

**Forest Service Handbook  
National Headquarters - Washington Office  
Washington, DC**

**Forest Service Handbook 6209.14 – Mail Management Handbook  
Chapter 40 - Classes of Mail**

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**Approved by:** F. Dale Robertson, Chief

**Date approved:**

**Responsible Staff:**

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**Digest:** Following is an explanation of the changes throughout the directive by section.

Revises entire Mail Management Handbook, FSH 6209.14.

This amendment is a reissuance of FSH 6209.14 to conform the format and structure of the Handbook to the requirements of electronic directive issuance.

This Handbook is now available electronically in the National Information Center in the same format as the paper copy. Henceforth, amendments to this Handbook will be issued to Forest Service units electronically on a document basis.

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## 41 - Mail Classification And Endorsements

Personnel involved in processing material for mailing must understand the classes of domestic mail and how domestic mail differs from international mail. See exhibit 01 for a summary of domestic mail classes.

All domestic mail not endorsed for another class receives first-class service and is paid at the first-class rate, with the following exceptions:

1. Unendorsed mail weighing over 11 ounces, but less than 16 ounces, is treated and charged as a third-class single piece.
2. Unendorsed mail weighing 16 ounces or more is treated and charged as fourth-class parcel post.

Pieces weighing over 11 ounces that require first-class service must be marked as "priority" mail. To preclude the necessity for judgemental decisions by Postal Service employees and to ensure the desired service is provided, endorse all flats and small parcels as "first-class," "third-class," "parcel post," or "priority" as appropriate (sec. 41.11).

Unless endorsed for airmail service, all official international mail is treated as surface mail and is reported at the appropriate surface rate.

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**41 - Exhibit 01**

**Summary of Domestic Mail Classes**

CLASS	WEIGHT	HANDLING OBJECTIVES	ENDORSEMENT
1st-Class	11 oz. or less	Third Day Delivery	"First Class"
1st-Class Priority	Up to 70 lbs.	Second Day Delivery	"First Class Priority"
3rd. Class	Over 1 oz. Less than 16 oz.	Same as 1st. Class	"3rd. Class"
3rd. Class Bulk	Over 1 oz. Less than 16 oz.	Speed not Essential	"3rd. Class Bulk"
4th. Class Mail	16 oz. to 70 lbs.	Same as 1st. Class	"4th. Class"
Special 4th. Class	16 oz. to 70 lbs	Speed not Essential	"4th. Class Special"

#### **41.1 - First-Class Mail**

First-class mail is handwritten or typewritten, including identical copies prepared by automatic typewriter and carbon copies of such matter. Computer prepared material is also considered first-class if it has the character of actual personal correspondence. The message may be imprinted on a postcard, sent as a self-mailer, or encased in an envelope or other odd-sized package. All first-class mail is wholly closed against postal inspection. Send all pieces of mail or material weighing 11 ounces or less first class unless they are endorsed to a lower class. Endorse such pieces "First-Class."

Handle first-class mail expeditiously and send by air unless ground transportation is faster.

##### **41.11 - First-Class Priority Mail**

Priority mail consists of first-class mail weighing more than 11 ounces. Priority mail provides second-day service and is available for mail weighing up to 70 pounds.

Use the "Priority" endorsement only on mail that requires expeditious handling and transportation and that weighs more than 11 ounces. Do not use this endorsement for large shipments of books and pamphlets; use third or fourth class as appropriate (sec. 41.2 - 41.3). To ensure that the Postal Service processes mail as priority, use the red, white, and blue TVVEK bags or stickers supplied free by the Postal Service. Mail not stamped "Priority" is processed as Fourth-Class mail.

#### **41.2 - Third-Class Mail**

This rate is for single pieces of mail weighing from 0 to less than 16 ounces. Mail merchandise, printed matter, circulars, and form letters as third-class. Use third-class mail when speed and expeditious handling are not essential. This mail is endorsed "Third-Class."

Keys and identification devices, such as tags or identification cards, can be mailed at the third class rate if they:

1. Are without cover letters;
2. Bear or have securely attached, the name and complete post office address of the person, organization, or concern; and
3. Have instructions to return the keys or identification device to the address and have a statement guaranteeing the payment of the postage.

#### **41.21 - Third-Class Bulk Rate**

Use third-class bulk rate for volume mailing of 200 or more pieces or more than 50 pounds, when fast delivery is not essential. Consult with the local Postal Service account representative for other limitations and requirements on this class of mail.

#### **41.3 - Fourth-Class Mail or Parcel Post**

Fourth-class mail consists of mailable matter not mailed or required to be mailed as first-class weighing 16 ounces or more. Parcels cannot weigh more than 70 pounds and cannot exceed 108 inches in length and girth combined. This is a low-cost mail category, with considerable savings over priority mail.

#### **41.31 - Special Fourth-Class Rate**

Articles mailed at this rate consist of books, printed music, bound volumes of academic theses, films, sound recordings, periodicals, and other library materials. Pieces require a "Special Fourth-Class Rate" endorsement on the address side of the package or envelope.

Consult the local Postal Service account representative for additional information concerning this class of postage.

This is a very low cost mail service and should be used when slower delivery times are permissible.

#### **41.4 - Library Rate**

This rate is available only to libraries, colleges, museums, and nonprofit religious, educational, and scientific organizations. The Forest Service is not authorized to use this postage rate on any mail.

#### **41.5 - International Mail**

Weight, size limits, and endorsements for international mail differ in many respects from those for domestic mail. Mail managers may contact the local Postal Service for assistance in determining foreign mail requirements. Additional guidance is found in the U.S. Postal Service Publication No. 51, "International Postal Rates and Fees."

#### **41.51 - Guidelines for International Mail**

1. Mail which is addressed to foreign countries that violate law or treaty stipulations is nonmailable matter; do not process such mail and return it to the originator.
2. Official mail dispatched from any foreign country requires postage applicable to that country.
3. Mail to individuals, firms, or organizations located in formerly or currently Communist-controlled countries requires special clearances (sec. 41.52).

##### **41.51a - Special Clearances**

Send mail to individuals, firms, or organizations in formerly or currently Communist-controlled countries to the Washington Office, International Forestry Staff for forwarding through the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS).

Publications and literature mailed to these countries does not have to be transmitted through these channels unless a letter is included.

#### **41.52 - International Mail Classes**

##### **41.52a - International Airmail for Letters and Letter Packages**

This rate provides the most expeditious handling and dispatching of letters and letter packages. The rate is more costly than other international rates and is not normally used for letters and packages over 4 pounds.

##### **41.52b - International Mail Using State Department Pouch Mail Services or Army Post Office (APO)**

All USDA employees serving overseas who receive their mail through the State Department pouch mail service must inform all their correspondents of their correct mailing address. Therefore, it is very important to use the following address on all correspondence:

Individual's Name  
Post Name or Address or APO  
U.S. Department of Agriculture, FAS  
Washington, D.C. 20250-6000

The Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS) handles and sorts all pouch mail going overseas to employees of the Department. Mail received from the USDA Central Mailroom in the morning will be sorted and delivered to the State Department's Dulles Airport Mail Facility the same afternoon.

#### **41.52c - International "Air All Other"**

"Air All Other" is designed for movement of printed matter. It is less expensive than either airmail or air parcel. It is the classification best suited for foreign shipment of most Forest Service material. It provides essentially the same speed and service as airmail for much less cost.

#### **41.52d - International Surface**

Use surface rate for material that has no time value. This is the classification best suited for foreign shipment of most Forest Service material when time permits.

### **42 - Special Mail Services**

#### **42.1 - Registered Mail**

The Forest Service has very limited need for registered mail service. It provides added protection for valuable and important mail. Registered mail is the most secure service the Postal Service offers. It incorporates a system of receipts to monitor the mail's movement from the point of acceptance to delivery. Use registered mail only when required by law or for matters requiring extensive security and protection, such as secret classified material.

#### **42.2 - Certified Mail**

Certified mail service provides the sender with a mailing receipt and a record of delivery at the addressee's post office. The delivery record is retained by the post office for 2 years. A "return receipt" is available for a fee in addition to the charge for certified mail and the postage cost. Use "return receipt" only when actual documentation is necessary for legal or contractual reasons since proof of delivery is available from the post office.

#### **42.3 - Special Delivery**

Special delivery service requires the last dispatching Postal Service office to expedite delivery during prescribed hours. Payment of a special delivery fee does not insure safety of delivery. Special delivery service moves slower than first-class mail due to special handling requirements.



#### **42.4 - Special Handling**

Special handling service is preferential handling for third- and fourth-class mail in dispatch and transportation. It does not speed delivery but just provides for special attention in handling.

#### **42.5 - Express Mail**

##### **42.51 - U.S. Postal Service Express Mail**

Express mail provides high-speed, highly reliable service for moving documents over long distances overnight for next day delivery.

Check with the local Postal Service office for availability of express mail services. Express mail is available when overnight movement is required to those cities served by the Postal Service. Do not use this service on Fridays, weekends, or holidays unless the receiving unit is open the next day for delivery.

When the Postal Service fails to make delivery the next day, apply for refunds of postage within 90 days from the date mailed. Submit the original copy of the mailing label with the application for refunds on Postal Service Form 3533. Submit the cover with the mailing label and postage intact showing the time and date of delivery.

Make all units aware of this refund policy and return the cover to the originating office if the package is not received by the next day.

##### **42.51a - Express Mail to the Washington Office**

Do not address express mail to the Forest Service post office box number. For Washington Office addressees, determine whether the addressee's office is located in the Auditors Building in Washington, D.C. or in the Rosslyn Plaza in Arlington, Virginia; address the express mail to either:

1. Express Mail for Auditors Building:  
Addressee's name, staff abbreviation, phone number  
USDA Forest Service  
Auditors Building  
201 - 14th St., S.W.  
14th and Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250

2. Express Mail for Rosslyn Plaza:

Addressee's name, staff abbreviation, phone number

USDA Forest Service

Rosslyn Plaza

1621 North Kent St.

Arlington, VA 22209

**42.52 - Commercial Express Carriers**

Commercial express carriers include such companies as Federal Express, United Parcel Service, Airborne Express, and so forth.

Do not use commercial express carriers for routine first class correspondence. Use such services only for small packages considered "extremely urgent" in compliance with Temporary Regulation G-54 to the Federal Property Management Regulations Chapter 101-40 (FSH 6409.31 - FPMR 101-40, Temp. Reg. G-54). This regulation defines a letter as "extremely urgent" when "the value or usefulness of a letter would be lost or greatly diminished if the letter were not delivered" under the conditions and timeframes set at paragraph 7a (1)-(4). Such timeframes for delivery range from close of business the same day to noon of the next business day.