

## 4.8 Indicia

### 4.8.1 Approval of Indicia Design

The manager of Postage Technology Management, USPS Headquarters, must approve the design (type, format, and content) of all indicia that will be produced by a postage evidencing system. This approval shall include all elements in the indicium required by USPS regulations and the postage evidencing system performance criteria and applies to the entire area within the indicium boundary. [P030.9.1]

### 4.8.2 Legibility Standards

Indicia must be legible. Illegible or unreadable (unscannable) indicia are not acceptable as payment of postage. Should there be a need to place multiple indicia on an envelope (e.g., for redate or postage correction) the indicia must not overlap each other. Overlapping indicia are not acceptable as payment of postage. Reflectance measurements of the indicia and the background material must meet the standards in 708.4.3. [P030.9.2]

### 4.8.3 Position of Indicia on Mailpiece

Indicia must be printed or applied in the upper right corner of the envelope or address label. Indicia must be at least 1/4 inch from the right edge of the mailpiece and 1/4 inch from the top edge of the mailpiece, and must not infringe on the areas reserved for the FIM, POSTNET barcode, or optical character reader (OCR) clear zone. Indicia must be oriented with the longest dimension parallel to the address. When a FIM is printed with the indicia, the position of the FIM must meet the requirements in 708.9.0. [P030.9.3]

### 4.8.4 Physical Dimensions of an Indicia

The USPS controls what is printed within the boundaries of indicia. The boundaries are defined as follows:

- a. For letterpress indicia, the boundaries are determined by the dimensions of the printing die used by the postage evidencing system to print postal information. Licensees may obtain an additional printing die from the provider, often called the "ad plate," for additional text to be included when printing indicia. The ad plate may contain postal markings or other printed matter.
- b. For digital indicia, including IBI, the boundaries are defined by the right edge of the envelope; the top edge of the envelope, and the bottom edge and the left edge of any USPS-required indicium element printed by the postage evidencing system. A 1/2-inch clear zone, within which nothing shall be printed by the postage evidencing system, must surround the indicium boundaries to the left of and below all elements of the indicium. [P030.9.4]

### 4.8.5 Indicia Content

Unless otherwise approved by the manager of Postage Technology Management, USPS Headquarters, indicia must include the following information:

- a. The city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code of the licensing post office; the postage evidencing system serial number or PSD Identification number; identification of the provider; the date of mailing; the words "US Postage," and the postage amount.

- b. As an alternative to the city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code of the licensing post office, just the ZIP Code of the licensing post office; in this case, the words "Mailed from ZIP Code" may be added to the indicia. For letterpress meters only, the city and state of the licensing post office may be used without also including the ZIP Code, upon approval of the manager of Postage Technology Management, USPS Headquarters.
- c. For multiple indicia on a given mailpiece, information showing the licensing post office in each indicium.
- d. For digital indicia, including IBI, the class of mail and presort level.
- e. For IBI, the required data elements of the two-dimensional barcode or other USPS-approved symbology in accordance with the performance criteria for the given postage evidencing system.
- f. For meters and other postage evidencing systems placed in main offices, stations, or branches of the Postal Service, the indicia must include the capital letters "USPS." No postage meter or postage evidencing system placed in any other location may include "USPS" in the indicia.
- g. For special indicia, including date correction or redate indicia, postage correction indicia, indicia for APO/FPO, and indicia for prepaid reply mail, information as required in 4.9.4. [P030.9.5]

#### 4.8.6 Indicia Design Standards

Arial font must be used for all postal information in the indicia. The postage amount must be at least 10-point type size. When they are required in the indicium, the capital letters "USPS" must be at least 12 points. For all other required information, the type size must be at least 8 points. The mail class or endorsement, the postage amount, and the words "US Postage" must be in bold capital letters. Text identifying special indicia ("redate," "postage correction," "reply postage") must be in 8-point bold capital letters. The words "US Postage" must be the most prominent and conspicuous printed matter in the indicia other than the postage amount. [P030.9.6]

#### 4.8.7 Optional Postal Markings Included in an Indicia

The postal marking that may be included in indicia vary by indicia type, as follows:

- a. Letterpress indicia may include postal markings related to the class of mail and presort level, or ancillary service endorsement, in accordance with postal regulations. When placed in the ad plate area, only the postal marking may be printed, and it must fill the ad plate area as much as possible. All words must be in bold capital letters at least 1/4 inch high or 18-point type, and legible. Exceptions are not made for small ad plates that cannot accommodate a permissible marking.
- b. Digital indicia may include ancillary service endorsements. [P030.9.7]

#### 4.8.8 Optional Content Included in an Indicia

Other printed matter must not infringe on the areas reserved for the FIM, POSTNET barcode, or optical character reader (OCR) clear zone. The matter that may be printed is based on indicia type, as follows:

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- a. For letterpress indicia only, advertising matter, slogans, and return addresses may be printed with the indicia within space limitations. Licensed users must obtain the ad plates for printing this matter from the authorized provider. Ad plate messages must be distinguished by the inclusion of the name of the mailer or words such as "Mailer's Message." The ad plate must not be obscene, defamatory of any person or group, or deceptive, nor may it advocate unlawful action. The ad plate must not emulate any form of valid indicia or payment for postage.
- b. For postage evidencing systems that print digital indicia, including IBI, an approved indicium shall include within its boundaries only postal markings and text required or recommended by USPS regulation, except that the indicium may identify the provider. Other matter may be printed only outside the boundaries of the clear zone surrounding the indicium. Such printed matter may not be obscene, defamatory of any person or group, or deceptive, and it must not advocate any unlawful action. The printed matter must not emulate any form of valid indicia or payment for postage. [P030.9.8]

**4.8.9 Ink**

All indicia printed by Generation 1 postage evidencing systems must be printed with USPS-approved fluorescent ink. Failure to use fluorescent ink may lead to the revocation of the user's license. Generation 2 postage evidencing systems must use fluorescence to ensure that the mail is faced during processing, unless otherwise approved by the manager of Postage Technology Management (see 608.8.0 for address). Generation 2 postage evidencing systems that do not print with fluorescent ink must use an alternative USPS-approved method to ensure that the mail is faced during processing. Approved methods include use of a facing identification mark (FIM) for indicia printed directly on letter-size First-Class Mail or printing indicia on USPS-approved labels. The ink or alternative facing method used is specified in the indicia approval granted by the manager of Postage Technology Management, USPS Headquarters. [P030.9.9]

**4.8.10 Facing Identification Mark**

The facing identification mark (FIM) serves to orient and separate certain types of First-Class Mail during the facing and cancelling process. Letter-size First-Class Mail with IBI printed with nonfluorescent ink directly on the envelope by an IBI meter or a PC Postage system must bear a USPS-approved FIM unless it is courtesy reply mail. The FIM must meet the format, dimensions, print quality, and placement specified in 708.9.0. [P030.9.10]

**4.8.11 Adhesive Tape or Label**

When indicia are printed on adhesive tape or on a label for application to the mailpiece, the tape or label used, including the label stock itself as well as the use of fluorescent ink to print indicia and the format and placement of any fluorescence on the label stock, must be approved by the manager of Postage Technology Management, USPS Headquarters. Failure to use the label approved by the USPS for use with the system may result in revocation of the postage evidencing system license. The label must meet the following requirements:

- a. The label must be a pressure-sensitive, permanent label. The label is subject to the corresponding standards in 201.3.12.2 for minimum peel adhesion. The applied label must adhere well enough that it cannot be removed in one piece. A face stock/liner label (also called a "sandwich" label) must not be used for printing indicia for postage evidencing.
- b. The label must meet the reflectance requirements in 708.4.3.
- c. The label must be large enough to contain the entire indicia.
- d. Indicia printed on a label must be the same as the indicia approved by the manager of Postage Technology Management for printing directly on an envelope. The label must not include any image or text other than those allowed by USPS regulation, unless approved by the manager of Postage Technology Management.
- e. For labels or tapes applied to standard letter-size envelopes and postcards sent as First-Class Mail, the indicia must be printed with fluorescent ink, or the label must have fluorescent tagging that is sufficient to enable the USPS to face and process the mail, as verified by postal testing of each label design. The fluorescent tagging must meet a minimum fluorescent emission intensity of at least 20 phosphor meter units (PMUs), with a maximum of 70 PMUs. The visible color of the fluorescent tagging may be any color that meets the fluorescence requirements. The fluorescent tagging shall exhibit no noticeable change (i.e., no more than 10%) in its emission when exposed to elevated temperature and high humidity conditions.
- f. The label must be placed on the envelope so that the position of the indicium meets the requirements in 4.8.3.
- g. When a label is applied to an envelope that already has a FIM, the label must not cover the existing FIM. [PQ30.9.11]

#### 4.8.12 Indicia Date Requirements

The mailing date in meter indicia must meet the format standards in 4.8.6 and this section. The year must be represented by all four digits or by the last two digits. The indicia may be printed directly onto mailpieces or onto separate labels or tape affixed to mailpieces. The mailing date format used in the indicia is subject to the following:

- a. **Complete Date.** At the mailer's option, a complete mailing date (month, day, and year) in the indicia may be used for any Standard Mail or Package Services piece. A complete date must be used for the following:
  1. All First-Class Mail, Priority Mail, and Express Mail pieces.
  2. Any mail with Insured Mail, COD, or Special Handling service.
  3. All mail prepared with the indicia printed on nonadhesive paper (e.g., computer printer paper) and affixed to the mailpiece or used as part of an insert in a window envelope or similar holder.
  4. Prepaid metered reply mail generated by a PC Postage system under 4.9.4.



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- b. *Month and Year.* A mailing date consisting solely of the month and year in the indicia may be used only for Standard Mail and Package Services pieces.
- c. *No Date.* No mailing date may be used in the indicia for prepaid metered reply mail under 4.9.4, except for FBI generated by a PC Postage system. No mailing date in the indicia may be used for Standard Mail and Package Services pieces not subject to 604.4.8.12a.. [P030.9.12]

#### 4.8.13 Date Accuracy and Mailing Periods

The date or period when metered mail may be deposited or presented for mailing is controlled by the mailing date in the indicia as follows:

- a. *Complete Date.* Mailpieces bearing a complete date in the indicia must be deposited or presented on that date, except that pieces entered after the day's last scheduled collection from the licensing post office or collection box may bear the actual date of entry or the date of the next scheduled collection from the licensing post office or collection box. Authorized dispatch-prepared presort mail accepted after midnight may bear the previous day's date. If the mailer knows that the mail is not to be deposited or presented on the date in the indicia, the mailer must use a date correction indicia under 4.9.1. Prepaid metered reply mail generated by a PC Postage system under 4.9.4 and showing a complete date in the indicia may be deposited or presented for mailing on any date without date correction.
- b. *Month and Year.* Mailpieces bearing only the month and year in the indicia may be deposited or presented for mailing on any day during the month shown in the indicia and through the third day of the following month.
- c. *No Date.* Mailpieces bearing no date in the indicia may be deposited or presented for mailing on any date. [P030.9.13]

### 4.9 Special Indicia

#### 4.9.1 Date Correction or Redate

A date correction or redate indicium is required for any mailpiece not deposited by the date of mailing in the indicium as required by 4.8.13. Only one date correction indicium is permitted on a mailpiece. The date correction or redate indicium may be printed on a USPS-approved label instead of directly on the mailpiece. Formats are as follows:

- a. For all postage evidencing systems except PC Postage systems, a date correction must show the actual date of deposit and zero postage value ("0.00"). On letter-size mail, the date correction is placed on the nonaddress side in the upper right corner or on the address side in the lower left corner. On flat-size mail or parcels, the date correction must be placed next to the original indicium, except when applied by an Ink Jet printer on barcoded flats. The mailer may use an Ink Jet printer to correct the date in the indicia on mailpieces in barcoded mailings if the text, preceded by two asterisks and showing the actual date of deposit, city, state, and 3-digit ZIP Code of the mailing office, is placed above the address block and below the indicia. Alternatively, on flat-size mailpieces in barcoded mailings only, the mailer may use an Ink Jet printer to apply the date correction just above the barcode when the barcode is applied by an Ink Jet printer in accordance with 302.4.1.

- b. For PC Postage systems, a date correction or redate indicium includes only the actual date of deposit and the word "REDATE," instead of a postage value. On letter-size mail, redate indicia must be placed on the nonaddress side at least 3/4 inch from the bottom edge of the mailpiece and not on an envelope flap. On flats or parcels, it must be placed next to the original indicium. The redate or date correction must not include the FIM or the two-dimensional barcode. [P030.10.1]

#### 4.9.2 Postage Correction

Indicia for additional postage must be placed on a shortpaid mailpiece to correct postage. The postage correction may be printed on a USPS-approved label instead of directly on the mailpiece and must contain all of the elements required for indicia in 4.8.5. Formats are as follows:

- a. For all postage evidencing systems except for PC Postage systems, the postage correction indicium is placed on the nonaddress side in the upper right corner or on the address side in the lower left corner of letter-size mail. On flats or parcels, it must be placed next to the indicium.
- b. For a PC Postage system, the word "CORRECTION" must be printed in the postage correction and it must not include a FIM. On letter-size mail, the PC Postage correction indicium must be printed on the nonaddress side at least 3/4 inch from the bottom edge of the mailpiece and not on an envelope flap. On flats or parcels, it must be placed next to the original indicium. The postage correction indicium may be printed on a USPS-approved label instead of directly on the mailpiece. [P030.10.2]

#### 4.9.3 APO/FPO Meters

Postage evidencing systems used by military (APO/FPO) post offices must show the military branch and address format for each location (e.g., "ARMY APO AE 09102"). Exceptions are made only for postage evidencing systems used in fleet post offices on board U.S. naval vessels that may show the name of the ship instead of the standard wording for Navy meters (e.g., "USS SARATOGA (CV-60) 3407B-2740"). [P030.10.3]

#### 4.9.4 Reply Postage

Indicia generated by any postage evidencing system may be used to prepay reply postage on Express Mail; on Priority Mail when the rate is the same for all zones; on First-Class Mail cards, letters, and flats up to a maximum of 13 ounces; and on single-piece rate Media Mail and Library Mail, under the following conditions:

- a. The postage amount must be enough to prepay the postage in full.
- b. Indicia may be printed directly on the mailpiece or on a label and must be positioned in accordance with 4.8.3. An applied label must meet the standards in 4.8.11.
- c. Indicia used to prepay reply postage, except for IBI generated by a PC Postage system, must not show the date.
- d. IBI generated by a PC Postage system to prepay reply postage must show the date the licensee printed the indicium and must include the words "REPLY POSTAGE."