

# Picture Permit FAQ's

## General Program Information

The United States Postal Service® has introduced a new permit offering, Picture Permit Imprint Indicia. This service will be available for Full-Service Intelligent Mail® barcode (IMb) mailings of automation First-Class Mail® letters and cards and all Standard Mail® Full-Service IMb letters and cards effective June 24, 2012.

### **What is Picture Permit Imprint Indicia?**

Picture Permit Imprint Indicia (Picture Permit) provides commercial mailers the opportunity to include corporate logos, brand images or trademarks in the permit indicia space of First-Class Mail® Full-Service IMb automation letters and cards, and all Standard Mail® Full-Service IMb letters and cards. The addition of images to the permit imprint indicia has the potential of increasing open rates and enhancing the value of the mail.

### **Why is the U.S. Postal Service® offering Picture Permit?**

The U.S. Postal Service is responding to requests from customers to use their corporate logos, brand images or trademarks in the permit indicia space, to improve the open rates of their mailpieces. In creating Picture Permit, the U.S. Postal Service has developed guidelines, requirements, and specifications for the use of mailers' proprietary images in the permit indicia space of the mailpiece.

### **How will my company benefit from using Picture Permit?**

Picture Permit will potentially boost the visual impact and open rate of your mailpiece, which will improve the effectiveness of the overall mailing.

### **Who can participate in Picture Permit?**

Commercial mailers who plan to use a new or existing mailing permit to send presorted First-Class Mail Full-Service IMb automation letters and cards or presorted Standard Mail Full-Service IMb letters and cards.

### **How do I apply?**

Follow the instructions provided on the program's website: [www.usps.com/picturepermit](http://www.usps.com/picturepermit).

## Requirements

### **What are the requirements for Picture Permit?**

The requirements for Picture Permit are the following:

- Commercial Presort Permit Imprint
- Presorted Automation First-Class Mail letters and cards
- Presorted Carrier-Route and Automation Standard Mail letters and cards
- Full-Service IMb mailing
- Customized portions of the proposed indicia design must be in color, e.g., brand images, corporate logos and trademarks

- Required elements of the indicia may be in black, e.g., Class of Mail, U.S. Postage Paid, Permit Number, etc.

### **What mail is eligible for Picture Permit?**

The following types of mail are eligible for Picture Permit;

- First-Class Mail Full-Service IMb Automation letters and cards
- Standard Mail Full-Service IMb Carrier Route and Automation letters and cards

### **What are the required elements for the Picture Permit space?**

The required elements for the Picture Permit Imprint Indicia space are the following:

- Mail Class (in all caps)
- U. S. Postage Paid
- Permit Number
- City and State (ZIP Code™ optional)
- Company Name – May be used in lieu of Permit Number, City, and State if specific requirements per DMM 604.5.3.9 are met.

*These are samples only. The images are not to scale.*



Picture Permit is an enhancement for the indicia space; it does not replace the basic indicia elements. All existing permit indicia markings are still required, including the mail class, "U.S. Postage Paid," City, State, and Permit Number or the Company name in lieu of city, state, and permit number when using a Company permit imprint per DMM 604.5.3.9.

### **Is use of the Full-Service IMb required for Picture Permit mailings?**

Yes, Full-Service IMb is required.

### **Why do the images in the Picture Permit need to be in color?**

Black and white images did not perform to satisfaction in operational tests; therefore color images and logos are required.

## Who is responsible for the image in the Picture Permit space?

The mail owner has the responsibility for the image in the Picture Permit space. Images are not provided or endorsed by the Postal Service.

## Is there a fee to use Picture Permit?

Yes, there is a fee to use Picture Permit

- Fee for First-Class Mail Automation letters and cards is one cent (1¢) per mailpiece (plus applicable postage)
- Fee for Standard Mail Carrier Route and Automation letters and cards is two cents (2¢) per mailpiece (plus applicable postage)

## **Picture Permit Authorization Process**

Step 1: The mailer goes to [www.usps.com/picturepermit](http://www.usps.com/picturepermit) to review the guidelines and required elements and completes the online registration process.

Step 2: Once registered, the mailer will receive a link to complete the online Picture Permit application, (PS Form 3615-A) which requires permit indicia and other information. Submit the signed copy to [picturepermit@usps.com](mailto:picturepermit@usps.com).

Step 3: When the Program Management Office (PMO) confirms the application has been approved the mailer will need to submit a PDF copy of the addressed mailpiece (showing envelope/card dimensions, IMb, clear zone and proposed Picture Permit design) to: [picturepermit@usps.com](mailto:picturepermit@usps.com).

Step 4: When the PDF copy of the proposed design clears the initial PMO review, the mailer will receive directions to develop and submit 500 production samples which replicate what will be printed and produced in the live mailstream. The following information is required on each sample mailpiece:

- Complete and valid destination address. Do not use the same address for all samples – must contain a variety of valid addresses
- Picture Permit Imprint Indicia
- Full-Service Intelligent Mail barcode (IMb)

*Please mail samples to:*

U.S. Postal Service  
Attn: Picture Permit Program Office  
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW, RM 5621  
Washington, DC 20260-5621

USPS® Engineering will then test the designed mailpieces. The tests take approximately 45 days. Once the mailer passes these tests, the PMO will request a mailing schedule, including dates and volumes.

## What information about Picture Permit is available online?

The Picture Permit website will provide the following information:

- Program Overview
- Fact Sheet

- FAQs
- Picture Permit Product Requirements
- Picture Permit Technical Requirements
- Picture Permit Template
- Registration Link
- Program Management Office (PMO) email address

### **What is the website address?**

The website address is [www.usps.com/picturepermit](http://www.usps.com/picturepermit).

### **How will I know if my application is approved?**

The Picture Permit PMO will email your company authorization to move to the next step.

### **How do I contact the Picture Permit Program Office?**

Email: [picturepermit@usps.com](mailto:picturepermit@usps.com)

Mail: US Postal Service  
Attn: Picture Permit Program Office  
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW, RM 5621  
Washington, DC 20260-5621

Information and resources will also be posted online at:

[www.usps.com/picturepermit](http://www.usps.com/picturepermit)

### **Commingled Mail**

#### **Can mail be commingled for Picture Permit?**

Yes, mail can be commingled for Picture Permit.

#### **Does the commingled mailing need to be entered as part of a Full-Service automation mailing?**

Yes, the commingled mailing needs to be entered as part of a Full-Service automation mailing.

#### **Are mailings consisting of only Intelligent Mail basic price pieces (i.e. no Intelligent Mail Full-Service pieces) eligible for Picture Permit pricing?**

No, only Intelligent Mail Full-Service pieces are eligible for Picture Permit pricing.

#### **Can Full-Service and Basic Service automation pieces be included and qualify for payment of the Picture Permit fee within the Combined mailing?**

Yes, Full-Service and Basic Service automation pieces may be included and qualify for payment of the Picture Permit fee within the combined mailing.

### **Can Non-Automation mailpieces be submitted and qualify for payment of the Picture Permit fees?**

Yes, non-automation mailpieces can be submitted and qualify for payment of the Picture Permit fees provided:

- Machinable (presort) mailing are presented as a combined mailing and supported by electronic documentation and separate postage statement by client.
- Or machinable (presort) mailing may be presented as a separate identical weight presort mailing for just the Picture Permit pieces.
- Single-piece Picture Permit pieces may qualify for payment of the Picture Permit fee when prepared and presented in groups of 100 by ounce increment.

### **How are the commingled mailings submitted?**

The commingled mailings are submitted on eDoc (Mail.dat or Mail.xml) and the Mail Owner and Mailing Agent must be identified in the eDoc.

### **Is the mail owner required to be listed on the Customer Mail Report?**

Yes, the mail owner is required to be listed on the Customer Mail Report.

### **Does a separate postage statement need to be submitted for each Picture Permit mail owner?**

Yes, a separate postage statement needs to be submitted for each Picture Permit mail owner.

### **Do all of the mailpieces represented on the individual postage statement need to be 100% Picture Permit?**

Yes, all of the mailpieces represented on the individual postage statement need to be 100% Picture Permit.

### **Will Picture Permit piece counts be verified in conjunction with the Mail Piece Count Verification performed at time of acceptance?**

Yes, Picture Permit piece counts will be verified in conjunction with the Mail Piece Count Verification performed at time of acceptance.

### **Mail Service Providers**

#### **Can a Mail Service Provider (MSP) apply for Picture Permit authorization on behalf of mail owners?**

Yes, MSPs may apply for the Picture Permit as long as they have written authorization from the mail owner. However, the mail owner remains responsible for the images appearing on the Picture Permit space.

### **Permit Imprint**

#### **Is a mailing permit required to participate in Picture Permit?**

Yes, a new or existing mailing permit is required to participate.

## **Can I customize my existing permit with images?**

Yes, existing permit imprint indicia may be modified as long as it conforms to all Picture Permit requirements, including the application process.

## **How do I obtain a mailing permit to participate in Picture Permit?**

Complete *PS Form 3615, Mailing Permit Application and Customer Profile*, and submit it to the Post Office™ where your mailings will be entered.

## **Sample Mailpieces**

### **How many sample mailpieces do I submit for Picture Permit?**

Once your design clears the initial review, you will need to submit 500 production samples which replicate what will be printed and produced in the live mailstream.

### **What information is required on the sample mailpieces?**

The information that is required on the sample mailpieces are:

- Complete and valid destination address. Do not use the same address for all samples – must contain a variety of valid addresses.
- Picture Permit Imprint Indicia
- Full-Service Intelligent Mail barcode (IMb)

### **Why are a variety of valid addresses needed on sample pieces?**

In order to test return-to-sender and undeliverable-as-addressed automation capabilities, a variety of valid addresses are needed within the 500 samples. Without a complete and valid address, all pieces are rejected and therefore cannot be appropriately tested.

### **Why is testing required for Picture Permit?**

Testing must be performed to ensure the Picture Permit is recognizable and readable on USPS processing equipment. Many factors of the mailpiece, such as background color, paper stock, print quality, and surrounding images or text, impact the ability to process the Picture Permit. Testing has also shown that excess text within the Picture Permit area can be problematic. Even the color of the text and images within the Picture Permit area can hinder software recognition and processing, thus black and white images have been prohibited. Because of all the intricacies, the same Picture Permit can produce varying results when applied to different mailpiece designs. Successful testing and approval of Picture Permit validates that the mailpiece is capable of automation processing, which also enables visibility and anticipated response for the mailer.

Due to the complexity of the processing software and the infancy of the Picture Permit program, at this time we are only able to provide general technical requirements that have been proven acceptable during previous testing. Mailpiece design can significantly impact the processing of Picture Permit; therefore, all Picture Permit designs must be tested for recognition and readability to ensure proper, efficient handling and delivery.

**Where do I submit the sample mailpieces for Picture Permit?**

Submit the samples for Picture Permit to the following address:

U.S. Postal Service  
Attn: Picture Permit Program Office  
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW, RM 5621  
Washington, DC 20260-5621

**Additional Information**

For additional information on Picture Permit, please go to the website at [www.usps.com/picturepermit](http://www.usps.com/picturepermit) or email questions to [picturepermit@usps.com](mailto:picturepermit@usps.com).