

These reports identify areas of improvement including: the readability of the barcode, the incorrect use of '9999' or '0000' ZIP+4 Code, the make-up (presort) of the mailing, properly applied meter postage for First-Class mailings, correct piece counts (for permit imprint mail) and certain characteristics of the mail piece (height, length, weight and aspect ratio).

Be sure to ask the acceptance clerk for copies of these reports in order to monitor your mail quality.

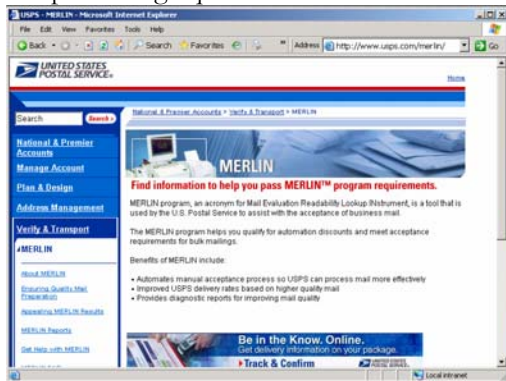
Sample reports and descriptions can be accessed on the website:

www.usps.com/merlin

RESOURCES FOR IMPROVING MAIL QUALITY

The MERLIN web site:

www.usps.com/merlin, has recently been redesigned and updated. The new site provides important information about the MERLIN verification process and, more importantly, tips on how to improve your mail quality and where to get help with your mailpiece design questions.



Mailpiece Design Analyst:

The mail piece design analysts (MDA) are postal employees specially trained to answer your questions regarding mailpiece design. MDAs can assist mailers in several ways:

- Review mailpiece designs to verify that they meet Domestic Mail Manual standards for discounted rate.
- Arrange for testing of a 25-50 piece sample on MERLIN to identify quality issues before a full print run is completed
- Provide technical assistance with barcoding and addressing standards

Your local MDA can be located under the “Getting Help with MERLIN” link on the MERLIN website and click on “Find a Mailpiece Design Analyst” link.

Manager – Business Mail Entry:

The manager, business mail entry can answer any questions about the MERLIN program or process, as well as assist mailers in their overall mail quality. The local manager, business mail entry can be located under the “Getting Help with MERLIN” link on the MERLIN website and click on “Locate a Business Mail Entry Unit” link.

Business Service Network:

Managed accounts may also contact their Business Service Network (BSN) representative if they have questions that are not addressed through other means. The local BSN can be located under the “Getting Help with MERLIN” link on the MERLIN website and click on “Find a Business Service Network” link.

www.usps.com/merlin/gethelp.htm

For additional help with MERLIN issue, you may send an email to MERLIN.usps.gov. A USPS representative will respond directly to your message.

ALL ABOUT THE MERLIN™ PROGRAM

IMPROVING MAIL QUALITY THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

MERLIN™ Program (an acronym for the Mail Evaluation Readability Lookup INSTRUMENT) is a tool that is used by the U. S. Postal Service to assist with the acceptance of discount rate mailings.

The Postal Service offers discounts for mailings that meet certain address, barcode and sortation standards so as to allow the mailing to bypass certain processing steps and expedite the mailing process. These special discounts are called ‘workshare’ discounts.

MERLIN allows the Postal Service to verify overall mail quality and apply appropriate customer discounts.

BENEFITS TO MAILERS

The MERLIN program helps mailers qualify for automation discounts and meet certain mail quality standards.

MERLIN can help improve the quality of customers’ mail production process and facilitates qualification for reduced postage rates.

- MERLIN provides a variety of reports that can help a mailer improve overall mailpiece design, barcode and presort quality.

Using MERLIN to improve mail quality can result in:

- Reduced mail production costs
- Accurate application of discount rates
- Increased consistency of mail delivery

YOUR MAIL AND MERLIN

When your mailing is presented for acceptance, it may be selected for processing on MERLIN. MERLIN will measure your mailing against the standards in the USPS Domestic Mail Manual for: the readability of the barcode, the improper

use of ‘9999’ or ‘0000’ ZIP+4 codes, proper make-up (presort) of the mail, the proper number of pieces (for permit imprint mail) and the accuracy of applied meter postage for First-Class mailings.

Additionally, your mailing will be checked for accuracy of the mailing address, compliance with mailpiece characteristic standards including: height, weight, thickness and aspect ratio, meter identification and dates, endorsements and rate markings.

For additional information on the verifications MERLIN can perform visit our website: www.usps.com/merlin

MAIL TYPES ANALYZED BY MERLIN?

Letter and flat-size mailings that fall within the following dimensions may be processed on MERLIN:

- Maximum Length – 15 inches
- Maximum Height – 12 inches
- Maximum Thickness – ¾ inch
- Maximum Weight – 16 ounces

WHAT IF I DISAGREE WITH THE VERIFICATION RESULTS

If your mailing has not passed MERLIN, and you question the results, you can request a second level review with U.S. Postal Service® acceptance personnel. If you are unable to resolve it, you may elect to appeal the results.

A Mailpiece Design Analyst (MDA), Business Mail Entry supervisor, or other designated USPS® employee completes the second level review. At the mailers request, the second level review may be conducted by the MDA, exclusively in the case of barcode readability errors. The MDA will review live mailpieces that

were identified with quality issues as quickly as possible; however there may be a delay if the MDA does not reside at your acceptance site. If local efforts are exhausted, you may appeal to the next level as follows:

Although Presort verification, First-Class Meter mail and piece count differences are usually resolved at the time of mailing, you may make an appeal through a general appeal process. The mailer may send a written appeal to the postmaster within 30-days. The appeal is forwarded to the Pricing and Classification Service Center for review and final agency decision (Domestic Mail Manual G020).

For barcode readability failures, upon your request, USPS® sends the sample pieces tested by MERLIN to a dedicated appeals site where the samples are retested on the MERLIN appeal machine. Additional postage (above original assessments) may be charged if the appeal results are lower than the initial results. If the appeal results are higher than the initial results a refund may be due.

For barcode digit string ‘9999’ failures, a mailer may request that the pieces with ‘9999’ ZIP+4 Code found in the sample be faxed to the National Customer Support Center (NCSC) for validation. The NCSC will respond to the origin site with the findings.

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORTS

When your mail is processed on MERLIN, you will receive a Summary Verification Report listing the results of each verification performed.

Additional reports will be provided if any quality issues are detected.