

7.0 Official Mail (Penalty)

[3-4-19] The term *penalty mail* refers to official mail, sent by U.S. government agencies, relating solely to the business of the U.S. government, that is authorized by law to be carried in the mail without prepayment of postage. For this standard, agencies are departments, agencies, corporations, establishments, commissions, committees, and all officers and authorities of the U.S. government authorized to use penalty mail. For information on the standards for penalty mail, email questions to the USPS Official Mail Accounting System (OMAS) headquarters at OMASHQ@usps.gov.

8.0 Balloting Materials

8.1 Basic Standards

8.1.1 Definition

Balloting materials include postcard applications, all ballot types, voting instructions, mailing instructions, and return envelopes.

8.1.2 Exceptions to Standards

An exception to the marking and verification standards in [8.1.3](#) through [8.1.5](#) may be granted for one of the following reasons:

- a. Ballots are mailed under [8.2](#).
- b. Ballots are prepared and mailed under [8.3](#).
- c. Ballots are returned under [505.1.0](#).
- d. A postage due account has been established to guarantee the payment of return postage.
- e. Prepayment of return postage is made by stamps, meter, or Permit Reply Mail.

8.1.3 Postage

Except for ballots meeting one of the exceptions under [8.1.2](#), balloting materials for any election, whether disseminated hardcopy or electronically, must indicate in a prominent location that the proper amount of postage must be paid. This information must be included in the balloting materials with the marking “First-Class Mail postage must be applied.” Alternatively, the marking “Apply First-Class Mail postage here” may be printed in the upper right corner of the address side of the return envelope. Approved versions will also be acceptable in either location. Election officials should consult with postal officials to assist with mailpiece design, barcode placement, and to determine the proper amount of postage required for mailing ballots to voters and the return of ballots to election officials.

8.1.4 Notification of Postage Requirement on Return Ballots

Except for ballots meeting one of the exceptions under [8.1.2](#), all ballot types for any election, whether disseminated hardcopy or electronically, must indicate in a prominent location on the balloting materials the specific amount of First-Class Mail postage required for return by mail to election officials.



703.8.1.5

8.1.5 Verification

Except for ballots meeting one of the exceptions under [8.1.2](#), each mailing must be accompanied by a complete sample mailpiece.

8.2 Special Exemption

8.2.1 Definition

Balloting materials may be sent through the mail without prepayment of postage to enable persons in the following categories to apply for registration and vote by absentee ballot when absent from the place of voting residence and otherwise eligible to vote as an absentee:

- a. Members of the Armed Forces in active service and their spouses and dependents.
- b. Members of the U.S. Merchant Marine and their spouses and dependents.
- c. U.S. citizens residing outside the territorial limits of the United States and the District of Columbia and their spouses and dependents residing with or accompanying them.

8.2.2 Eligibility

To be mailable without prepayment of postage, the balloting materials must be deposited at a U.S. Post Office, an overseas U.S. military Post Office (APO/FPO), a Diplomatic Post Office (DPO), or an American Embassy or American Consulate.

8.2.3 Between Officials

Balloting materials may be mailed between state and local election officials, individually or in bulk, without prepayment of postage. Packages of materials mailed in bulk must bear an address label as described in [8.2](#).

8.2.4 Elections Affected

Materials may be for any general election of electors for President and Vice President, or of senators and representatives in Congress, and other general, primary, and special elections.

8.2.5 Envelope

The envelope used to send balloting material and the envelope supplied for return of the ballots must have printed across the face the words “Official Absentee Balloting Material—First-Class Mail” (or similar language required by state law) in a rectangular box. Immediately below, the words “No Postage Necessary in the U.S. Mail—DMM 703.8.0” must be printed. Envelopes previously approved with the citation “DMM E080” must not be rejected. In the upper right corner of the envelope, in a rectangular box, the words “U.S. Postage Paid, 39 USC 3406” must be printed. An appropriate inscription or blank spaces for the return address of the sender must be shown in the upper left corner (see [Exhibit 8.2.5](#)).



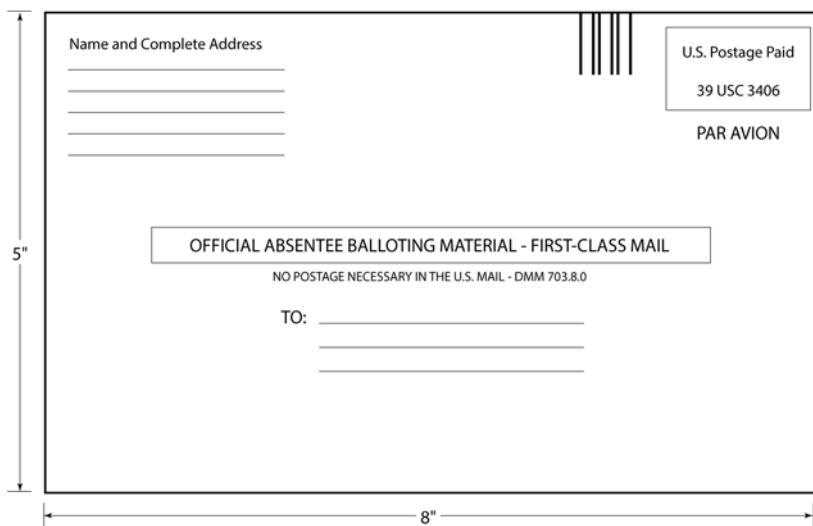
Exhibit 8.2.5 Balloting Material Formats—Envelope

Name and Complete Address _____ _____ _____ _____	U.S. Postage Paid 39 USC 3406 PAR AVION OFFICIAL ABSENTEE BALLOTING MATERIAL - FIRST-CLASS MAIL <small>NO POSTAGE NECESSARY IN THE U.S. MAIL - DMM 703.8.0</small> Address Line 1 Address Line 2 City, State XXXXX-XXXX ┌───┐
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8.2.6 Postcard

The federal voting registration postcard application must be approximately 5 by 8 inches. The design shown in [Exhibit 8.2.6](#) must be printed on the address side of the card.

Exhibit 8.2.6 Balloting Material Formats—Postcard



8.2.7 FIM (Facing Identification Mark)

The correct facing identification mark (FIM) as described in [505.1.5.8](#) must be printed on the address side of envelopes and cards.



703.8.3

8.3 Priority Mail Express Label 11-DOD

Absentee ballots may be returned by military personnel from overseas APO/FPO military locations using Priority Mail Express Label 11-DOD without the prepayment of postage. Ballots prepared with Label 11-DOD affixed for return by military personnel from overseas APO/FPO military locations are exempt from the marking and verification standards in [8.1.3](#) through [8.1.5](#).

9.0 Mixed Classes**9.1 Basic Information****9.1.1 General**

When mail of a higher price is enclosed with mail of a lower price, the postage on the entire piece is charged at the higher price, except under [9.2](#) through [9.6](#).

9.1.2 Concealing Enclosures

Mailers are subject to a fine if they conceal letters or other mail of a higher price in mail sent at a lower price without paying the correct postage on the enclosures (18 USC 1723).

9.2 Eligibility for Attachments of Different Classes**9.2.1 First-Class Mail or USPS Marketing Mail**

Letters or other pieces of First-Class Mail or USPS Marketing Mail may be placed in an envelope and attached to the address side of a Periodicals, USPS Marketing Mail, Parcel Select, or Package Services piece. Combination envelopes or containers with separate parts for the two classes of mail may be used.

9.2.2 Price Qualification

If a Periodicals, USPS Marketing Mail, Parcel Select, or Package Services host piece qualifies for:

- a. A presort discount, a First-Class Mail or USPS Marketing Mail attachment is eligible for the comparable First-Class Mail or USPS Marketing Mail presort price. The attachment need not meet the volume standard that would apply if mailed separately.
- b. An automation price, a First-Class Mail or USPS Marketing Mail attachment is eligible for the comparable First-Class Mail or USPS Marketing Mail price. The attachment need not meet the volume standards that would apply if mailed separately. An automation price may not be claimed for an attachment unless a similar automation price is claimed for the host piece. If the attachment makes the host piece incompatible with automation standards, neither the host piece nor the attachment qualifies for an automation price.
- c. A carrier route price, a First-Class Mail or USPS Marketing Mail attachment is eligible for the comparable First-Class Mail or USPS Marketing Mail price if every host piece for which the carrier route price is claimed has a First-Class Mail or USPS Marketing Mail attachment. The attachment need