mail piece and retain all logs for three years	• Retaining copies of mailings and logs for three years will help the postal service with tracking and reporting	• This will help locate specific mailings quickly and efficiently
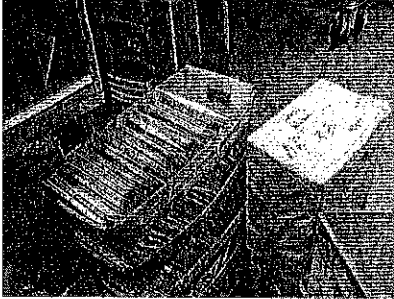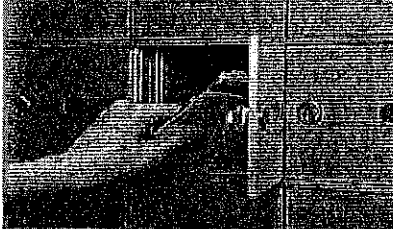
Standard Work Instruction: Handling Missent Election Mail/Ballots

| Identify Missent Election Mail/Ballots | → | Prepare Missent Election Mail/Ballots for Dispatch on First Available Transportation | → | Ensure Red Special Handling Placards are Affixed to Sleeved Letter | → | Utilize Pitch-and-Catch Process |

	Important Steps	**Key Points**

	Identification and redirection of missent Election Mail/ballots	Delivery Units will:
		• Identify missent Election Mail/ballots
		• Place missent Election Mail/ballots into dedicated letter trays or flat tubs
		• Cover mail using sleeves for letter trays and lids for flat tubs
		• Affix red Special Handling placards on:
		  - Sleeved trays
		  - Flat tub lids
		  - Mail transportation equipment (MTE)

	Complete the Pitch and Catch Process	Delivery Units must contact Plant via phone:
		• Notify Manager, Distribution Operations/Plant manager of dispatched mail. Verbally communicate:
		  - Truck number
		  - Time truck left
		  - Driver's name
		
		Delivery Units send an email:
		• Include: Plant Manager/Supervisor, POOM, Postmaster, Manager of Customer Relations, Distribution Operations. Include:
		  - Time the call was placed
		  - Who they spoke with
		  - Type of container the mail is in (for example, a flat tub in an APC)
		
		Plant replies "to all" via email to include:
		  - When the truck arrived
		  - Who handled the mail (Supervisor/MDO name)
		  - Time mail was processed

Standard Work Instruction: Election Mail – Carrier Responsibilities

Identify Election Mail ➡ **Report High Volumes to Supervisor** ➡ **Take to Street Same Day** ➡ **Deliver ALL mail to mailbox**

	Important Steps	Key Points	Reasons for Key Points
	1. Identify and be aware of all Election Mail brought to case by F4 clerk	• Communicate with clerks to understand which mail is Election Mail • Keep Election Mail in sight	• Carriers need to understand which mail is Election Mail so it can be properly handled • Keeping mail in sight will ensure it goes to the street same day
	2. Report abnormally high volumes of Election Mail to immediate supervisor	• Upon identifying abnormally high volumes of Election Mail, notify supervisor of the high volumes so proper steps can be taken	• Management needs to be aware of high volumes to be able to change operating plans to ensure all Election Mail gets delivered in a timely manner
	3. Ensure all Election Mail is taken to the street the <u>same day</u> it <u>is received</u> at the carrier case	• Carrier needs to identify all Election Mail at their case after pull down to ensure all mail is taken to the street same day as received	• Election Mail cannot be delayed or curtailed and therefore should always go to the street same day as received
	4. Deliver all Election Mail to a secure mailbox (place inside mailbox) – <u>DO NOT</u> leave Election Mail on ledges, doorsteps, next to mailboxes	• All Election Mail needs to be placed inside of a mailbox, period 	• Election Mail should never be left accessible to the public and therefore should always be placed inside of the mailbox for the intended recipient

Standard Work Instruction: Pitch-Catch-Clear Process for Election Ballots

Preparation ⇒ Plant Dispatch ⇒ Pickup from Plant ⇒ Arrival at Delivery Unit ⇒ Deliver ballots to Board of Elections

	Important Steps	Key Points
	Preparation	Plant Managers will: • Identify stakeholders and local post office POC information (email & phone number) which include but are not limited to the following managers: ○ Plant, In-Plant Support, Managers of Operations Integration, Distribution Operations, Transportation and Network Systems, Delivery & Retail, as well as Postmaster, Dock Supervisor, and Managers of Customer Relations • Communicate the contact list to all parties • Notify all parties of the Pitch-Catch-Clear Process
	Plant Dispatch	For all ballots that are dispatched to delivery units • TANS manager consolidates the list of delivery units, dispatch tomes, and total number of ballots • TANS manager sends "Pitch" email (cc: all stakeholders) and follows up with a phone call to delivery units receiving ballots • TANS manager performs All-Clear • TANS manager communicates with all stations within area of responsibility
	Pickup from Plant	For ballots that are picked up by Board of Elections (BOE) designee • Stage ballots in designation location • After ballots are collected, MDO or Dock Supervisor sends email confirmation to stakeholders • MDO performs All-Clear
	Arrival at Delivery Unit	Postmaster verifies the number of ballots annotated in "Pitch" email. • If correct, send "Catch" email to stakeholders confirming receipt of ballots • If incorrect or ballots have not arrived as scheduled, send email within 60 minutes to TANS manager and also make a phone call for investigation and request a follow up (cc: stakeholders) • Once mail is distributed, verify workroom floor is clear of all mail • Ensure ballots are delivered timely
	Deliver Ballots to Board of Elections	• Upon return to office, report to management on duty confirming that all ballots were delivered to the BOE • Management performs All-Clear certification • Management sends "Clear" email to stakeholders

Standard Work Instruction: All Clear Certification for Delivery Units for Political Mail and Election Mail

Access All Clear Certification Link on the Blue Page → **Select Delivery/Retail and drill to your area** → **Answer all questions and click "submit" to save**

Election years are always very busy for the Postal Service as we deliver both Election Mail and Political Mail for local, state, and federal elections happening across the United States of America.

During the period preceding local, state, and national primaries, special elections, general elections, and runoffs elections the Postal Service accepts and delivers many political campaign mailings, frequently in large quantities. These mailings are made up of individual candidates and their campaign organizations, as well as by local, state, and national committees of political parties. There are also large numbers of ballots, and other Election Mail, mailed out to voters and the Postal Service is responsible for properly handling these materials.

To ensure that we are delivering these mailings to the American Voters in an efficient and timely manner, the Postal Service will be requiring all delivery units to certify, on a daily basis, that their unit is clear of all Political Mail and Election Mail committed for delivery that day. All Clear AM Certifications are due by 2:00pm local time, and All Clear PM Certifications are due after units' retail and/or delivery operations are completed for the day. This means the carrier cases, clerk distribution cases, staging areas, the dock, the window area, supervisor desk, PAR & RFS area, BRM & BMEU area, P.O. box section, collection boxes & lobby drops, and all delivery vehicles need to be checked.

This reporting will continue until two weeks after the General Election.

The Political / Election Mail All Clear Certification link for Delivery Units is available on the Political

/ Election Mail Blue Share page at this link: https://blue.usps.gov/marketing/product-

solutions/electionmail/standard-work-instructions.htm

View Facility Certificates

Search for a facility by finance number or ZIP and view all active certificates.

Certify Mode		
Start Date:	2024-01-08	
End Date:	2024-01-08	

Step #1 – Select Facility Type:
- Delivery/Retail
- Processing Operations
- Other Facility Types
- COVID-19 Associated Certs

Step #2 – Search by Finance, FDB, or ZIP:

Step #3 – Drill-Down to Facility:

Area:	Select a Area ...
District:	
MPOO:	
Facility:	

Select "Delivery/Retail", and drill to your Area, District, MPOO and Facility/Unit. If your unit has not yet certified for the day, you will see this window. Click on the red "Respond". All questions must be answered for your unit to be in compliance for certification. At this time, it is recommended not to click the "N/A" button. Only answer Yes or No. Click the Submit button or your certification will not be saved.

View Facility Certificates

Search for a facility by finance number or ZIP and view all active certificates.

Certify Mode

Start Date: 2024-01-03
End Date: 2024-01-03

Step #1 – Select Facility Type:		Step #3 – Drill-Down to Facility:	
⦿ Delivery/Retail		Area:	CENTRAL
○ Processing Operations		District:	KS-MO
○ Other Facility Types		MPOO:	MPOO D
○ COVID-19 Associated Certs		Facility:	Shawnee Mission Main Office

Step #2 – Search by Finance, FDB, or ZIP:
1963550532

Certificate Schedule **FAQ**

Certificates: All Certificates

Status: All ▾   Show 5 ▾ entries   Search:

Status	District	MPOO	Facility Name	Due Date	Certificate Name	Completed By/On
Respond	KS-MO	MPOO D	Shawnee Mission Main Office	2024-01-03	AM: Political/Election Mail "All Clear" Checklist Certification	N/A
Respond	KS-MO	MPOO D	Shawnee Mission Main Office	2024-01-03	PM: Political/Election Mail "All Clear" Checklist Certification	N/A

NOTE: All questions must be answered in order for this certificate to be marked as compliant.

NOTE: The following section defines all AM questions to be answered BEFORE 2pm local time.

CERTIFICATION:

Is your facility using the official logs from **Election and Political Mail Guidebook** as required, not your own local customized log? *

⦿ Yes
○ No
○ N/A

I certify that this facility has been validated and is clear of ALL committed POLITICAL Mail. *

⦿ Yes
○ No
○ N/A

I certify that this facility has been validated and is clear of ALL committed ELECTION Mail (including ballots). *

⦿ Yes
○ No
○ N/A

Is the Delivery Unit familiar with the required service talks? Are they posted on the workroom floor and being shared with employees? *

○ Yes
○ No
○ N/A

Does the Delivery Unit know how to handle military, overseas, and absentee ballots? *

○ Yes
○ No
○ N/A

Does the Delivery Unit have a contingency plan to deliver late arriving or missent Political/Election Mail? *

○ Yes
○ No
○ N/A

Is the Delivery Unit clear of Business Reply Mail (BRM) today? *

○ Yes
○ No
○ N/A

If "No" was selected above, please provide an explanation here:

Does the Delivery Unit have the 2022 Business Reply Mail (BRM) and Short Paid Ballots memos posted near the area where the BRM is worked? *

○ Yes
○ No
○ N/A

Are the postage due/short paid election mail procedures being followed? Absentee ballots must not be detained or held for postage payment. DO NOT delay delivery of balloting materials. Willful delay of absentee balloting material or other election material is a violation of policies, ethics and law. *

○ Yes
○ No
○ N/A

Is the Delivery Unit free of delayed and curtailed Political/Election Mail?
(i.e. distribution case, RFS location, PO box section and supervisor's desk) *

○ Yes
○ No
○ N/A

If there was delayed/curtailed Political/Election Mail, was it properly reported in Delivery Condition Visualization (DCV), identified on your HQ-approved political log, and your election coordinator notified? *

○ Yes
○ No
○ N/A

Are carrier cases clear of mail pieces overlooked after strapping out? *

○ Yes
○ No
○ N/A

Has management verified that non-forwardable Political/Election Mail is not co-mingled with Undeliverable Bulk Business Mail? Non-forwardable include: unendorsed: non-profit, standard, and marketing mail. Address Service Requested (ASR), Change Service Requested (CSR), Electronic Service Requested (ESR), Forwarding Service Requested (FSR), Return Service Requested (RSR), Temp-Return Service Requested (TRSR). *

○ Yes
○ No
○ N/A

Is Undeliverable As Addressed and Undeliverable Bulk Business Mail (reference DMM 507.1.1) being properly recorded on the HQ-approved Destination Delivery Unit log? *

○ Yes
○ No
○ N/A

ADDITIONAL PROCESS CHECKS:

Is Undeliverable Bulk Business Mail (carrier cases and P.O. Box section) being worked/processed daily? *

○ Yes
○ No
○ N/A

Is the Political/Election Mail "All Clear" certification being completed daily? *

○ Yes
○ No
○ N/A

CARRIER CASES:

Are carrier cases clear of Political/Election Mail? Are carriers aware of the policy to hold unknown recipient mail for ten days before returning to sender? *

○ Yes
○ No
○ N/A

Is Undeliverable As Addressed -- letters (PARS) and flats (FPARS) trayed and parcels processed in RFS and dispatched to the plant? *

○ Yes
○ No
○ N/A

If the Delivery Unit has an on-site Bulk Mail Entry Unit, is an HQ-approved Political/Election Mail log present and current with sample photocopies? *

○ Yes
○ No
○ N/A

Are RED tag 57 and/or GREEN tag 191 being used in the Delivery Unit to identify Political Campaign Mail/Official Election Mail? Tag 57 is the RED tag used to identify containers with Political Mail in it. Tag 191 is the GREEN tag used to identify Ballot Mail; this tag is only used on trays or sacks. *

○ Yes
○ No
○ N/A

Daily certification of this "All Clear" checklist is scheduled until further notice.
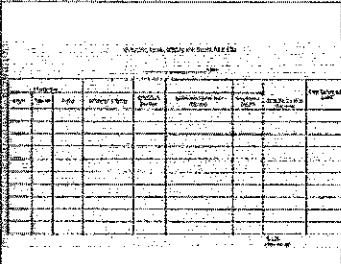
Completed By: N/A
Completed On: N/A

Submit   Cancel

The U.S. Mail remains a secure, efficient, and effective means for citizens and campaigns to participate in the electoral process, and the Postal Service is proud of our role in the nation's democratic process. Thank you for all you do to ensure the safe and timely delivery of the nation's Election Mail.

Standard Work Instruction: Clearing Election / Political Mail – Delivery & Retail Units

	Important Steps
	Verify front office/retail areas are clear, including: • Mobile Point Of Sale (mPOS) cart • Dutch Door • Postage Due area • BMEU/BRM area • Lobby mail slots • Self-Service Kiosk • Retail window area – under the counter/drawers • Collection boxes (Front of PO)
	Verify back office/Post Office box section/workroom floor area are clear, including: • Supervisor desks • Post Office box staging area • PRS/Firm/Caller Service area • Hot case/3M case/Throwback case • Accountable cage/area • Hold Mail area • Undeliverable Bulk Business Mail (UBBM)/Nixie Mail/Postal Automated Redirection System (PARS) • UBBM/Nixie mail/PARS • Carrier cases/carrier satchels • Empty equipment (trays, tubs, hampers, etc.)
	Verify the following are all clear: • Carrier vehicles (including rural POV) • Loading dock • Collection dock • Vestibules
	Reports • Political/Election Mail log with copies or samples of mailings • DCV (Delivery Condition Visualization) • CPMS reports • AM/PM certification • All Clear certification

Standard Work Instruction: Election Day Hand-to-Hand Exchange

Local Managers
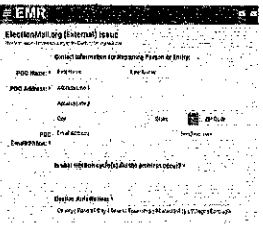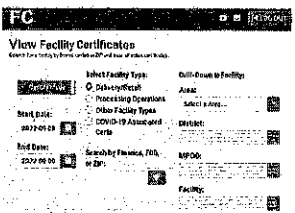
Maintain list of Board of Election (BOE) Locations	➡	Designate Points of Contact (POC)	➡	Coordinate Hand-to-Hand Exchange
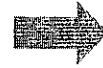
	Important Steps	Key Points

	Hand-to-hand exchange within designated delivery area	Managers of Customer Relations (MCR) will:
		• Identify and maintain a list of BOEs in the delivery area
		• Maintain log with BOE contact information
		• Conduct touchpoints with local BOEs and Postmasters/Management Designee
		  o Postmaster/Management Designee will be POC for local BOE
		  o Ensure facilities with multiple BOEs separate accordingly
		• Coordinate with the Postmaster/Management Designee that determined the HUB locations within Postal BOE jurisdiction
		  o Ensure facilities with multiple BOEs separate accordingly
		• Report and address concerns via internal ticket management system: https://electionmail.usps.gov/
		Postmaster/Management Designee will:
		• Coordinate with the Manager of Customer Relations (MCR) to determine the HUB locations within Postal BOE jurisdiction
		• Determine cutoff times for timely delivery to BOE
		• Communicate with all delivery units within area of responsibility
		  o Anticipate Vote by Mail volumes
		  o Expect volumes of absentee ballots
		  o Prepare for BOE to mail last-minute ballots
		• Communicate BOE concerns to the Manager of Customer Relations (MCR) and document any issue on the internal ticket management system: https://electionmail.usps.gov/

	Hand-to-hand exchange within local Post Office	Local Postmaster or Management Designee:
		• Maintain a list of local BOE contacts with drop off locations and times
		• Record and report volumes received or returned from/to each BOE
		• Knowledge of the following:
		  o Delivery requirement of ballots on Election Day
		  o Latest drop off time for ballots to be counted
		  o Postmarking requirements (Delivery Units should not apply a postmark to unpostmarked ballots after the mailpieces have gone through the outgoing operation.)
		• Arrange hand-to-hand delivery of late arriving ballots
		• Complete daily All Clear certification: https://facilitycerts.usps.gov/FacCert_HOME.cfm

Election Mail and Political Mail Operations Policy

The content of this Election Mail and Political Mail Processing Operations Policy is intended to provide guidance to the field on the specific processing parameters associated with Election Mail and Political Mail. This document also provides instruction relative to processing and distribution accountability and tools to monitor processing efficiency.

Executive Summary

The USPS plays a critical role in national elections. The purpose of this Election Mail and Political Mail Processing Operations Policy is to define and establish a nationally standardized policy to receive, process, and distribute Election Mail, Political Campaign Mail, and Political Message Mail.

Identification of Political and Ballot Mail via the Tag 57 (Political Campaign and Message Mail) and Tag 191 (Domestic and International Ballots), respectively, are important components of our process. Both will require thorough and precise documentation of arrival and processing into our political mail logs.

General

The American electorate votes on numerous political offices and issues. Eligible citizens cast ballots every four years for president, every two years for one-third of the U.S. senators and all members of the House of Representatives, and at varying frequencies for governorships and other state, county, and local offices, and referenda measures. During the period preceding local, state, and national primaries, special elections, and general elections, the Postal Service accepts and delivers large volumes of ballots and other election related materials, as well as many political campaign and message mailings.

Purpose

The purpose of this Election Mail and Political Mail Processing Operations Policy is to define and establish a nationally standardized policy to receive, process, and deliver Election Mail and Political Campaign and Message Mail.

Tag 57 - Political Mail

This tag is used for any material mailed at First-Class Mail or USPS Marketing Mail postage rates for political campaign purposes by a registered political candidate, a campaign committee, or a committee of a political party. This type of mailing normally uses the address of a candidate's campaign committee or political party committee as the return address. Political Message Mail is any material mailed at First-Class Mail or USPS Marketing Mail prices by a PAC, super-PAC, or other organization engaging in issue advocacy or voter mobilization. Both types of Political Mail may use Tag 57.

Tag 191 - Domestic and International Ballots

This tag is used only for Ballot Mail. As a larger grouping, Election Mail is any item mailed to or from authorized elections officials that enables citizens to participate

in the voting process.

Election Mail includes ballots, sample ballots, polling place notices, voter registration notices, or other election-related materials. Military balloting materials for federal elections may be sent without prepayment of postage to and from: members of the Uniformed Services on active duty (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and the commissioned corps of the Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration); members of the U.S. Merchant Marine; eligible spouses and dependents of members of the Uniformed Services or Merchant Marine; and U.S. citizens residing outside the United States.

The number of "vote by mail" states and mail-in voting volumes have increased. Ballot processing, both outgoing and incoming, will be very important and critical to a successful election season. ALL return ballots must be cancelled on our AFCS's and AFSM100's or hand cancelled.

Identifying Official Election Mail

Official Election Mail is any item mailed to or from authorized elections officials that enables citizens to participate in the voting process. Official Election Mail includes:

- Mail-In Ballots
- Ballot Materials
- Voter Registration Cards
- Absentee Applications
- Polling Place Notifications
- Military Ballots

Use of Tag 191
- The use of the green Tag 191 provides immediate visibility to ballot mail as it enters into our processing facilities. Tag 191 is used for Domestic and International Ballots only and is available at local Post Office or Business Mail Entry Unit (BMEU). The green Tag 191 may be used only to identify ballots addressed for domestic or international delivery. The tag may not to be used to identify containers of other types of Official Election Mail, such as polling place notices, voter registration notices, or other election-related materials. Tag 191 may not be used by other organizations or individuals who are not election officials. Tag 191 may not be used by organizations or individuals for Political Campaign Mail that promotes political candidates, referendums, or political campaigns.
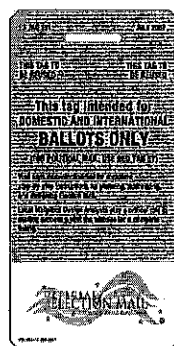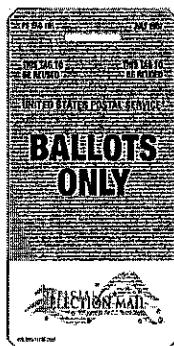
Identifying Political Campaign Mail

- Any material accepted for mailing at First Class Mail or Marketing Mail postage rates that is mailed for political campaign purposes by a registered political candidate, campaign committee, or committee of a political party is classified as a political campaign mailing. This type of mailing normally uses the address of a candidate's campaign committee or the committee of a political party as the return address. Do not confuse political campaign mailings with official mailings by members of Congress under congressional franking privileges.
- An individual or organization recognized as such by the appropriate governmental election control authority is considered to be a registered political candidate or party.
- A "qualified political committee" for the purpose of eligibility for Nonprofit Marketing Mail rates is defined as:
  - A national committee of a political party.
  - A state committee of a political party.
  - The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.
  - The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee.
  - The National Republican Congressional Committee.
  - The National Republican Senatorial Committee.
  - The term "national committee" means the organization that, by virtue of the bylaws of a political party, is responsible for the day-to-day operation of that political party at the national level.
  - The term "state committee means" the organization that, by virtue of the bylaws of a political party, is responsible for the day-to-day operation of that political party at the state level.

Postage for political campaign mail can be paid by permit, postage indicia, postage meter, or stamps affixed to each mail piece. Mailings by a qualified political committee often bear endorsements such as "Paid for by (committee) and authorized by (candidate)".

A qualified political committee can be eligible for Nonprofit Marketing Mail rates. The name and return address of the qualifying organization must appear either on the outside of the mailpiece or in a prominent location on the material being mailed at the Nonprofit Marketing Mail rates.

Identifying Political Message Mail

Tag 57 may also be used to identify *political message mailings* from Political Action Committees (PACs), Super-PACs, or other organizations engaged in issue advocacy or voter mobilization.

Political Mail comes in two classes of mail, for the most part, with characteristics as follows:

First-Class Mail: DMM 230

Any mailable matter may be sent as First-Class Mail, but materials containing personal information, handwritten or typed materials; bills and statements; and matter marked "postcard", or "double postcard" must be sent by First-Class Mail, Priority Mail®, or Priority Mail

Express®. There are exceptions for advertisements and solicitations.
- Free forwarding and return
- Sealed against inspection

Marketing Mail: DMM 240
- Mailable matter that is less than 16 ounces, is not required to be mailed as First-Class Mail, and is not authorized to be mailed as a Periodical may be mailed as Marketing Mail.
- Forwarding/return require endorsement and a fee
- May be opened for postal inspection

Use of Tag 57

Tag 57 can be used for any political campaign mailing by a registered political candidate, campaign committee, and committee of a political party, or a *political message mailing by a Political Action Committee (PAC), Super-PAC, or other organizations engaged in issue advocacy or voter mobilization.*

Mail from organizations such as labor unions, religious groups, retiree associations, and others that endorse specific candidates or political issues is not political campaign mail. However, this mail is considered "political message mail" and can be identified with Tag 57 for processing. The use of Tag 57 is optional, but the Postal Service does encourage mailers to use the tag to identify trays and sacks of political campaign mail and political message mail while it is in the mailstream.
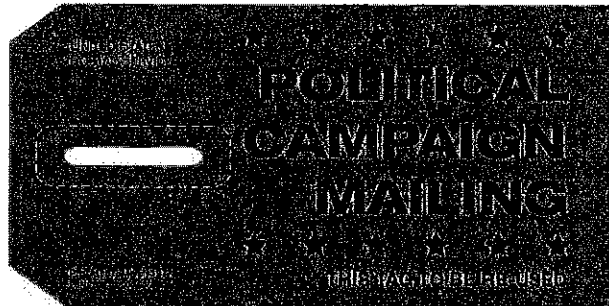
Identifying Franked Mail

Franked Mail, also referenced as Congressional Mail, is defined as official mail sent **without** postage prepayment, which can be utilized by Members and Members-elect of Congress, the Vice-President, and other authorized individuals. Franked Mail is identified by the facsimile signature of the Member of Congress in the upper right corner of the envelope or franked label, followed by "M.C." standing for Member of Congress, or "U.S.S." for U.S. Senate.

Franked mail can be sent as single-piece or mass congressional mailings. Most mass congressional mailings are sent from Washington, DC. Members of Congress may however, dispatch these mailings from Post Offices other than Washington, DC. Members of Congress occasionally enter mass

mailings at local Post Offices outside Washington, DC. Members or their vendors must submit a PS Form 3615, *Mailing Permit Application and Customer Profile,* to the entry Post Office when the first franked mass mailing is made there.

Franked Mail Envelopes - It is permissible for congressional offices to secure their franked envelope to various other envelopes or packaging when placing items in the mailstream. If such an item is identified, do not return it to the congressional office and do not detain it unless there is a question of mail security. Congressional mass mailings do **not** receive a PS Tag 57, *Political Campaign Mailing,* which is used to identify Political Campaign Mail. PS Tag 11, *Congressional Mail,* "Postmaster - Open and Distribute" is used on all sacks or trays of congressional mail. This tag helps identify the franked congressional mailing as it moves through the mailstream.
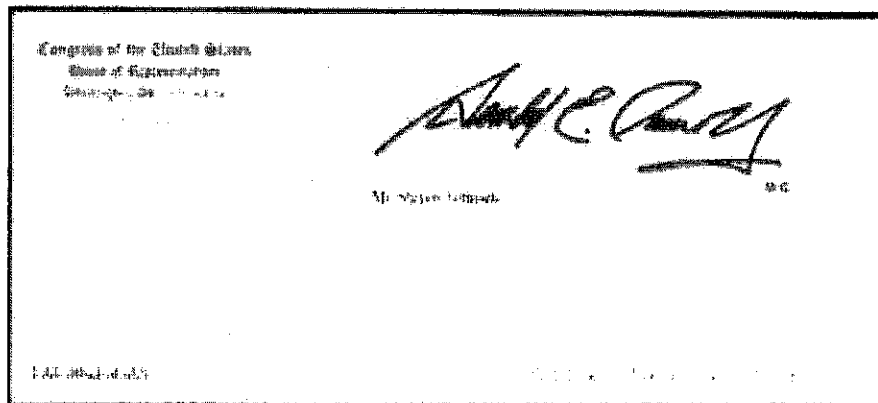
Example of a Franked Mail Envelope

Franking Blackout Period

With the exception of individual-piece mailings and those in response to a request, Members of Congress who are seeking re-election are prohibited from sending franked mass mailings during the designated "Franking Blackout" period before Election Day, whether for a primary, special, or general election.

The Franking Statute, Senate Rule 40, and the Franking Regulations impose the following limitations on mass mailings before certain elections:

- No mass mailings postmarked fewer than 60 days immediately before the date of any primary or general election for any federal, state, or local office in which the Senator is a candidate (except if the election is uncontested and no legal possibility for a write-in candidate exists).
- No mass mailings during the 60 days immediately before a biennial federal general election.
- No mass mailings of town meeting notices fewer than 60 days immediately before the date of any primary or general election for any federal, state, or local office in which the Senator is a candidate. There

is no exception for uncontested candidacies.

As noted above, this blackout period does not include individual-piece franked mailings. If you receive a mass franked mailing with PS Tag 57 in your unit, please contact your supervisor or BME Manager. If there re indications of abuse, local management may escalate the issue by making a copy of the mailing and submitting a completed Issue Report to the Manager of Customer Relations.

Detention of Franked Mail - Employees should be aware that Franked Mail is **not** to be detained. The Postal Operations Manual (POM) provides specific guidelines concerning how to handle this mail in response to an incident where a franked mailing was improperly detained. It is important that these guidelines are adhered to in order to ensure there are no delays when dealing with Franked (Congressional) Mail. With the exception of mail security, Franked Mail must be dispatched and delivered as addressed. If there are indications of abuse of the franking privilege, this must be reported to the Pricing and Classification Service Center (PCSC), who will in turn refer the case to the Postal Inspection Service and Government Relations, Headquarters.

Postal Service's Role in the Election Process:

The U.S. Postal Service is responsible for processing, transporting, and delivering the nation's Election Mail. We are committed to fulfilling our role in the electoral process when public policy makers choose to employ the mail as a part of their election system. We are proud to provide a secure, efficient, and effective way for citizens to participate in elections when officials choose to use the mail as part of the voting process. We employ a robust and proven process to ensure proper handling of all Election Mail, including ballots.

Election Mail/Political Mail Logs

All Political Mail and Election Mail must be logged through entire mailstream.
Political/Election Mail AM/PM All Clear Certification

The Postal Service requires all delivery units and processing facilities to certify, on a daily basis, that their unit is clear of all Political & Election mail committed for delivery that day.

Operational Clean Sweep Search Checklist Political and Election Mail

This checklist must be used by CPDO employees conducting ALL CLEARS to assist in their effort to clear all mail processing facilities of Election Mail and Political Mail on a daily basis is thorough and complete.

Any delay in processing Political Mail must be documented:

- Any delay in processing Political Mail must be documented using the Late Arriving Political Mail Report form and immediate attention needs to be given by communicating with the District Strike Team or Manager of Customer Relations.

Compliance Audit - Election Mail and Political Mail

The compliance audit is a self-audit that must be completed daily by the BMEU and Mail Processing.

Processing and Delivery Records

Managers, Business Mail Entry, and postmasters must keep documented records of all Election Mail and political campaign and message mailings that are deposited or received at their offices, with particular attention to those deposited or received too late for timely delivery.

Postmarking Ballots

All completed ballots returned through the mail should be postmarked/cancelled on our Advanced Facer Canceler Systems (AFCS/AFCS 200), Automated Flat Sorting Machine (AFSM100), or hand cancelled. Automated and manual postmarking operations should be spot-checked daily for correctness and legibility.

Each originating plant should keep a supply of manual date stamps to hand-cancel any return ballots that do not receive a postmark (or a legible postmark) during automated processing operations. 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. If a ballot already has a postmark, do not apply a second.

Every effort should be made to postmark any uncancelled ballots in the originating operation, including by hand-cancellation. If any non-postmarked ballots are found in the destinating operation after such ballots have gone through the originating operation, a postmark should not be applied to those ballots.

Military & Overseas Absentee Ballots

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 21 is 45 days before the November 5 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

Recording of Election Mail and Political Mail status

Each facility must record all delayed and on hand Ballots, Election Mail, and Political Mail in the mail condition system of record.

Election Mail and Political Mail Organization

Within Operations, each Division and Plant has an Operations Coordinator who will be responsible for their Division and Plant Election Mail and Political Mail processing operational issues that may arise during the Election Mail and Political Mail season.

1. Serving as Processing Operations Point of Contact for each Election Mail Strike Team

2. Communicating to all processing operations employees (consistent messaging)

3. Implementing standard operation procedures (SWI/Service talks)

4. Ongoing monitoring of inventories

DATE: January 11, 2024
NO: POMO-001-24   **Policy Tracking Number:** PO-001-01112024

TO: Regional VPs,
Processing Operations
Division Directors,
Processing Operations
Plant Managers, MIPS

Election Mail and Political Mail Operations Procedures

This Processing Operations Management Order (POMO) provides the updated procedures to be used for the Election Mail and Political Mail cycle.

The content of this document is intended to provide guidance to the field on the specific processing parameters associated with Election Mail and Political Mail. This document also provides instruction relative to processing, and distribution accountability and tools to monitor processing efficiency. In addition to some technical updates, this document includes the following material changes to the version of the POMO published on October 24, 2022:

>   Removing service talks from POMO and including link to access New logs for BMEUs and Plants to facilitate logging of Election Mail and Political Mail.

All Plant Managers must certify that they understand the requirements of this Election Mail and Political Mail Operations Procedures and acknowledge that this document has been shared with all employees in their facility and all parts of this document are fully executed.

/S Kristina R. Reynoso
Senior Director
Processing Operations Implementation

/S Jason R. DeChambeau
Senior Director
Strategic Planning and Implementation

E-SIGNED by KRISTINA.R REYNOSO
on 2024-01-11 21:51:35 GMT

E-SIGNED by JASON.R DE CHAMBEAU
on 2024-01-11 21:58:53 GMT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The USPS will play a critical role in the national election cycle. The purpose of this Election Mail and Political Mail Operations Procedure is to define and establish a nationally standardized procedure to receive, process, and deliver Election Mail, Political Campaign Mail, and Political Message Mail.

Identification of Political and Ballot Mail via the Tag 57 (Political Campaign and Message Mail) and Tag 191 (Domestic and International Ballots), respectively, are important components of our process. Both will require thorough and precise documentation of arrival and processing into our political mail logs.

General

The American electorate votes on numerous political offices and issues. Eligible citizens cast ballots every four years for president, every two years for one-third of the U.S. senators and all members of the House of Representatives, and at varying frequencies for governorships and other state, county, and local offices, and referenda measures. During the period preceding local, state, and national primaries, special elections, and general elections, the Postal Service accepts and delivers large volumes of ballots and other election related materials, as well as many political campaign and message mailings.

Purpose

The purpose of this Election Mail and Political Mail Operations Procedures is to define and establish a nationally standardized procedure to receive, process, and deliver Election Mail and Political Campaign and Message Mail.

Identifying Official Election Mail

Official Election Mail is any item mailed to or from authorized elections officials that enables citizens to participate in the voting process.

Use of Tag 191

The use of the green Tag 191 provides immediate visibility to ballot mail as it enters into our processing facilities. By identifying containers with this Tag 191, mail processing operations can ensure that ballot mail is identified and processed timely.
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.

Identifying Political Campaign Mail

Any material accepted for mailing at First Class Mail or Marketing Mail postage rates that is mailed for political campaign purposes by a registered political candidate, campaign committee, or committee of a political party is classified as a political campaign mailing.

Use of Tag 57

Tag 57 can be used for any political campaign mailing by a registered, political candidate, campaign committee, and committee of a political party, or a political message mailing by a Political Action Committee (PAC), Super-PAC, or other organizations engaged in issue advocacy or voter mobilization. By identifying containers with this Tag 57, mail processing operations can ensure that political mail is identified, and processed timely.
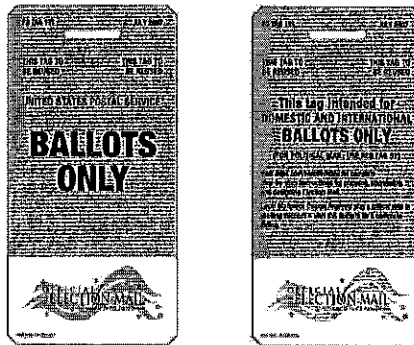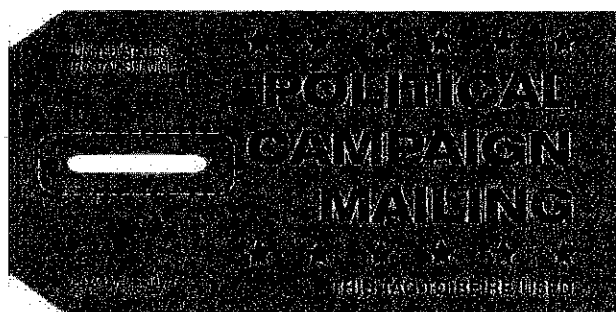

In addition, empty equipment must not be returned to a Mail Transport Equipment Service Center (MTESC) with a red Political Mail Tag 57 or green Ballot Mail Tag 191 attached. These tags must be removed from the tray/tub/sack as soon as the mail in the container is processed. Do not dispose of the tags; return them to the local Business Mail Entry Unit (BMEU) for reuse.

Identifying Franked Mail

Franked Mail, also referenced as Congressional Mail, is defined as official mail sent **without** postage prepayment, which can be utilized by Members and Members-elect of Congress, the Vice-President, and other authorized individuals. Franked Mail is identified by the facsimile signature of the Member of Congress in the upper right corner of the envelope or franked label, followed by "M.C." standing for Member of Congress, or "U.S.S." for U.S. Senate.

Franked Mail Envelopes - It is permissible for congressional offices to secure their franked envelope to various other envelopes or packaging when placing items in the mailstream. If such an item is identified, do not return it to the congressional office and do not detain it unless there is a question of mail security. PS Tag 11, *Congressional Mail*, "Postmaster - Open and Distribute" is used on all sacks or trays of congressional mail. This tag helps identify the franked congressional mailing as it moves through the mailstream.
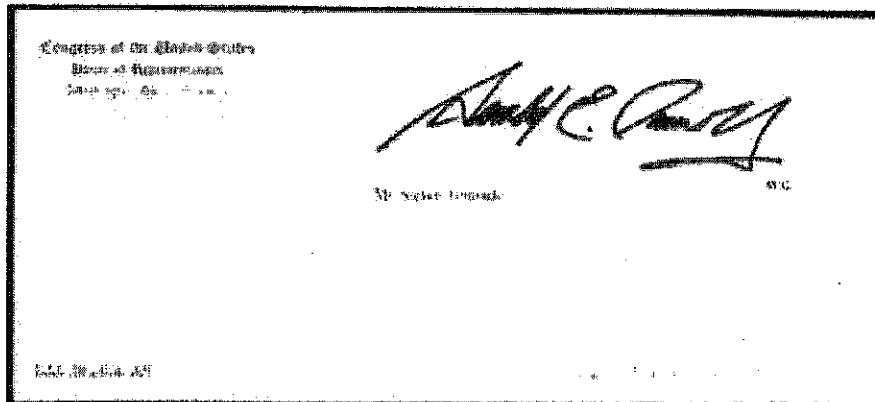
Example of a Franked Mail Envelope

Franking Blackout Period

With the exception of individual-piece mailings and those in response to a request, Members of Congress who are seeking re-election are prohibited from sending franked mass mailings during the designated "Franking Blackout" period before Election Day, whether for a primary, special, or general election.

Detention of Franked Mail - Employees should be aware that Franked Mail is **not** to be detained.

Postal Service's Role in the Election Process:

The U.S. Postal Service is responsible for processing, transporting, and delivering the nation's Election Mail. We are committed to fulfilling our role in the electoral process when public policy makers choose to employ the mail as a part of their election system. We are proud to provide a secure, efficient, and effective way for citizens to participate in elections when officials choose to use the mail as part of the voting process. We employ a robust and proven process to ensure proper handling of all Election Mail, including ballots.

Political Mail Log/Tracking Arrival/Clearance

- All Political Mail and Election Mail must be logged through entire mailstream.
- The Operations Supervisor, or employee, must sign the BMEU or Plant Log when responsibility for mail is transferred.
- BMEU and Plant Election Mail/Political Mail Logs have been updated and are on the Election Mail Website. All previous copies are no longer valid

- Forward completed logs to plant management.
- The Plant Election Mail / Political Mail log and other required Election and Political Mail materials are available at the Election Mail Website: https://blue.usps.gov/marketing/electionmail/

Types of logs

- **BMEU Election Mail/Political Mail Log**: Used by all BMEUs to log Election and Political Mail
- **Plant Election Mail/Political Mail** Log: Used by all Plants to log Election and Political Mail
- **Clean Sweep and All Clear certification** - The checklist must be used by CPDO employees conducting ALL CLEARS to assist in their effort to clear all mail processing facilities of Election Mail and Political Mail. The Postal Service requires all delivery units and processing facilities to certify, on a daily basis, that their unit is clear of all Political & Election mail committed for delivery that day. The reporting time frame is January 15th 2024 through November 30th 2024
- **Compliance Audit** - Election Mail and Political Mail. The compliance audit is a self-audit that must be completed daily by the BMEU and Mail Processing. Though this is a self-audit, HQ and Division may ask for copies of the last day's audit to review. The audit below is a sample of what is available on the file. This log can be found on the Election & Government Mail Services or the Political Mail Services Page.

Any delay in processing Political Mail must be documented:

Any delay in processing Political Mail must be documented using the Late Arriving Political Mail Log form and immediate attention needs to be given by communicating with the District Strike Team or Manager of Customer Relations.

Political Mail:

Late Deposit - Inform mailers of the potential for late delivery if they attempt to deposit political campaign and message mailings too late for delivery by the election date. Document and maintain this advice.
Report of Delays - Give prompt attention to any reported delay in processing or delivering political campaign and message mailings and fully document inquiries made and subsequent actions taken.
Utilize form below to document late deposit or late arriving.

Completing the Late Arriving Political Mail Report Instructions:

(See also SWI-Late Arriving Political Mail Report)

1. Late Arriving Political Mail is presented/discovered at your unit/dock.
2. Count how many pallets/sacks/trays that contain the mailing.
3. Make a photocopy of both sides of one mailpiece to attach to the report.

4. Record the findings of your investigation on the Late Arriving Political Mail report.
5. Attach the copy of the mailpiece to the report.
6. Retain the report in the unit.
7. If requested, provide a copy of the Late Arriving Mail report to the Mgr. Customer Relations for your district or, if a BMEU, to the Mgr. Business Mail Entry.
8. Mgr. BMEU or Mgr. Customer Relations (or their designee) - Contact the mailer to determine the disposition of the mail.
9. Plant – Work with the Mgr. Customer Relations for your district before contacting the customer.
10. Retain the report for 3 years.

When to use:

Beginning 10 days before an election notify mailers using **USPS Marketing Mail** for Political Mail that every effort will be made to deliver USPS Marketing Mail by Election Day. Beginning 3 days before an election notify mailers sending **First-Class Mail** for Political Mail purposes that every effort will be made to deliver First-Class Mail by Election Day. It is not necessary to document these conversations.

Timeframe for recording the Late Arriving Political Mail Report:
a.) All Political mail that arrives the weekend before the election.
b.) Political Mail that arrives the day of or after the election.
c.) Political Mail that arrives after acceptance hours.
d.) Political Mail found unattended on the dock.

After Acceptance Hours: Any Political Mail that a mailer attempts to enter *after* regular business hours must be returned to the mailer for entry during normal business hours. However, a scheduled drop shipment mailing must be accepted.

Mail found unattended on the Dock: When Political mail is found on the dock and the mailer is not available, secure the Political Mail and record this discrepancy on the Political Mail log for your site. In addition, report this mail on the Late Arriving Political Mail Report. Next, notify the mailer of the proper procedure for entering Political Mail during normal business hours.

Processing and Delivery Records

Managers, Business Mail Entry, and postmasters must keep documented records of all Election Mail and political campaign and message mailings that are deposited or received at their offices, with particular attention to those deposited or received too late for timely delivery. At a minimum, these documented records must include the following:

- The name of the mailer.
- A sample, photocopy, or description of the mailing.
- The date and time the mailing was received for dispatch or delivery.
- The Election Day deadline and, if applicable, the date of requested delivery.

- If applicable, the approximate number of pieces not delivered before the Election Day deadline and/or the date of requested delivery and the reasons why delivery was not timely.
- The approximate volume of any Marketing Mail consigned to waste upon instruction by the mailer.

In most cases, this type of documentation is necessary if inquiries are made regarding a specific mailing and if investigation of a mailing is required resulting from a service-related issue.

Processing and Distribution Operations Guidance on Postmarking Ballots
All completed ballots returned through the mail should be postmarked/cancelled on our Advanced Facer Canceler Systems (AFCS/AFCS 200), Automated Flat Sorting Machine (AFSM100), or hand cancelled. Automated and manual postmarking operations should be spot-checked daily for legibility. If not readable, cancellation must stop immediately until the issue is resolved. Work with Maintenance to address any problems. If the issue is unable to be resolved prior to dispatch, hand cancellation must be used as a contingency.

Each originating plant should keep a supply of manual date stamps to hand cancel any return ballots that do not receive a postmark (or a legible postmark) during automated processing operations. 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. If a ballot already has a postmark, do not apply a second.

Every effort should be made to postmark any uncancelled ballots in the originating operation, including by hand-cancellation. If any unpostmarked ballots are found in the destinating operation after such ballots have gone through the originating operation, a postmark should not be applied to those ballots. A destinating operation cannot reliably determine the date that a mailpiece was processed after the mailpiece has gone through the originating operation.

We can expect to process a high volume of ballot mail. 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 legible postmark. The following are areas to monitor and processes that must be in place and followed for each ballot mail type:

Ballots - Flats

- Direct to AFSM100 console with canceller capability.
- Manual Case: Postmark uncancelled volumes, including metered and BRM.

Ballots - Letters

- All Ballots must be processed and cancelled on AFCS/AFCS200.
- AFCS Bin 12 from Operation 004 must be rerun once, then properly handled as a manual reject. All ballots, including metered and BRM, must be hand-cancelled.

- Ballots from AFCS flat extractor must be hand-cancelled or flow to AFSM100 canceller.
- Trayed ballots must be processed on AFCS/AFCS200. **Do not take directly to DIOSS.**
- Manual Case: Rejects from the fine cull, flat extractor, and AFCS rejects must receive a postmark, to include metered and BRM.

Ballots - Priority Express/Priority
- All ballots must have postmark validated.
- Postmark uncancelled volumes, including metered and BRM.

Ballots - Irregulars
- Watch for ballots mailed in irregular envelopes.
- Postmark uncancelled volumes, including metered and BRM.

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

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.

Each facility must also **certify** that their manual operations have a **Round-Date Hand Canceller** and ensure that the date is updated correctly and verified each day.

Important: If a ballot already has a postmark, do not apply a second postmark. Every effort should be made to postmark any uncancelled ballots in the outgoing operation, including by hand-cancellation.

Military & Overseas Absentee Ballots
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 21 is 45 days before the November 5 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

Political/Election Mail AM/PM All Clear Certification

During the period preceding local, state, and national primaries, special elections, and general elections, the Postal Service accepts and delivers many political campaign mailings, frequently in large quantities. These mailings are sent by or on behalf of individual candidates and their campaign organizations, as well as by local, state, and national committees of political parties. There are also large numbers of ballots and other Election Mail mailed out to local and military voters, as well as ballot applications and completed ballots mailed by voters to their election officials. The Postal Service is responsible for properly handling this volume.

To ensure that we are delivering these mailings to and from the American voters in an efficient and timely manner, the Postal Service will be requiring all delivery units and processing facilities to certify, on a daily basis, that their unit is clear of all Political & Election mail committed for delivery that day. This means the carrier cases, clerk distribution cases, staging areas, the dock(s), the window area, all delivery vehicles, all processing areas and trailers need to be checked. **This reporting will begin nationally for all state and federal offices on January 15th and continue until November 30, 2024**

When required, ALL CLEAR certifications are to be completed as follows:

- Processing Operations AM Certification is due by 10:00 am local time.

Go to the Election Mail Facility Certification Blue Share page at this link:

https://facilitycerts.usps.gov/login/loginPrompt.cfm

Election Mail Tracking

The visibility of Election Mail will be vital for the election period. This is not only true for the USPS but for the customer as well. The ability to track and trace each election ballot will be of great benefit.

Internally, the two tools to ensure visibility are Informed Visibility (IV) and Mail History Tracking System (MHTS). If IMb or STID information is available for the returning ballots, MHTS will be used to determine where the ballots are in the mailstream and to diagnose problems that may arise during the ballot mail flow process. Each division should have an MHTS SME who can drill into the tool for appropriate mail flow diagnosis.

Each division should also have an IV SME who can drill into IV to solve specific Political/Election mail issues. IV has several reports with Political Mail filters that produce valuable data and performance diagnostics specifically for political and election mail, as shown:

IV with Political Mail Options

Mail Processing Service Performance

- Service Scores
- Tracking and Diagnostic Tools -Drill Down

Recording of Election Mail and Political Mail status

HQ Option lines will be turned on to monitor daily Political/Election Mail conditions at all facilities. The following rules apply (subject to change).

- ELECTION MAIL ON HAND & DELAYED VOLUME REPORTING
- POLITICAL MAIL ON HAND & DELAYED VOLUME REPORTING
- BALLOT NOTIFICATION & COUNT REPORTING
- LATE ENTRY ELECTION MAIL AND LATE ENTRY POLITICAL MAIL

Each reporting option will have a specific criterion for counting associated with it. ALL FACILITIES WILL BE REQUIRED TO REPORT. A negative report will be required. Below is a preliminary description of the option lines.

Election Mail and Political Mail Organization

Within Operations, each Division and Plant has an Operations Coordinator who will be responsible for their Division and Plant Election Mail and Political Mail processing operational issues that may arise during the Election Mail and Political Mail season. The coordinators will be responsible for implementing, monitoring, communicating, and acting as the liaison for operations with HQ and Election and Government Mail Services, and Customer Relations. The Operations Coordinators will partner with Managers of Customer Relations to resolve mail processing issues raised by mailers and state or local election officials. Other responsibilities include:

1. Serving as Processing Operations Point of Contact for each Election Mail Strike Team
   - Division Processing Operations Coordinators are primary points of contact for Customer Relations Managers
   - Plant Processing Operations Coordinators are local contacts for District Strike Teams
   - Advising District Strike Team of Election Mail and Political Mail issues

2. Communicating to all processing operations employees (consistent messaging)

   - Issuing standardized employee talks
   - Performance measurement results
   - Maintain/monitor problems/issues log and resolution

3. Implementing standard operation procedures (SOP/Service talks)

   - Utilizing past best practices
   - Refining processes where needed

4. Ongoing monitoring of inventories

   - Tracking entered volumes to ensure on-time delivery
   - Ensuring volumes can meet required delivery dates
   - Monitoring Election Mail and Political Mail tracking and performance via MHTS and IV

Certification of Communication

The following documents must be shared and communicated to ALL employees. Upon completion, each plant manager must certify that the SWI's and Service talks have been communicated:

1. Election Mail and Political Mail Processing Procedures (this document)

2. Operational Checklists

    a. Election Mail and Political Mail Audit Checklist

    b. Operational Clean Sweep Search Checklist

3. All Stand up talks at https://blue.usps.gov/marketing/product-solutions/electionmail/stand-up-talks.htm

4. All Mail Processing SWI's at https://blue.usps.gov/marketing/product-solutions/electionmail/standard-work-instructions.htm

This is a fluid list that will increase during the season. As new SWI's and talks are developed, the Election Mail website will be updated and will be communicated to all our Customer Relations Managers and Operations Political Coordinators.
Talks can be found on the Election Mail website:

https://blue.usps.gov/marketing/product-solutions/electionmail/welcome.htm