

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

Subject: Mail Management

Purpose: Ensures that mail service throughout Reclamation is expedient, dependable, accurate, cost effective, and processed in accordance with General Services Administration, Department of the Interior, and United States Postal Service regulations.

Authority: 39 CFR; United States Postal Service (USPS) *Domestic Mail Manual* (DMM), and *International Mail Manual* (IMM); Federal Property Management Regulations, Subchapter A, 101-9, *Federal Mail Management*; and 382 DM 2, *Mail Management* and the *Mail Operations Handbook*.

Contact: Directives and Paperwork Management Team, D-7924

1. **Official Mail.** Letters, books, reports, maps, drawings, or other materials relating exclusively to the business of the U.S. Government are termed official mail and may be transmitted at Government expense through facilities provided by the USPS or other authorized carriers.
 - A. **Penalty Mail.** Penalty mail is 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 transmitted in the mail without prepayment of postage. (The name comes from the endorsement: "Penalty for Private Use.") Agencies must reimburse the USPS the equivalent amount of postage and fees due for the penalty mail service they receive.
 - B. **Personal Mail.** Reclamation mail services will not be used for personal mail. This includes incoming and outgoing and the use of internal distribution services. However, under special circumstances, a Director or Area Manager may authorize an employee to temporarily use an office address.
 - C. **Undeliverable Mail.** Every attempt will be made to deliver official mail. However, incoming bulk business rate mail addressed to an individual may be discarded if the facility cannot readily ascertain the name or whereabouts of the addressee. Bulk business rate mail that is obviously unrelated to Reclamation business may be discarded unopened and undelivered. Incoming First-Class mail that cannot be delivered must be returned to the sender, per the DMM.

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

- D. **Reclamation Mailing Addresses.** To facilitate mail routing within Reclamation, a system of alpha-numeric codes is used to represent organizational components and/or individuals. The mail code reflects the office location and the individual or group within that office. For example, in the mail code MP-1140, "MP" identifies the Mid-Pacific Regional Office; "1140" is the numeric code assigned to an individual or work group. To ensure accurate/timely delivery, the sender may include an individual's name following the mail code. However, personal names will not be used to form an official mail code.
- (1) **Address Changes.** It is the responsibility of the Commissioner's Office, each regional and area office, and the Denver Office to prepare a memorandum announcing any changes in organization names, mail codes, street addresses, or post office box numbers (this includes establishing/closing an office as well as internal reorganizations). This memorandum should be distributed to all Reclamation Directors with a copy to the mail facility in the Commissioner's Office, each region, and the Denver Office. It is important that this announcement be made as early as possible to ensure a minimum of disruption to mail service.
 - (2) **Office Directory.** Reclamation officials, organization titles, telephone and faxogram numbers, organization codes, street addresses, and official post office mailing addresses are listed in the Office Directory. The Commissioner's Office, each regional office, and the Denver Office will report any changes in the current directory to D-7921.
2. **Mail Carriers.**
- A. **USPS Mail.** Mail sent through the USPS is governed by regulations contained in the DMM and the IMM and will be processed accordingly.
 - B. **Private Carrier Express and Small Package Service.** Reclamation participates in contracts authorized for private carrier express mail, small package, and freight. As a participant in this contract, we are required to use the services under the contract and may not elect to use any other private carrier unless the contract carrier is unable to meet special requirements.
 - (1) Express mail should be used only for urgent mail; excessive use should be avoided. Generally, express mail should not be used on Fridays, weekends, or the day before a holiday.
 - C. **Alternate Private Carriers.** Alternate private carriers should only be used when paragraphs A and B above cannot meet the requirements (e.g., pellet shipments). In

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

no case, will a private carrier be used to transmit letter mail (official correspondence).

3. **Mail Facilities.** Facilities for receiving, routing, and dispatching all mail will be consolidated in each Reclamation office location. Official mail will not be received at, addressed to, or dispatched from the private residence or Post Office Box (PO Box) of an officer or employee except when authorized through proper channels as necessary to perform official Government business.
4. **PO Boxes.**
 - A. **Reclamation Mail Facility.** When a Reclamation mail facility needs a PO box, it may be acquired and rented on a quarterly or an annual basis.
 - B. **Individual Employee.** Reclamation mail facilities will be used whenever possible. However, if it is determined that an individual employee requires a PO Box, it must be authorized in writing by the appropriate local management official. Rental and use of the box must be necessary to accomplish Reclamation's programs. The PO Box must be rented under Reclamation's name, not the name of the employee. The PO box must be used solely for official mail; personal mail may not be delivered to this PO Box. Employees who have purchase authority may use their Government charge card for this purpose when rental of a PO Box is authorized.
5. **Mailroom Procedures.** Written guidance required by mailroom personnel varies according to the size of the office, complexity of the organization, and variety of official mail processed. Therefore, each mail facility is responsible for preparing additional guidance, as needed, to ensure consistent, effective, and efficient operation. This includes establishing mailroom hours of operation; coordinating mail arrival and departure with the local post office; and planning, organizing, and controlling the workflow within the mail facility so that timely service is provided.
 - A. **Safeguarding Mail.** Each mail facility will establish procedures necessary to safeguard proprietary information, information protected from disclosure by the Privacy Act, and security classified information.
 - (1) **Payments or Negotiables.** In each office receiving payments to the Government by mail, a mailroom employee will be designated to receive, record, and transmit the payments to the authorized Reclamation collection officer. Form 7-487, *Daily Abstract of Remittances*, is prepared and signed by the designated mailroom employee for remittances received. Once each day, the form and payments received are delivered to the collection officer.

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

- (2) **Official Personnel Folder (OPF).** OPF's transmitted through the mail will be sent "CERTIFIED MAIL." They should be packaged and securely sealed and reinforced in such a manner as to prevent damage of contents or mutilation of folder tabs. Each envelope or package containing OPF's should have "OFFICIAL PERSONNEL FOLDER" on the face of the envelope or package.
 - (3) **Receipt of Sealed Bid.** When an office receives a sealed bid in response to a request for solicitation, the bid should be sent **unopened** to the Contracting Officer. If the bid is accidentally opened, use form 7-2531, *Opened by Mistake*, to notify the Contracting Officer that the bid was opened inadvertently by the mailroom.
6. **Mail Service Provided by Contract Employees.** Contractors engaged by Federal Government agencies, either directly or through the Government Printing Office, who will mail official mail on behalf of an agency must prepare and mail such mailings in accordance with the requirements in this directive, the Departmental Manual, the CFR, and the DMM.
7. **Payment for Postal Services.** Reclamation pays for USPS services as follows:
 - A. **Washington, D.C.** Mail services for offices located in Washington, D.C., are furnished by the Department of the Interior under a memorandum of understanding.
 - B. **Denver and Regional Offices.** All offices use the USPS Official Mail Accounting System (OMAS). We must reimburse the USPS the equivalent amount of postage and fees due for the penalty mail service we receive. The USPS requires agencies to use penalty postage meters or other forms of direct accountability for penalty mail services to ensure proper reimbursement through OMAS. Prior to the beginning of each fiscal year each office using OMAS estimates its postage use for the upcoming fiscal year and supplies a cost authority for charge-backs. A Reclamation total is then submitted to USPS. The USPS then collects monthly payments equal to 1/12 of the estimate through the Online Payables and Collections (OPAC) system. OMAS provides a quarterly report of actual postage use. These reports should be reviewed by each office to ensure accuracy. At the end of the fiscal year, USPS compares costs billed with the estimated payments collected. Reclamation then receives an invoice indicating an additional charge or refund due.
8. **Authorizations.** Offices authorized by the USPS to use penalty mail must obtain licenses or permits to use penalty postage meters (see paragraph 9), penalty permit imprints, and penalty business reply mail (see the DMM for complete guidelines). Reclamation is assigned the following identifiers:

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

- A. **Agency Code.** An "Agency Code" is the 3-digit code that identifies each Federal agency authorized to use penalty mail. Agency Code 118 is assigned to Reclamation.
 - B. **Business Reply Mail (BRM).** BRM Permit No. 12849 is required on all Reclamation penalty business reply mail. Offices using the Commercial Payment Method must establish a commercial account at their local post offices.
 - C. **Permit Imprint Number.** Permit Imprint Number G-110 is assigned to Reclamation for penalty mail use.
9. **Envelopes.**
- A. **Envelopes for USPS.** Envelopes will conform to USPS requirements. Borders, markings, slogans, emblems, or designs will not be printed on mailing envelopes except when specifically approved by the General Services Administration (GSA) and when in conformity with postal laws and regulations. Names and titles of officials and names of offices are not permitted in the office return address. The words "Official Business" must appear immediately below the return address.
 - B. **Blue Envelopes.** Blue envelopes marked "SPECIAL ATTENTION MAIL to be opened only by _____," are to be used only to send official Government business materials subject to the Privacy Act and other materials of a sensitive nature. Blue envelopes are to be addressed with an accurate office name, including city and state (if other than the originating office), organization code, and, when appropriate, the name of the intended recipient. The sender's name and organization code will be provided in the upper left-hand corner. Blue envelopes are to be opened only by the individual or office addressed. During a named recipient's absence, the supervisor may open the envelope to determine the proper action needed.
 - C. **Messenger Service Envelopes.** Optional Form-65-B, *Messenger Service Envelopes* (holey envelopes), will be used for transmitting material which is not security classified or does not contain Privacy Act information.

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

10. Postage Meters.

- A. **License.** An office must obtain a license to use penalty postage meters by submitting Form 3601-A to the post office where their meters are set. The office must include their 3-digit agency code on each license application and may assign one cost code to each license (contact D-7924 to determine the appropriate cost code). Licenses can be obtained from the USPS per instructions in the DMM. When the license is no longer required, it will be canceled by the mail facility office for which the meter was obtained. D-7924 will be notified of license numbers being obtained or canceled.
- B. **Computerized Meter Resetting System (CMRS).** Under CMRS meters are reset electronically at the place of business by the meter manufacturer. After a meter is reset, the manufacturer must provide documentation of the transaction and the balance remaining in the account, or provide a monthly statement documenting all transactions for the period and the balance after each transaction. A copy of the resetting transaction will be maintained by the Reclamation office. A copy of the resetting transaction will be maintained by the Reclamation office.
- C. **Meter Security.** Postage meters will be secured (e.g., placed in a locked room, file cabinet, or locked safe) overnight to prevent loss or unauthorized use. Daily records of meter register readings will be maintained for each meter on PS Form 3602-A, *Daily Record of Meter Register Readings*.
- D. **Scales.** Scales will be checked regularly to ensure their accuracy.

11. **Penalty Mail Stamps.** Only those Reclamation offices with small mail volumes are authorized to use postage stamps on a routine basis. Other offices may use postage stamps only for special circumstances, e.g., to provide a customer a self-addressed stamped envelope used to facilitate returning documents to Reclamation. Penalty mail stamps will not exceed a 90-day supply. Stamps will be secured in locked safes, file cabinets, desk drawers, etc., or a locked room. Additional security will be administered as required.

12. **Incoming Mail.** All official mail addressed to the Bureau of Reclamation will be opened in the mailroom and stamped with a date stamp within 24 hours of receipt (it is recommended that this stamp include the phrase "Received by Bureau of Reclamation"). Blue envelopes, personnel and Equal Opportunity material, and any other sensitive mail, as determined by the local mailroom, will not be opened.

- A. **Priority Handling.** Priority handling is given to express mail, White House Mail, congressional mail, FOIA/Privacy Act mail, and facsimile messages. *Departmental*

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

Manual Mail Operations Handbook (382 DM 2.9) identifies items of mail requiring special handling.

- B. **Return Postage.** Enclosed stamps or self-addressed stamped envelopes supplied by an addressee may be used to return requested information. If the return envelope is not the appropriate size, a Government envelope will be used and the stamped self-addressed envelope returned.
 - C. **Postage Due.** Payment for official mail bearing insufficient postage will be made by mail meter strips or stamps in the exact amount of the postage due. Postage due mail received from the general public will be refused.
13. **Outgoing Mail.** Outgoing mail will be processed by the responsible Reclamation mail facility to ensure compliance with regulations and the most economical use of postal services. As much of the daily mail for a single address should be enclosed in one envelope or package as is practical, without overloading and consistent with postal regulations.
- A. **Records of Transactions.** Each mail facility will keep records of costs associated with mail metering and stamps, express mail, and other classifications of mail used. Records necessary for tracking purposes will also be maintained for controlled, express, registered, certified, and insured mail. [Refer to the *Information Management Handbook* (IMH) for retention guidelines.]
 - B. **Separate Enclosures.** When an enclosure is handled separately from its transmittal letter, the enclosure may be identified by a numbered enclosure tag, form 7-1601, and show the tag number as part of the enclosure designation at the end of the transmittal letter. The author should provide the enclosure tag.