
A Beginner's Overview to IMb™ Services

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Version 7

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Change Log

Change Log – Version 7

- Page 12: Corrected 4x7 label to include second line 2010-06-24

Introduction

This Overview contains fundamental information on what IMb services offer and require, Intelligent Mail barcodes and their benefits, the two service level options being offered, how to get started with IMb services and where to find additional resources to help you.

This Overview contains the following sections:

- What are IMb services?
- Barcodes: past, present and future
- The IMb
 - The IMb for mailpieces
 - Data fields in the IMb for Mailpieces
- IMb services options
 - Basic option
 - Full-Service option
 - The IMb tray barcode
 - Data Fields in the IMb tray barcode
 - The IMb container barcode
 - Data Fields in the IMb container barcode
 - Electronic Documentation (eDoc)
 - General Information
 - *PostalOne!* Requirements
 - Postal Wizard
 - Mail.dat
 - Mail.XML
 - FAST (Facilities Access & Shipment Tracking) appointment scheduling
- Summary of IMb services benefits
- Getting started with the IMb
- Resources available to help you
 - Detailed information on the Basic and Full-Service options
 - The [RIBBS](#) Website
 - Technical help for Intelligent Mail barcodes
 - Barcode scanning and verification tools
 - Additional sites, links and sources

What are IMb Services?

IMb services offer mailers the Postal Service's next-generation mail delivery information processing. IMb services are built around barcode formats to be used on mailpieces, handling units (trays and sacks) and containers (pallets, et al.). As explained in detail over the next several pages, these Intelligent Mail barcodes carry more information and enable more services than the barcodes used today.

The chart below outlines the progress dates for the IMb service options.

Date	Initiatives
November 29, 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Began discounts for Full-Service option• <i>PostalOne!</i> supports Mail.XML electronic documentation
May 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• POSTNET barcode eliminated for automation prices• PLANET Code eliminated• Transition to Intelligent Mail barcode complete<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes reply mail

Barcodes: Past, Present and Future

Over the years, the Postal Service has continuously worked to develop new technology and drive improvements in service and efficiency. The first major achievement in this effort was the **POSTNET barcode**, which was developed in the early 1980s by the Postal Service to encode ZIP Code or “routing”, information on mailpieces for sorting by automation equipment. The POSTNET barcode uses a series of half- and full-height bars to represent the ZIP Code, a check-digit, and framing bars at the beginning and end of the barcode. The length of the POSTNET barcode can vary depending on the length of the routing code present (5, 9 or 11 digits).

In the 1990s, the USPS created Confirm service – a subscription-based service to allow mailers to track their mailpieces through the postal system. The Confirm program requires the use of a second, separate barcode to be printed on the mailpiece called the **PLANET Code**.

Over time, the USPS introduced the **10-digit barcoded tray label**, which uses an interleaved 2-of-5 barcode for routing purposes on tray/sack labels.

As the next step in the evolution of the USPS automation initiative, the Postal Service has introduced a suite of **Intelligent Mail barcodes**. The Intelligent Mail barcode consolidates all of the previous barcode formats into one and can be used to uniquely identify:

- Mailpieces – letters and flats
- Handling Units (trays and sacks)
- Containers [pallets, all-purpose containers (APCs), etc.].

Intelligent Mail barcodes are information-rich. For example, the POSTNET barcode only includes delivery point routing information. As explained in more detail below, the Intelligent Mail barcode for mailpieces holds significantly more data and includes additional fields that can allow mailers to uniquely identify each mailpiece in a mailing. Intelligent Mail barcodes facilitate feedback about the mailpiece, allow for USPS service performance measurement, and make it possible to use the mail in a much smarter way.

IMb Service Options

The Postal Service offers two IMb service options for mailers: Basic and Full-Service. The requirements and benefits of each are outlined below.

Two Options	Basic	Full-Service
IMb on mailpiece	Required – does not need to be unique	Required - Unique
IMb tray barcode on labels	Optional	Required - Unique
IMb container barcode on placards	Optional	Required - Unique
Electronic documentation	Optional	Required
Start-the-Clock	NA	Available
Full-Service ACS (address change information)	NA	Available

Basic Option

Mailpiece Barcodes

Under the Basic option, a maximum 31-digit IMb comprising the Barcode ID, Service Type Identifier, Mailer ID, Serial Number and Routing Code will be required on all letters and flats.

Tray and Container Barcodes

The Basic option does not require the use of IMb tray labels or container placards. Use of these formats is optional. When used, a Mailer ID (MID) is required, but the Serial Number does not have to be unique.

Full-Service Option

There are several requirements a mailer must meet in order to comply with the Full-Service option:

1. Unique Mailpiece Barcodes. A maximum 31-digit IMb (described in detail below) consists of 65 bars and five fields: Barcode ID, Service Type Identifier (STID), Mailer ID, Serial Number and Routing Code. A Full-Service IMb is required on letters and flats. The barcode must be unique for a period of 45 days based on the postage statement mailing date provided by the mailer in the CSM file in Mail.dat, the Postage Statement Create Request in Mail.XML, or the postage statement mailing date in Postal Wizard. The combination of the Mailer ID and the Serial Number determines uniqueness within the class of mail indicated by the STID.
2. Unique Tray Barcodes. A 24-digit IMb tray barcode is required on all letter trays, flat trays and sacks. This barcode consists of six fields: routing information (destination ZIP Code), Content Identifier Number (CIN), Processing Code, Mailer ID, unique serial number, and the Label type. The barcode must be unique for a period of 45 days based on the postage statement mailing date provided by the mailer in the CSM file in Mail.dat, the Postage Statement Create Request in Mail.XML, or the postage statement mailing date in Postal Wizard. The entire 24 digits are used to determine uniqueness.
3. Unique Container Barcodes. A 21-digit Intelligent Mail container barcode is required on all pallets, APCs, rolling stock, pallet boxes, etc. This barcode consists of: Application ID (*always* 99), Type ID (*always* M), Mailer ID, and unique serial number. The barcode must be unique for a period of 45 days based on the postage statement mailing date provided by the mailer in the CSM file in Mail.dat, the Postage Statement Create Request in Mail.XML, or the postage statement mailing date in Postal Wizard. The entire 21 digits are used to determine uniqueness.
4. Electronic Documentation (eDoc). Mailers are required to submit their postage statements and mailing documentation electronically to the *PostalOne!* system using one of the following three methods: Mail.dat, Mail.XML, or Postal Wizard.
5. FAST (Facility Access and Shipment Tracking). Mailers are required to schedule appointments using the FAST system for drop-ship mailings and all mailer-transported, origin-entered mail verified at a detached mail unit (DMU).
6. Barcode uniqueness is an important aspect of the Full-Service option; however, there are two exceptions to the unique serial number requirement for Full-Service letters and flats mailpieces. Both exceptions exist for mailings under 10,000 pieces that either:
 - Have postage affixed to each piece at the correct price - or -
 - Contain pieces of identical weight that are separated by price.

With Postal Service approval, mailings that qualify for one of these exceptions may be permitted to use the same number on all mailpieces, although that number cannot be reused for a period of 45 days from the postage statement mailing date provided by the mailer in the CSM file in Mail.dat, the Postage Statement Create Request in Mail.XML, or the postage statement mailing date in Postal Wizard.

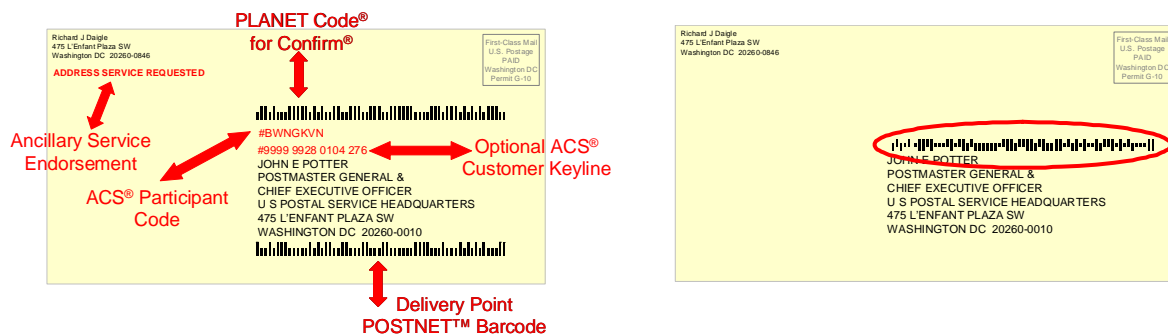
Under the Full-Service option, mail owners may use their own 6-digit or 9-digit Mailer ID and unique serial numbers for mailpieces or they may allow mail preparers to provide the Mailer ID and manage uniqueness. We encourage mail owners to use their own Mailer IDs in the Intelligent Mail barcode.

The IMb

The IMb for mailpieces includes the same routing information as the POSTNET barcode, but with four new data fields added. These additional fields enable a mailer to combine several pieces of text-based information into one barcode line.

In the diagram below you will see how the IMb is more compact and has all the necessary information in one line providing for a much cleaner looking mailpiece with more 'real estate' available for mail owners to use as they see fit. The mailpiece on the right uses the IMb to combine data from five sources on the left:

- PLANET Code
- Traditional ACS Participant ID
- Optional Traditional ACS Mailer's Keyline
- POSTNET barcode
- Ancillary service endorsement (First-Class Mail letters only)



Mailpieces with POSTNET, Planet, and Intelligent Mail barcodes.

Printing

The placement of these barcodes is different for letters and flats.

Letters typically have the barcode in either the address block or the lower right corner (the barcode clear zone.) When placed in the address block, the IMb can be above or below the address. In those instances where there is more than one barcode, the one in the lower right corner takes precedence. If two barcodes are present, only one barcode's data is utilized by the Postal Service.

Flats can only have one barcode on the piece, since the entire surface is considered one read area. Barcodes on flat-size mailpieces must be at least 1/8" from the edge. It is recommended that the barcode be at least 1" from the edge, as edges tend to bend.

Note: There should not be a PLANET Code and an IMb on a mailpiece as the processing systems would ignore the PLANET Code.

Note on printing the barcode in the clear zone: An IMb printed in the barcode clear zone must have a delivery point Routing Code or the USPS may affix a LMLM (Letter Mail Labeling Machine) label in order to apply a delivery point barcode.

The IMb is taller and longer than the POSTNET barcode. The length is 3 bars, or approximately 1/8", longer than the POSTNET.

While the height of the barcode is taller than the POSTNET, the spacing above and below the IMb barcode may be less. Therefore, the overall height is similar to the POSTNET barcode.

Check the spacing and placement of the current POSTNET barcode to ensure that the IMb will fit in the same location, while maintaining the minimum 1/8" clear space to the left and right of the barcode. For window envelopes, perform the tap test to ensure that the barcode is clearly visible, with correct clear spacing, during any insert shift.

Data Fields in the IMb

The IMb for mailpieces is a maximum 31-character data string that converts into 65 bars of 4 different heights. Unlike the POSTNET barcode, the IMb always has 65 bars, regardless of Routing Code length, and does not require a check-digit or framing bars. The data string contains a 20-character Tracking Code (the first four fields) and a maximum 11-character Routing Code.

1. The **Barcode Identifier** is a 2-digit field that describes the level of presort qualification for the mailpiece. Currently, this information may be printed on a mailpiece in human-readable form using the optional endorsement line (OEL).
 - Letter-size mail, with or without a printed OEL, may contain "00".
 - Flat-size mail without a printed OEL may contain "00".
 - Flat-size mail with a printed OEL must contain coding corresponding to the correct sortation level of each piece.
2. The **Service Type Identifier** (STID) is a 3-digit field that represents the Intelligent Mail option, the class of mail, and additional services requested, if any.
3. The **Mailer Identifier** (Mailer ID or MID) field is a 6-digit or 9-digit number assigned by the USPS that identifies a specific agent in the mailing supply chain. Mail owners and mail preparers will be assigned 6-digit or 9-digit Mailer IDs based upon their annual mail volume as verified by the Postal Service.
 - Mailers may obtain their own MIDs by obtaining a login to the [Business Customer Gateway](#), establishing their location (Customer Registration ID – CRID) and applying for their MID.
 - Local Business Mail Entry Units (BMEUs) and Mailpiece Design Analysts (MDAs) are responsible for helping customers acquire their Mailer ID.

To locate your local BME Manager, go to: <http://www.usps.com/ncsc/locators/find-bme.html>

To locate your local MDA, go to: http://pe.usps.com/mpdesign/mpdfr_mda_lookup.asp

4. The **Serial Number** is a 6-digit or 9-digit field depending on the length of the Mailer ID. In Basic option mailings, the serial number has no requirement for uniqueness. In qualified Full-Service mailings, the combination of the serial number and MID must be unique within the class of mail defined in the STID and remain so for a period of 45 days based on the postage statement mailing date provided by the mailer in the CSM file in Mail.dat, the Postage Statement Create Request in Mail.XML, or the postage statement mailing date in Postal Wizard.
5. The **Routing Code** field contains essentially the same ZIP Code routing information as the POSTNET barcode. It may contain the 11-digit delivery point barcode data, the 9-digit ZIP+4 code data, the 5-digit ZIP Code data, or no data. It may not be padded with blanks or any other characters. Delivery point information is required for automation prices (i.e., Basic and Full-Service).

Intelligent Mail Barcode for Letters and Flats: 6-Digit and 9-Digit Mailer IDs																														
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Barcode ID (2N)		Service Type ID (3N)			Mailer ID (6N)						Serial Number (9N)									Routing Code (0, 5, 9, or 11N)										
Barcode ID (2N)		Service Type ID (3N)			Mailer ID (9N)									Serial Number (6N)						Routing Code (0, 5, 9, or 11N)										

Example of 6-digit and 9-digit Serial Numbers in Relation to Mailer IDs.

IMb Basic Option Fields

All fields must be populated with the appropriate data. Mailers cannot zero fill the:

- Barcode ID for a flat-size mailing with OELs
- Service Type ID
- Mailer ID
- Routing Code.

The Basic option does not require unique barcodes so a mailer who chooses the Basic option may encode the Serial Numbers with any number. Following are some examples:

- All zeros (except when using OneCode ACS)
- Variable information
 - Account number
 - Membership number
 - Order number
- Unique data (in conjunction with the Mailer ID)
- A Mailing ID (a static ID number to be used on the entire mailing)
 - Job number
 - Project number
 - Reference number

Choosing the Basic option will ensure compliance with automation requirements effective with the retirement of the POSTNET barcode in May 2011. It can also provide mailers with a transition path to the Full-Service option.

IMb Field	Content	Data Provided by
Barcode ID	Must still be populated with Flat OEL information	Software
Service Type ID	Dependent on class of mail and services requested	Mailer, modified by software
Mailer ID	Assigned by USPS	Mail Owner or Mail Preparer
Serial Number	Must be numeric May be static or variable	Mail Owner or Mail Preparer
Routing Code	ZIP+4 Delivery Point, ZIP+4, ZIP Code or nothing – may not be padded	CASS/DPV/LACS ^{Link} determined by software

IMb Full-Service Fields

All fields must be populated with the appropriate data. Mailers cannot zero fill the:

- Barcode ID for a flat-size mailing with OELs
- Service Type ID
- Mailer ID
- Serial Number
- Routing Code.

The Mailer ID and Serial Number, within the class of mail identified in the STID, determine uniqueness.

IMb Field	Content	Data Provided by
Barcode ID	Must still be populated with Flat OEL information	Software
Service Type ID	Dependent on class of mail, services requested, and IMb option	Mailer, modified by software
Mailer ID	Assigned by USPS Part of the uniqueness determination	Mailer or Mail Preparer
Serial Number	Must be variable Part of the uniqueness determination	Mailer or Mail Preparer
Routing Code	ZIP+4 Delivery Point, ZIP+4, ZIP Code or nothing – may not be padded	CASS/DPV/LACS ^{Link} determined by software

CRIDs and MIDs

CRID

A Customer Registration ID (CRID) is up to a 15-digit unique number that is created by the Customer Registration system in the [Business Customer Gateway](#). It allows the Postal Service to uniquely identify our customers by location.

A CRID connects company information by physical address across multiple Postal Service applications.

A CRID is associated to every customer regardless of having a permit number or a Mailer ID. Additionally, a CRID is associated with any other type of account that is established with the Postal Service.

If a customer has multiple locations, a separate CRID will be assigned to each location. CRIDs can be used instead of Mailer IDs in the Mail.dat files to help identify either the Mail Preparer or the Mail Owner. A CRID may be assigned to a customer who does not have or does not need a Mailer ID.

A CRID cannot be substituted for a MID in the actual IMb.

CRIDs are treated by the Postal Service like account numbers and are considered confidential information.

MID

The Mailer ID is a field within the suite of Intelligent Mail barcodes that is used to identify mail owners and/or mail preparers. The IDs are assigned by the USPS to each mail owner and/or mail preparer or other service providers that request them.

The MID is a 6- or 9-digit number assigned by the Postal Service based primarily on validated historic mail volume

- A 6-digit MID may be issued based on annual volume of 10 million pieces
- A single 9-digit MID may be issued regardless of annual volume

- Additional 9-digit MIDs may be issued based on annual volume in increments of one million pieces

Mailers can have more than one MID based on mail volume. Mailers using the Basic option are not required to keep the IMb unique and therefore may not require multiple MIDs. Mailers using Full-Service need to plan on managing uniqueness based on the assignment of the MID and Serial Number within class of mail.

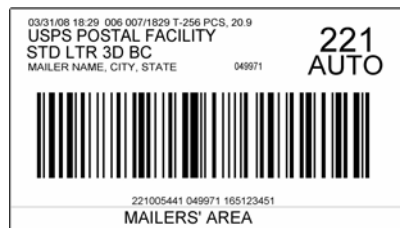
If the mailer chooses to use Basic option and Address Change Service (ACS) or OneCode Confirm, additional MIDs may be needed to manage specific data from those mailings. Mailers may want to identify each mailpiece for these programs. This is done with a combination of the MID and Serial Number.

The Intelligent Mail Tray Barcode

Under the Full-Service option, mailers will be required to apply unique IMb tray barcodes on tray and sack labels. Uniquely identifying each tray or sack with this barcode will allow them to be tracked as they are processed through the mailstream.

In order to meet the requirements for Full-Service mailings, mailers will be required to uniquely number each tray or sack in a mailing by using one of the two IMb tray label formats:

- Transitional 10/24-digit Intelligent Mail tray label
- Pure 24-digit Intelligent Mail tray label
- Also for use with the Basic option, but mailers are not required to uniquely number each tray or sack.



Pure 24-digit Intelligent Mail tray label

Data Fields in the Pure 24-digit IMb Tray Barcode

The IMb tray barcode is a 24-digit data string that contains six fields (defined below). This barcode must remain unique for a period of 45 days based on the postage statement mailing date provided by the mailer in the CSM file in Mail.dat, the Postage Statement Create Request in Mail.XML, or the postage statement mailing date in Postal Wizard..

1. The **ZIP Code** is a 5-digit field that identifies the tray or sack's ZIP Code destination.
2. The **Content Identification Number (CIN)** is a 3-digit field that describes the presort qualification of the mail in the tray or sack. A table of valid CINs can be found in the Domestic Mail Manual (DMM).
3. The **Processing Code** is a 1-digit field. The two acceptable values are:
 - "1" - for automation and machinable mail
 - "7" - for all other mail.
4. The **Mailer ID** is a 6- or 9-digit number assigned by the USPS that identifies a specific agent in the mailing supply chain. Mail owners and mail preparers will be assigned 6-digit or 9-digit Mailer IDs based upon their annual mail volume as verified by the Postal Service.
5. The **Serial Number** is a 5- or 8-digit number, depending on the length of the Mailer ID.

- The **Label Type** is a 1-digit field that defines the length of the Mailer ID. This field is used as a qualifier for systems to properly recognize the data within the barcode and has two acceptable values:
 - “1” - for 6-digit Mailer IDs
 - “8” - for 9-digit Mailer IDs.

ZIP Code Ex: <i>Memphis, TN</i> “38141”	Content Identification Number (CIN) 3-digits describing the tray	Processing Code Ex: “1” for Automation Compatible	Mailer ID Ex: “123456” USPS Assigned	Serial Number Ex: “20080001” Mailer Assigned	Label Type Ex: “1” for 6-digit MID
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Data fields in the Intelligent Mail tray barcode

The Intelligent Mail Container Barcode

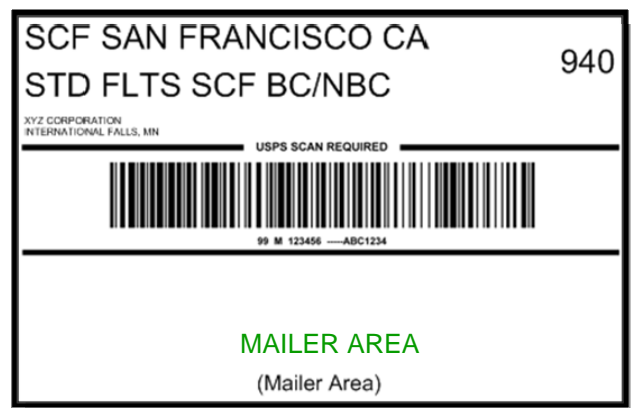
Under the Full-Service option, mailers must apply unique IMb container barcodes on placards affixed to pallets, APCs, pallet boxes, and other rolling stock.

Mailers can choose between two sizes of IMb container labels for the Full-Service option: 4” by 7” or 8” by 11”. The difference between these two placards is the 8” by 11” label includes a much larger space for the mailer area.

Regardless of which size you choose, at least two copies of the label must be affixed to adjacent sides on the outside of the shrinkwrap or container. Placards must be affixed by self-adhesive or other adhesive means that will not obscure any required element of the placard and remain secure throughout transportation and USPS processing.



**4” x 7”
Intelligent Mail container label**



**8” x 11”
Intelligent Mail container label**

Data Fields in the Intelligent Mail Container Barcode

The IMb container barcode is a 21-digit data string that converts into GS1-128 barcode symbology, and contains four fields (defined below). This barcode must remain unique for a period of 45 days based on the postage statement mailing date provided by the mailer in the CSM file in Mail.dat, the Postage Statement Create Request in Mail.XML, or the postage statement mailing date in Postal Wizard.

- The **Application Identifier** is a 2-digit field that must contain “99”.

2. The **Type Indicator** is a 1-byte field that must contain the letter “M”.
3. The **Mailer ID** is a 6- or 9-digit number assigned by the USPS that identifies a specific agent in the mailing supply chain. Mail owners and mail preparers will be assigned 6-digit or 9-digit Mailer IDs based upon their annual mail volume as verified by the Postal Service.
4. The **Serial Number** is a 9- or 12-digit number, depending on the length of the Mailer ID.

Application Identifier “99”	Type Indicator “M”	Mailer ID <i>USPS Assigned, Ex:</i> “123456”	Serial Number <i>Mailer Assigned, Ex:</i> “200800000001”
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Data Fields in the Intelligent Mail Container Barcode

Electronic Documentation – (eDoc)

General Information

Under the Full-Service option, electronic documentation must be used to transmit data files for generating postage statements and mailing documentation to the *PostalOne!* system. These files describe the “nesting relationship” or how mailpieces are linked to trays or sacks, and to containers (if applicable), and are required to match the preparation of the mail to qualify for the Full-Service option. The electronic documentation must provide the data that identifies:

- Mail Owner and Mail Preparer (By/For Relationship)
- IMb piece detail data on each mailpiece in a mailing
- Nesting relationship
 - IMb tray barcode applied to each tray or sack, as well as the pieces contained within the tray or sack.
 - unique IMb container barcode applied to each container in a mailing and the trays or sacks, or mailpieces in/on the container.

This electronic mailing information is used for:

- Business mail verification and acceptance
- Start-the-Clock (when the USPS takes ownership of the mail)
- Automated address correction (Full-Service ACS)
- Confirm (OneCode Confirm) service.

The Postal Service will use the electronically generated postage statements and supporting documentation to simplify mail verification, acceptance, and induction. By submitting documents electronically, mailers will not have to create paper-based forms and will use technology to manage their mailing data.

Streamlining Hard Copy Postage Statements

In our ongoing efforts to improve customer service and postage statement processing, the Postal Service will continue to improve efficiencies of Business Mail Acceptance processes. Starting March 15, 2010, the Postal Service will streamline the processing of hard copy postage statements. [Click here to read about it.](#)

***PostalOne!* Requirements**

In order to submit eDoc, mailers must obtain access to the USPS *PostalOne!* system. This is accomplished through the USPS [Business Customer Gateway](#). Getting set up with a [Business Customer Gateway](#) system login and completing all the test files and processes must be done prior to entering a Full-Service mailing. Mailers must allow sufficient time for this process. Those unfamiliar with eDoc should study the [User Access to Electronic Mailing Information and Reports Guide](#), Volume 1, Chapter 3.

The following options are available for submitting electronic postage statements and documentation:

- Postal Wizard
- Mail.dat
- Mail.XML

Postal Wizard

Postal Wizard enables electronic submission of postage statements, which would meet the requirement for Full-Service mailings of less than 10,000 letters and flats pieces that do not require accompanying documentation, such as permit imprint mailings of identical-weight pieces separated by price category or mailings with the correct postage affixed to each piece. Mailers may not submit a Postal Wizard electronic postage statement to a Detached Mail Unit.

For mailings that do not require presort documentation, you will only need to report the serial number range used in the IMb for mailpieces listed in your electronic postage statement.

Mail.dat and Mail.XML

Mail.dat and Mail.XML are specifications owned by the International Digital Enterprise Alliance (IDEAlliance). This mailer organization facilitates data communication for appointments, qualification reports, postage, piece information, data distribution, and other supporting business functions between members of the mailing industry and then from the industry to the Postal Service. Contact them directly at www.idealliance.org for more detailed information on these specifications and licensing requirements.

Mailers who are beginning to use Mail.dat or Mail.XML must plan time to learn about these specifications, specifically regarding the installation and implementation of software needed to generate, edit and update these files. This is an important part of a timeline and should be one of the first items completed. Check with your presort software provider for information on generating, editing and updating the Mail.dat or Mail.XML files.

Mail.dat

Mail.dat is presented as a database consisting of files linked by key fields. There are 21 files, each with its own record type, from which recipients can extract any set of data serving their purpose. Mail.dat provides information efficiently and effectively.

Mail.dat is a relational database of 21 "connected" files describing each characteristic that can exist within a mailing. As a relational database, not all 21 files are required. There is a core set of nine required files, with another file specifically created for IMb services. The focus of Mail.dat has been, and will continue to be, the full description of a mailing job and related data.

Mail.dat version 9.1 supports IMb Full-Service option. Mailers must complete the Test Environment for Mailers (TEM) with the Postal Service as part of the authorization process for participating in electronic documentation.

In order to submit Mail.dat files to the USPS, mailers must obtain a User License Code from IDEAlliance.

Mail.XML

Mail.XML is an XML-based (www.mailxml.org) specification for Web services, supporting the Services Oriented Architecture (SOA) that is conversational in nature and platform independent. Its core focus is the communication between industry members and from the industry to the USPS.

Mail.XML includes advanced functions such as payment; automated verification; enabling first, second, and third party communication and incorporating presort planning, printing, and distribution processes. Additionally, Mail.XML supports container-based scheduling, pick up and drop-off business processes, as well as identifying different business entities responsible for performing different services such as quality of mailing, address correction, and delivery confirmation on a mailing.

FAST Appointment Scheduling

As required today, most mailers will use the Facility Access and Shipment Tracking (FAST) system to schedule appointments for dropship mailings, except for mailings entered at a Destination Delivery Unit (DDU). Additionally, FAST will be used to create an appointment for origin-entered mail, regardless of class, that is verified at the DMU and is transported by the mailer, or as defined in a Customer Supplier Agreement (CSA).

Mailers may schedule appointments online using the FAST website at fast.usps.com or they may submit appointment requests through *PostalOne!* FAST Web Services at www.uspspostalone.com using the Transaction Messaging specifications.

FAST appointments will continue to be required for dropshipments to applicable Destination Network Distribution Center (DNDC), Destination Area Distribution Center (DADC), or Destination Sectional Center Facility (DSCF) locations for Periodicals, Standard Mail, and Package Services mailings. Use of FAST enables the USPS to validate appointments and provide information to mailers regarding receipt of mailings.

Summary of IMb Full-Service Benefits

The IMb offers much more than a POSTNET barcode. When using the IMb on your mailpieces, mailers can consolidate a lot of the information that is currently printed on the pieces, thereby creating a much "cleaner" look with more free space available. When taking advantage of the full suite of Intelligent Mail barcodes, mailers can increase the amount of information that can be stored and associated with individual mailpieces, handling units (trays and sacks), and containers. This information can be used to request services and add visibility (tracking information) to your mailpiece to enhance the value of mail. The Postal Service will also provide feedback about the quality of addresses to help reduce undeliverable-as-addressed mail and its associated costs.

Additionally, there will be monetary benefits to using the IMb. Both POSTNET barcodes and the IMb Basic option qualify for automation prices. The IMb Full-Service option provides the following additional benefits on qualifying mail:

- Additional Full-Service postage discounts
- Start-the-clock information at no additional charge to notify mailers when the Postal Service takes possession of mailings, and
- Address correction information at no charge (Full-Service ACS), for specific timeframes, for qualified letters and flats that do not have the most current address or that are undeliverable for other reasons, when those pieces are endorsed as specified for Full-Service ACS.
 - First-Class Mail Full-Service ACS will be free with no time or quantity limitations.

- Standard Mail and Bound Printed Matter will receive free Full-Service ACS data for the 30 days from the first notification.
- Periodicals will receive free Full-Service ACS data for the 60 days from the first notification.

Getting Started With IMb Services

Now that you have a basic understanding of IMb services and options, requirements and benefits, it's time to get started on your own implementation plans for IMb services. While the following is not necessarily the exact sequence you should follow, nor is it an exhaustive list of questions that should be answered or decisions that should be made, it will get you started.

- **Talk to your business partners** – Find out from your software vendors and/or service providers what *their* IMb service plans are.

Just a few of the questions you may want to ask are:

- What are your Mailer ID plans? Will I need my own or will I be using yours?
 - What additional features/services are available?
 - Do you support Mail.dat, Mail.XML or both?
 - Can you create and track unique serial numbers?
 - Can you support the Basic and Full-Service options?
- **Build a Team** – Work to put together a team that will help you implement IMb services. Include, consider and start to plan the following:
 - Include key stakeholders: IT, Finance, Business, Business Partners
 - Define the Value/ROI
 - Re-engineer your mail supply chain
 - Develop budget
 - Develop implementation plan
 - Review materials and seek support from resources
 - **Review Guides and Specifications** – Get the information you need from the following resources. These resources are discussed more in depth in the resource section.
 - [Federal Register Notice: Implementation of New Standards for Intelligent Mail Barcodes](#)
 - [A Beginners Overview to IMb Services](#)
 - [A Guide to Intelligent Mail for Letters and Flats](#)
 - [Postal Service Mail.dat Technical Specification](#)
 - [Postal Service Mail.XML Technical Specification](#)
 - [User Access to Electronic Mailing Information and Reports Guide](#)
 - **Acquire a Mailer ID**
 - All mailers requesting a Mailer ID (MID) must go to <http://www.usps.com/> and select the [Business Customer Gateway](#) located on the bottom right hand corner of the web page. A mailer must logon as an existing user or register as a new user to gain access to the [Business Customer Gateway](#). Once logged on, select the "Mailer ID" link to obtain a MID.
 - **Exception Process**
For mailers who cannot obtain the desired number or type of Mailer ID(s) through the [Business Customer Gateway](#)-MID Tool or if the mailing agent is acting in behalf of the mail owner, the customer must read the [Mailer ID Application Process](#) and/or the [CRID/Mailer ID Agent Application Process](#), print and complete the [Mailer Application](#) and the [Additional Accounts Information Sheet](#) (as applicable). The forms must be submitted to the Business Mail Entry Unit (BMEU) or the Mailpiece Design Analyst for processing.

- **Plan your Barcode** – To generate the IMb mailpiece barcode, tray label barcode, and container label barcode you will need to do the following.
 - Plan for barcode data management
 - Services (Service Type Identifiers)
 - USPS provided Mailer ID (MID)
 - IMb encoder/decoder
 - USPS-developed font for the IMb
 - Content Identification Number (CIN) List
 - Code 128 subset C font for the IMb tray and container barcodes
 - Endorsements for address correction
 - Validate and test barcode

Further information regarding these elements can be found in the materials listed in the Resource section.
- **Design and Test Electronic Documentation** – Electronic documentation is a crucial step in the process. There are different requirements and uses for Basic and Full-Service options.
 - Basic: electronic documentation is optional
 - Electronic documentation includes postage statement
 - Aggregate mailing data such as a USPS Qualification Report
 - Full-Service: electronic documentation is required
 - Electronic documentation includes postage statement
 - Aggregate mailing data and piece detail mailing data
 - Mail owner, mail preparers
 - Intelligent Mail barcodes on mailpieces, trays and containers
 - Nesting relationships
 - Options:
 - Mail.dat
 - Mail.XML
 - Postal Wizard (< 10,000 pieces maximum for Full-Service when documentation is not required)
- **Plan for Feedback**
 - How will you use the Start-the-Clock and address correction information?
 - Who will receive the data?
 - How will you receive the data?
 - How will you update your address lists?
- **Migrate to the Production Environment**
 - Test barcodes
 - Test electronic submission of eDoc in the Test Environment for Mailers
 - Receive validation for Full-Service prior to migrating to the Production Environment
- **OneCode ACS and OneCode Confirm**
 - Is either or both of these services something you wish to participate in and take advantage of?
 - If you are a service provider, do you want to participate in these and make them available to your customers as value-added services?
- **Determine which Service Type Identifier**
 - Identify the Service Type Identifier(s) for the services you are requesting. You can find the list of Service Type Identifiers in [A Guide to Intelligent Mail for Letters and Flats](#) which is posted at <http://ribbs.usps.gov/index.cfm?page=intellmailguides>. Be sure to check Appendix A for all the information necessary to make decisions on what services/options/constraints will affect your mailing.

Class of Mail	Address Correction Option	Basic option ¹ or Non-auto ² w/o Confirm	Basic option ¹ or Non-auto ² w/ Confirm	Full-Service w/o Confirm ¹	Full-Service w/ Confirm ¹
First-Class Mail	No Address Corrections	300	310	260	270
	Manual Corrections *	700	040	036	041
	Traditional ACS – ASR *	080	140	081	141
	Traditional ACS – ASR Opt 2 *	080	140	081	141
	Traditional ACS – CSR *	082	240	083	241
	Traditional ACS – CSR Opt 2 *	082	240	083	241
	OneCode ACS – ASR	081	140		
	OneCode ACS – ASR Opt 2	081	140		
	OneCode ACS – CSR	082	240		
	OneCode ACS – CSR Opt 2	082	240		
	Full-Service ACS – ASR			081	141
	Full-Service ACS – ASR Opt 2			081	141
	Full-Service ACS – CSR			083	241
Full-Service ACS – CSR Opt 2			083	241	

Table of Service Type Identifiers

* Requires printed text ancillary service endorsement¹
(Not all STIDs shown)

- Participants in Confirm use Service Type Identifiers to participate in Confirm. Upon implementation of IMb services, mailers have to change Service Type Identifiers to correctly identify the IMb services you are requesting.
- **Basic and Full-Service options** – Service providers may want to be prepared to support both of these options for their customers; however, mail owners have a choice. Does it make good economic sense to switch from POSTNET barcodes now or plan a longer implementation strategy? USPS will not require the use of an IMb until May 2011, so there is time to plan a smooth transition.
- **Lessons from Early Adopters** –
 - Ability to submit Full-Service mail does not happen overnight!
 - Consider whether to “build or buy”
 - Pay special attention to managing uniqueness and the Mailer ID

Resources Available to Implement IMb Services

Detailed Information on the Basic and Full-Service Options

The USPS provides a number of technical and non-technical guides and specifications, informative documents and presentations, and other helpful tools to make it easier for you to take full advantage of the suite of Intelligent Mail barcodes. These valuable resources can be found on the [RIBBS](http://ribbs.usps.gov/) website <http://ribbs.usps.gov/>.

Guides, Specifications and Manuals

For those new to IMb services, there are several guides, specifications and manuals that will get you started and give a broad overview of the fundamentals of the program. Following is a list of primary sources of information.

[Domestic Mail Manual \(DMM\)](#)

The [Domestic Mail Manual](#) is the USPS manual that contains the basic standards governing U.S. domestic mail services, descriptions of the mail classes and special services and conditions governing their uses, and standards for rate eligibility and mail preparation. Domestic mail is classified by size, weight, content, service, and other factors.

[Federal Register Notice/ Vol. 73, No. 163/, August 21, 2008: Implementation of New Standards for Intelligent Mail Barcodes](#)

The [Federal Register Notice](#) outlines the key elements of the Basic and Full-Service IMb options. It also provides a timeline and the requirements for using IMb services. The [Federal Register Notice](#) can be found at <http://ribbs.usps.gov/files/fedreg/usps2008/E8-19339.PDF>.

[A Guide to Intelligent Mail for Letters and Flats](#)

[A Guide to Intelligent Mail for Letters and Flats](#) provides guidance on how to prepare your mail and electronic documentation and identifies the data that will be provided at no additional charge for Full-Service option compliance. In addition, the Guide also describes what will be available in the first release of IMb services. [A Guide to Intelligent Mail for Letters and Flats](#) can be found at <http://ribbs.usps.gov/>.

[User Access to Electronic Mailing Information and Reports Guide](#)

The purpose of this guide is to provide information regarding IMb Full-Service option reports and a walk through of the new [Business Customer Gateway](#) webpage, which is accessible through the [USPS.com](#) home page. This guide is available on RIBBS at http://ribbs.usps.gov/intelligentmail_guides/documents/tech_guides/user_access/user_access.htm.

[Postal Service Mail.dat Technical Specification](#)

The [Postal Service Mail.dat Technical Specification](#) provides detailed specifications for how to populate your Mail.dat 09.1 files to comply with the requirements for the Full-Service option. This technical specification explains the eDoc, postage, and induction requirements on how to use Mail.dat with the *PostalOne!* system. The [Postal Service Mail.dat Technical Specification](#) can be found at http://ribbs.usps.gov/intelligentmail_guides/documents/tech_guides/datspec/datspec.htm.

[Postal Service Mail.XML Technical Specification](#)

The [Postal Service Mail.XML Technical Specification](#) outlines the specifications for the messages used to send and receive data from the *PostalOne!* system. This technical specification explains FAST appointment scheduling, Full-Service data distribution [change of address (COA), nixie, Start-the-Clock, and container visibility induction scans], eDoc postage and electronic induction status management through Mail.XML messaging. The [Postal Service Mail.XML Technical Specification](#) can be found at http://ribbs.usps.gov/intelligentmail_guides/documents/tech_guides/xmlspec/xmlspec.htm.

Technical Help for IMb Mailers

There are several technical documents that will help you create the Intelligent Mail barcodes for mailpieces, trays and sacks and containers.

Intelligent Mail Barcodes

IMb

To create and print the IMb for mailpieces, obtain and use:

[IMb Specification, USPS-B-3200](https://ribbs.usps.gov/intelligentmail_mailpieces/documents/tech_guides/SPUSPS-B-3200E001.pdf) available at https://ribbs.usps.gov/intelligentmail_mailpieces/documents/tech_guides/SPUSPS-B-3200E001.pdf.

Service Type Identifiers, found in [A Guide to Intelligent Mail for Letters and Flats](http://ribbs.usps.gov/intelligentmail_guides/documents/tech_guides/GuidetoIntelligentMailLettersandFlats.pdf) available at: http://ribbs.usps.gov/intelligentmail_guides/documents/tech_guides/GuidetoIntelligentMailLettersandFlats.pdf.

USPS has developed, and has made available at no charge, an extensive library of [Windows and Mainframe Encoder Software and Fonts](https://ribbs.usps.gov/onecodesolution/download.cfm) suitable for encoding and printing the IMb in mail production environments using numerous operating systems and printing architectures. These resources are available at <https://ribbs.usps.gov/onecodesolution/download.cfm>.

To help you with encoding and decoding Intelligent Mail barcodes, the USPS offers an on-line [IMb Encoder and Decoder](http://ribbs.usps.gov/onecodesolution/Default.aspx). You can access these tools at <http://ribbs.usps.gov/onecodesolution/Default.aspx>.

Intelligent Mail Tray Barcode

Mailers planning to take advantage of the Full-Service option are encouraged to contact the National Customer Support Center (NCSC), Barcode Certification Department to certify their IMb tray labels. Participants may contact the NCSC, Barcode Certification Department by calling 1-877-640-0724, option 2 for application information or to locate the IMTL information on the [RIBBS](http://ribbs.usps.gov) website. Participants will then complete and submit PS Form 5113, Barcode Certification Customer Application. Mailers are encouraged to work with their Mailpiece Design Analyst (MDA).

To create and print the pure 24-digit IMb tray Label, use specification [USPS-L-3216](https://ribbs.usps.gov/intelligentmail_tray_label/documents/tech_guides/IMTL_24-Digit_SPECIFICATIONS_FOR_MAILERS_(SPUSPS-L-3216-001).PDF), available at: [https://ribbs.usps.gov/intelligentmail_tray_label/documents/tech_guides/IMTL_24-Digit_SPECIFICATIONS_FOR_MAILERS_\(SPUSPS-L-3216-001\).PDF](https://ribbs.usps.gov/intelligentmail_tray_label/documents/tech_guides/IMTL_24-Digit_SPECIFICATIONS_FOR_MAILERS_(SPUSPS-L-3216-001).PDF).

To create and print the 10/24-digit IMb tray label, use specification [USPS-L-3191](http://ribbs.usps.gov/intelligentmail_tray_label/documents/tech_guides/IMTL_10_1024_SPECIFICATION_S_FOR_MAILERS_(SPUSPS-L-3191).pdf), available at: [http://ribbs.usps.gov/intelligentmail_tray_label/documents/tech_guides/IMTL_10_1024_SPECIFICATION_S_FOR_MAILERS_\(SPUSPS-L-3191\).pdf](http://ribbs.usps.gov/intelligentmail_tray_label/documents/tech_guides/IMTL_10_1024_SPECIFICATION_S_FOR_MAILERS_(SPUSPS-L-3191).pdf)

Intelligent Mail Container Barcode

To create and print the IMb container label, obtain the specifications [USPS-B-3215 \(IMb Container Barcode Specification\)](http://ribbs.usps.gov/index.cfm?page=intellmailcontainer) available on <http://ribbs.usps.gov/index.cfm?page=intellmailcontainer>. Unlike tray labels, there is no ordering system – so for now, mailers must print their own or work with a third-party vendor.

Test Environment for Mailers (TEM): Checklist & Troubleshooting

The Checklist shows how to start participating in electronic documentation (eDoc), Basic and Full-Service. Note that a mailer can participate in eDoc with or without IMb service. Use of electronic documentation is optional for the IMb Basic Service; required for IMb Full-Service.

Personal Support Resources

In addition to the guides and specifications listed above, you can also get help from USPS IMb service experts.

To find your local Business Mail Entry (BME) Manager, go to:

<http://www.usps.com/ncsc/locators/find-bme.html>

To find your local Mailpiece Design Analyst (MDA), go to:

http://pe.usps.com/mpdesign/mpdfr_mda_lookup.asp

OneCode Confirm

Learn about the IMb format for OneCode Confirm by reviewing the [Confirm Service Featuring OneCode Confirm User Guide \(Publication 197\)](#) and the [SUPPLEMENT to Confirm User Guide \(Pub. 197\)](#). For more information on the Confirm service, please call the Confirm Customer Help Desk at 800-238-3150, option 1 or visit <https://mailtracking.usps.com>.

Traditional and OneCode ACS

Learn how the process works, the features available, and mailer requirements to receive electronic address corrections using the IMb. References include [Publication 8A, Traditional ACS Technical Guide](#) and [Publication 8B, OneCode ACS Technical Guide](#).

Downloadable OneCode ACS application and fulfillment access forms.

For more information on traditional or OneCode ACS, please contact the ACS Department at the NCSC via email at acs@usps.gov or by phone at 877-640-0724.

To contact the *PostalOne!* Help Desk call **1-800-522-9085**.