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508 Recipient Services

Overview

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1.0 Recipient Options

1.1 Basic Recipient Concerns

1.1.1 Delivery to Addressee

Addressees may control delivery of their mail. Without a contrary order, the mail is delivered as addressed. Mail addressed to several persons may be delivered to any one of them.

1.1.2 Refusal at Delivery

The addressee may refuse to accept a mailpiece when it is offered for delivery.

1.1.3 Refusal After Delivery

After delivery, an addressee may mark a mailpiece "Refused" and return it within a reasonable time, if the piece or any attachment is not opened. Mail that may not be refused and returned unopened under this provision may be returned to the sender only if it is enclosed in a new envelope or wrapper with a correct address and new postage. The following may not be refused and returned postage-free after delivery:

- a. Pieces sent as Registered Mail, insured, Certified Mail, collect on delivery (COD), and Adult Signature.
- b. Response mail to the addressee's sales promotion, solicitation, announcement, or other advertisement that was not refused when offered to the addressee.

1.1.4 Mail Withheld From Delivery

An addressee may request the postmaster, in writing, to withhold from delivery for a period not to exceed 2 years any foreign letter or printed matter with a specified name or address on the outside.

1.1.5 Addressee Identification

If the delivery employee does not know the person claiming to be the addressee, delivery employees may withhold from claimants certain mail pending presentation of an acceptable primary form of identification as specified under [608.10.3](#), or if suitable under [6.0](#) for general delivery.

1.1.6 Remailing Returned Mail

Generally, a returned mailpiece that was undeliverable-as-addressed or refused by the addressee may not be remailed unless it is placed in a new envelope or wrapper with a correct address and new postage. A returned shortpaid mailpiece can have the necessary additional postage affixed to the original piece and does not have to be placed in a new envelope or wrapper.

1.1.7 Priority Mail Express and Accountable Mail

The following conditions also apply to the delivery of Priority Mail Express, Registered Mail, Certified Mail, mail insured for more than \$500.00, Adult Signature, or COD, as well as mail for which a return receipt is requested or the sender has specified restricted delivery.

- a. The addressee (or representative) may obtain the sender's name and address while held by the USPS employee before accepting delivery and endorsing the delivery receipt.
- b. Unless an electronic signature is used as described in [503.1.8a](#), a mailpiece may not be opened or given to the recipient before the recipient signs and legibly prints his or her name on the applicable form or label and returns the form or label to the USPS employee.
- c. An acceptable primary form of identification as specified under [608.10.3](#) may be required of the recipient before delivery of the mailpiece.
- d. When delivery is not restricted at the sender's request, mail addressed to a person at a hotel, apartment house, etc., may be delivered to any person in a position to whom mail for that location is usually delivered.
- e. USPS responsibility ends when the mailpiece is delivered to the addressee (or another party, subject to [1.0](#)).
- f. A notice is provided to the addressee for a mailpiece that cannot be delivered. If the piece is not called for or redelivery is not requested, the piece is returned to the sender after 15 days (5 days for Priority Mail Express, 10 days for COD), unless the sender specifies fewer days on the piece.
- g. A hand stamp approved by the Postmaster may be used by the addressee (or authorized agent) to provide the signature and name of the individual or organization receiving the mailpiece as follows:

1. The hand stamp imprint must fit within the Signature and Printed Name blocks on Form 3849, without overlapping into other sections.
2. To obtain approval for a hand stamp, the company must submit a written statement to the postmaster that the person whose name appears on the stamp is authorized to accept accountable mail, accompanied by a sample of the authorized employee's signature. After approval, the documentation is held by the postmaster and the stamped signature and name are acceptable only if a legible impression is provided within the Signature and Printed Name blocks on Form 3849.
3. For mail addressed only to a federal or state official, the stamp need show only the name and location of the accepting organization. In these cases, the stamp imprint must fit within the Printed Name and Delivery Address block of Form 3849 without overlapping into other sections.

1.1.8 Additional Delivery Standards for Restricted Delivery

In addition to following standards specified under [1.1.7](#), postal employees must deliver mail marked "Restricted Delivery" only to the addressee or person authorized in writing as the addressee's agent and under the following conditions: (Note: USPS may require an acceptable primary form of identification as specified under [608.10.3](#) from the addressee or agent receiving the mail.)

- a. Mail for famous personalities and executives of large organizations is normally delivered to an agent authorized to sign for such mail.
- b. Mail for officials of executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the government of the United States or of the states and possessions and their political subdivisions, or to members of the diplomatic corps, may be delivered to a person authorized by the addressee or by regulations or procedures of the agency or organization to receive the addressee's mail.
- c. Mail for the commander or other officials of military organizations by name and title, is delivered to the unit mail clerk, mail orderly, postal clerk, assistant postal clerk, or postal finance clerk, when such individuals are designated on DD (Department of Defense) Form 285 to receipt for all mail addressed to the units for which they are designated. If the person accepting mail is designated on DD Form 285 to receipt for ordinary mail only, then restricted delivery mail addressed to the commander, or other official by name and title, is delivered to the mail clerk only if authorized by the addressee.
- d. Mail for an inmate of a city, state, or federal penal institution, in cases where a personal signature cannot be obtained, is delivered to the warden or designee.
- e. Mail for minors or persons under guardianship may be delivered to their parents or guardians.
- f. An addressee who regularly receives restricted delivery mail may authorize an agent on Form 3801 or by letter to the Postmaster and must include the notation "this authorization is extended to include restricted delivery (or Adult Signature Restricted Delivery) mail". Form 3849 also may be used for the authorization, if the Post Office has no standing delivery

order or letter on file, when the addressee enters the name of the agent on the back of Form 3849 in the space provided and signs the form. The agent must sign for receipt of the article on the back of the form.

- g. When mail is addressed to two or more persons jointly, all addressees or their agents must be present to accept delivery together. The delivery receipt obtained and the return receipt, if any, must be signed by all joint addressees or their agents. The mail may then be delivered to any of the addressees or their agents unless one or more addressees or their agents object, in which case delivery is not made until all the addressees or their agents sign a statement designating who is to receive the mail.
- h. Either person may sign for mail addressed to one person in care of another (i.e. "In Care Of").

1.2 Carrier Release Endorsement for Parcels

The carrier release endorsement "CARRIER—LEAVE IF NO RESPONSE" instructs carriers to leave the parcel if no one is available to accept the parcel or when the addressee has filed a written order to allow a carrier to leave the parcel. A parcel may be left in an unprotected location, such as a stairway or uncovered porch, only when it bears the "CARRIER—LEAVE IF NO RESPONSE" endorsement. The endorsement must appear directly to the left of the postage area (preferred) or directly below the return address as specified in [102.4.1](#) and [202.4.3](#). A carrier release endorsement may be used on only:

- a. Uninsured parcels
- b. Parcels which do not require a signature

1.3 Jointly Addressed

For mail that is jointly addressed:

- a. Such as "Mr. and Mrs. John Doe," or "John and Jim Doe," neither party is entitled to control delivery of such mail over the objection of the other.
- b. To husbands or wives, neither party may control delivery of mail addressed to the other.

1.4 Delivery to Addressee's Agent

1.4.1 Basic Standard

Unless otherwise directed, an addressee's mail may be delivered to an employee, to a competent member of the addressee's family, or to any person authorized to represent the addressee. A person or several persons may designate another to receive their mail.

1.4.2 Minor

A minor's guardian may control delivery of mail addressed to the minor. If there is no guardian and the minor is unmarried, either parent may receive delivery of the minor's mail.

1.4.3 Incompetent Person

Mail may be delivered under the order of the guardian or conservator for a person legally declared incompetent. If there is no legal representative, the mail is delivered as addressed.

1.4.4 Deceased Person

Mail addressed to a deceased person may be received at the address of the deceased by anyone who would normally receive the addressee's mail at that address. The mail may also be forwarded to a different address, such as that of an appointed executor or administrator, if an order of request is filed at the Post Office.

1.5 Delivery to Individual at Organization

1.5.1 To Address

All mail addressed to a governmental or nongovernmental organization or to an individual by name or title at the address of the organization is delivered to the organization, as is similarly addressed mail for former officials, employees, contractors, agents, etc. If disagreement arises where any such mail should be delivered, it must be delivered under the order of the organization's president or equivalent official.

1.5.2 Not to Address

Mail addressed to a governmental or nongovernmental official by title or by organization name, but not to the address of the organization, is delivered to the organization if the organization so directs.

1.6 Delivery at Hotels, Institutions, Schools, and Similar Places

1.6.1 Patient or Inmate

Mail addressed to a patient or inmate at an institution is delivered to the institution authorities. If the addressee is no longer at that address, the mail must be redirected to the current address, if known, or endorsed appropriately and returned by the institution to the Post Office.

1.6.2 Hotel or School

Mail addressed to a person at a hotel, school, or similar place is delivered to the hotel, school, etc. If the addressee is no longer at that address, the mail must be redirected to the current address, if known, or endorsed appropriately and returned by the institution to the Post Office.

1.6.3 Prisoner