

# MAIL SERVICES GUIDE



Mail Customer Service Branch  
Division of Mail Management Services  
Program and Employee Services  
Office of Research Services  
Revised March 2010



Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)



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## INTRODUCTION

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This Mail Services Guide for National Institutes of Health (NIH) employees has been prepared by the Mail Customer Service Branch (MCSB), Division of Mail Management Services (DMMS), Program and Employee Services (PES), Office of Research Services (ORS). It is a source of information intended to help NIH customers receive the most efficient and cost effective mail and inter-office communications distribution services.

This guide discusses topics such as addressing envelopes, inter-office communications, United States Postal Service (USPS) mail classifications, specialized delivery services and other mail-related information; it will be a useful desk companion for NIH employees.

The information provided in this guide is subject to periodic changes in regulation and services provided by the USPS and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). If changes occur, the DMMS will distribute updates.

The more the DMMS knows about your individual needs and concerns, the better we can provide responsive service, whether it is information on special mail services, how to prepare a large mailing, an office move, or sending or receiving something out of the ordinary.

For questions regarding any aspect of NIH mail service, contact the DMMS Mail Customer Service Branch at 301-496-3586 or e-mail us at [mcsbcs@mail.nih.gov](mailto:mcsbcs@mail.nih.gov). A DMMS representative will provide prompt assistance.

This guide and additional information are available on our web site: <http://dmcs.ors.od.nih.gov>

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## MAIL SERVICES GENERAL INFORMATION

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### A. Locations and Hours of Operation

The Division of Mail Management Services (DMMS) operates the main mail processing center on North Stonestreet Avenue in Rockville and seven satellite mail centers both on-and off-campus. Following are the locations, hours of operation and telephone numbers of each mail facility.

#### MAIN MAIL CENTER

**Hours of Operation: 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**

301 North Stonestreet Ave., Rockville MD		
Director, Division Mail Management Services	Room 105B	301-402-4171
Mail Operations Manager	Room 105C	301-402-4172
Mail Customer Service Branch	Room 105E	301-496-3586
Main Mail Center	Room 109H	301-496-3586

#### SATELLITE CENTERS

<b>Supervisor, Satellite Mail Operations</b>		
Building 45	Room P1AS.14B	301-594-6486

#### Satellite Locations:

<u>On-Campus</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Phone Number</u>
Building 1	7:30 - 4:30	Room B2W40	301-496-6410
Building 10	7:30 - 4:30	Room B1N211	301-496-5518
Building 31	7:30 - 4:30	Room 1W-34	301-496-1950
Building 45	7:30 - 4:30	Room P1AS.14B	301-594-6486
 <u>Off-Campus</u>			
Rockledge II	7:30 - 4:30	Room 1153	301-435-0461
EPN	7:30 - 4:30	Room 112	301-496-0865
NSC	7:30 - 4:30	Room 112	301-435-1471

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*Any questions? Need assistance? Please contact the Mail Customer Service Branch (MCSB) on 301- 496-3586 or through email at [mcsbcs@mail.nih.gov](mailto:mcsbcs@mail.nih.gov)*

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## I. MAIL SERVICES GENERAL INFORMATION

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### B. Customer Service

The Mail Customer Service Branch (MCSB) assists the NIH community with mailing needs and promptly responds to questions and concerns.

The primary responsibilities of the MCSB are:

- 1) Assist in resolving general mail and/or distribution problems
- 2) Provide guidance on mail preparation and processing (permit imprint mail, business reply mail, proper addressing, mail transit times, etc.)
- 3) Provide guidance (upon request) on USPS regulations and manuals, internal NIH regulations, standard operating procedures and policy letters regarding mail services
- 4) Participate in IC staff and building occupant meetings (upon request) to discuss mail related issues
- 5) Provide information about mail security
- 6) Assist NIH employees to establish mail pick-up and delivery points
- 7) Assign mail stop codes (MSC)
- 8) Provide or order USPS mailing supplies that are not carried in self-service stores
- 9) Coordinate mail forwarding for relocating offices
- 10) Receive and process congressional, undeliverable, return to sender and misdirected mail received via the USPS
- 11) Review and forward improperly addressed mail and inter-office communications generated by the NIH community
- 12) Initiate tracking actions on NIH inter-office specials, USPS registered, certified, express and delivery confirmation mail with the USPS as necessary

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*Any questions? Need assistance? Please contact the Mail Customer Service Branch (MCSB) on 301- 496-3586 or through email at [mcsbcs@mail.nih.gov](mailto:mcsbcs@mail.nih.gov)*

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## I. MAIL SERVICES GENERAL INFORMATION

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### C. Available Mail Services

The DMMS assists NIH employees with mail-related services. These services include:

- 1) Daily pick-up and delivery of USPS and interoffice mail
- 2) Processing outgoing USPS domestic, international, and overnight express mail
- 3) Processing incoming USPS and inter-office communications
- 4) Providing technical assistance to commercial vendors contracted by NIH ICs to process high volume mailings
- 5) Assisting with the design of business mail (postcards, envelopes and labels)
- 6) Assisting with the selection of the most cost-effective method of processing the various types of mail based upon desired delivery time
- 7) Assisting with business reply mail and permit imprint mailings

### D. Mail Pick-Up and Delivery Schedule

Mail is collected and delivered twice each day for all mail stop codes in Bethesda, Rockville and Gaithersburg, Maryland. Mail is delivered and collected no later than 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. each business day.

NIH offices with critical inter-office specials or express mail that cannot wait the next scheduled mail collection/delivery should contact the Mail Customer Service Branch to arrange for a special mail pick-up. Inter-office specials and accountable mail (USPS Express, Registered, Certified and Delivery Confirmation) is delivered to the appropriate individual and/or office within 24-hours of receipt at our main mail center. A signature receipt is necessary for these items.

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## I. MAIL SERVICES GENERAL INFORMATION

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### E. Mail Stops

Mail stops (pick-up and delivery points) are established according to number of people supported and mail volumes. To streamline mail processing and expedite mail delivery, ICs should request a single mail stop code to support multiple offices located within the same building. The MCSB assigns mail stop codes on a case-by-case basis. The MCSB team is available to answer questions regarding mail stops at 301-496-3586 or by emailing [mcsbcs@mail.nih.gov](mailto:mcsbcs@mail.nih.gov).

#### 1) Opening Mail Stops

NIH offices should submit requests for mail stop codes (MSC) to: Chief, Mail Customer Service Branch, NSA/105 MSC 3333 or fax to 402-2147. The request should include names of personnel occupying the space, building, room, a point of contact, phone number, start-up date and the number of desk-to-desk copies of internal distribution required. A MCSB representative will contact the designated individual after receipt of the request. Requests for mail stop codes may be submitted electronically via the DMMS web site address <http://dmcs.ors.od.nih.gov/mail/scripts/mscrequest.asp> or email [mcsbcs@mail.nih.gov](mailto:mcsbcs@mail.nih.gov). NIH employees should evaluate whether an existing MSC assigned to the same IC, building or floor may be able to support additional IC employees prior to requesting an additional mail stop code.

#### 2) Closing Mail Stops

NIH employees should notify the MCSB as soon as possible when a mail stop code is no longer needed. The notification of closing a MSC may be faxed to 301-402-2147 or emailed to [mcsbcs@mail.nih.gov](mailto:mcsbcs@mail.nih.gov). The notice should include building, room, MSC, point of contact, phone number and date when mail deliveries should be canceled. Where applicable, mailbox keys should be returned to a MCSB representative. Upon receipt of this notification, a MCSB representative will contact the customer.

NIH offices closing mail stops should advise their personnel to immediately notify their correspondents of their new forwarding address.

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## I. MAIL SERVICES GENERAL INFORMATION

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### 3) Relocation

To maintain accurate mail delivery services without delay or interruption, NIH employees should notify the MCSB as early as possible of a pending relocation. If the move is to a different room within the same building, it may be possible to keep the same mail stop code. If moving to a different building, the MCSB will establish a new mail stop code.

### F. Clustered Mail Delivery Service

Clustered Mail Delivery Service is a centrally located cluster of mailboxes where the customer controls the distribution of mail. This type of service is more economical and efficient than the door-to-door mail service.

This service is implemented in all new buildings constructed on the NIH campus and in newly leased facilities off-campus where NIH employees are the sole occupants. Door-to-door mail service that is currently provided to some NIH offices will be phased out and eventually replaced by the Clustered Mail Delivery Mail Service.

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## II. INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATIONS

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A Standard Form 65-B, Government Messenger Envelope (also referred to as a “holey Joe” or “shotgun” envelope, see samples 1 and 2) or a preprinted Inter-Office Communication envelope (see samples 3, 4, and 5) which can be purchased from the NIH self-service store should be used for inter-office communications. This will clearly identify inter-office correspondence from other types of mail received for processing.

### A. Addressing

When addressing envelopes for inter-office correspondence always use mail stop codes (MSC) in addition to building names/numbers and room numbers. Names and routing information should be legibly printed to ensure timely and proper delivery.

When using Government Messenger Envelopes (Holey-Joe), the address should be placed on the next unused line. Mark out all previous entries to prevent misrouting. Clearly enter the addressee’s name and enter the mail stop code (MSC) in the box marked “STOP” (see sample 1). Building and room numbers are also encouraged (see sample 2).

**Sample 1: Sample SF-65  
Name and MSC**

<b>U.S. Government Messenger Envelope</b>	
<small>NAME (OR TITLE) OF ADDRESSEE, AGENCY, ORGANIZATIONAL UNIT, ADDRESS AND ROOM</small>	
	<b>STOP</b>
JOHN E. DOE	0071

**Sample 2: Sample SF-65  
Name, Building,  
Room and MSC**

<b>U.S. Government Messenger Envelope</b>	
<small>NAME (OR TITLE) OF ADDRESSEE, AGENCY, ORGANIZATIONAL UNIT, ADDRESS AND ROOM</small>	
	<b>STOP</b>
JOHN E. DOE	
BLDG 100 RM 3A45	MSC 0071

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## II. INTER-OFFICE MAIL

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When using preprinted Inter-Office Communications envelopes, a two-line address format is best. Place a return address in the upper left-hand corner of the envelope (name, building, room and MSC). Clearly enter the addressee's name in the center of the envelope and list the mail stop code below the name (sample 3). The building and room number may be used by placing them on the line with the MSC (see samples 4 and 5).

**Sample 3:  
Two-line address  
format with MSC**

<p>INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION National Institutes of Health</p> <p>D.V. DOE BLDG 13 Rm 23 MSC 0021</p> <p>ROGER PAPER MSC 0003</p>
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**Sample 4:  
Two-line address  
format with Building  
and Room**

<p>INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION National Institutes of Health</p> <p>D.V. DOE BLDG 13 RM 23 MSC 0021</p> <p>ROGER PAPER BLDG 98 RM 1090 MSC 0003</p>
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**Sample 5:  
Two-line address  
format for  
SPECIALS**

<p>INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION National Institutes of Health</p> <p>D.V. DOE BLDG 13 RM 23 MSC 0021</p> <p><b>“SPECIAL HAND CARRY”</b></p> <p>ROGER PAPER BLDG 98 RM 1090 MSC 0003</p>
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## II. INTER-OFFICE MAIL

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### B. Prohibitions

The following items are prohibited from the NIH mail stream:

#### 1) Solid Objects

Metal or glass objects should not be mailed in Inter-Office Communication envelopes or placed into the inter-office communication mail stream. These objects require special packing for safe handling.

#### 2) Hazardous Materials

Hazardous materials should never be mailed through the inter-office communication mail stream. Materials such as chemicals, research vials, blood samples, and tissue samples, should be transported by other means specifically designed for the safe transport of these materials. Contact the Mail Customer Service Branch for assistance.

#### 3) Chain Letters

Chain letters mailed through the inter-office mail is misuse of government resources and is strictly prohibited. Report the receipt of such materials immediately to the Mail Customer Service Branch so the appropriate security officials may be notified.

#### 4) Personal Mail

The NIH mail centers are for official government mail only. The use of the inter-office mail system for personal mail is prohibited.

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## III. U.S. POSTAL SERVICE MAIL

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### A. Domestic Mail Classes

- 1) **Express Mail** - Fastest and most costly. This service should be used only when absolutely necessary. Express mail service is available to most foreign countries. Contact the Mail Customer Service Branch for delivery schedules and information.
- 2) **First Class Mail** - Any mailable item weighing 13 ounces or less. Items such as letters, post cards, official notes, and checks should be mailed via First-Class Mail.

#### First Class Mail – Mail Shape Helps Determine Cost

(a) Postcards:



- Maximum length 6”
- Maximum height 4-1/4”
- Maximum thickness 0.016”
- Minimum length 5”
- Minimum height 3-1/2”
- Minimum thickness 0.007”

(b) Letters:



- Maximum weight 3.5 ounces
- Maximum length 11-1/2”
- Maximum height 6-1/8”
- Maximum thickness 1/4”
- Minimum length 5”
- Minimum height 3-1/2”
- Minimum thickness 0.007”

If your letter exceeds any of the above factors it will be classified and priced as a large envelope (flat).

(c) Large envelopes (flats):



- Maximum weight: 13 ounces
- Maximum height: 12”
- Maximum length: 15”
- Maximum thickness: 3/4”
- Minimum height 6-1/8”
- Minimum length 11-1/2”

A large envelope that exceeds any of these dimensions will be classified and priced as a package (parcel). Large envelopes must also be flexible, rectangular and uniformly thick. A large envelope that exceeds 13 ounces is classified and priced as Priority Mail.

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### III. U.S. POSTAL SERVICE MAIL

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(d) First Class Packages:



- Maximum weight: 13 ounces
- Maximum size no more than 108" in combined length and girth

Packages that exceed 13 ounces are classified and priced as Priority Mail.

**3) Priority Mail** - Any mailable item weighing over 13 ounces but less than 70 pounds. When the speed of Express Mail is not needed, and preferential handling is desired, use Priority Mail.

**4) Bound Printed Matter** - Consists of advertising, promotional, directory or editorial material (or any combination of such material) up to 15 lbs. The material must be bound by permanent fastenings such as staples, spiral binding, glue or stitching. Loose-leaf binders and similar fastenings are not considered permanent. Contact the Mail Customer Service Branch when planning to mail this material.

**5) Parcel Post** - Mailable matter not required to be mailed as First Class or Priority and weighing 16 ounces or more. Packages mailed within the U.S. may weigh up to 70 pounds.

**6) Library Mail** - Mailable matter not required to be mailed as First-Class weighing more than 5 ounces. This class of service can only be used when it is mailed from a library, academic institution, museum, non-profit or similar organization and addressed to schools, colleges, universities, public libraries and nonprofit religious, educational and scientific organizations or associations. Library Mail cannot contain advertising or other non-media materials except for a packing slip.

**7) Media Mail** - Mailable matter not required to be mailed as First-Class weighing more than 5 ounces. This service should be used for items such as CDs, videos, books, scholarly bibliography, printed music, bound volumes of academic thesis in typewritten or duplicated form, periodicals and sound recordings. Media Mail cannot contain advertising or other non-media materials except for a packing slip.

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## III. U.S. POSTAL SERVICE MAIL

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### B. Special Mail Services

These additional mail services are available upon request at additional cost to the IC.

- 1) **Certified Mail** - Provides a mailing receipt and a record of delivery is maintained at the post office of address.
- 2) **Registered Mail** - Provides the most secure USPS option offered. It is designed to provide added protection for valuable and important mail. Registered Mail may be insured for up to \$25,000.
- 3) **Return Receipt - (PS Form 3811 for Domestic Mail and PS Form 2856 for International Mail)** - Provides the sender with proof of delivery. It shows who signed for the piece and the date it was delivered.
- 4) **Delivery Confirmation** - Provides the mailer with information about the date and time an article was delivered and if delivery was attempted but not successful.

### C. Sending Domestic Mail

#### 1) Preparing and Addressing Outgoing Domestic Mail

The USPS requires that all outgoing NIH official mail bearing a NIH (G-series) Permit Imprint number, Business Reply Mail (BRM) permit number or a Government postage meter stamp, must have a complete NIH return address and bear the required penalty statement “Official Business Penalty for Private Use, \$300”.

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## III. U.S. POSTAL SERVICE MAIL

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### (a) Return Address

The return address tells the USPS where the sender wants the mail returned, if it is undeliverable. If a return address is not included, the mail is sent to the dead letter section of the Post Office where it will eventually be destroyed.

A complete return address should be included on all correspondence. The following format for the return address is recommended:

#### **Return Address**

Mailer's Name (Optional)  
Mailer's Organization (Institute, Center, Division, Branch, etc.)  
Mailer's Street Address (bldg, street name, rm., MSC)  
Mailer's City, State, and Nine-digit Zip Code

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OFFICIAL BUSINESS  
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300

#### **Sample Return Address**

DR. JOHN DOE  
NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH/NIAAA  
22 SUCCESS PL RM 9030 MSC 0080  
BETHESDA MD 20892-0080

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OFFICIAL BUSINESS  
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300

Section VI of this mail guide contains a sample of a properly addressed envelope, a listing of USPS directional and secondary address indicators, a list of state abbreviations and a list of the most commonly used street abbreviations.

It is best to capitalize the address and eliminate all punctuation as this will speed machine processing by the USPS. The USPS list of common address and state abbreviations on pages 29-30 of this guide should be used. Always place the address or post office box on the line above the city and state and always place the ZIP+4 Code on the last line.

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## III. U.S. POSTAL SERVICE MAIL

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### (b) NIH ZIP Codes

The following city, state, and ZIP Codes should be used when receiving mail through the NIH main mail center:

**Domestic Mail:** BETHESDA MD 20892-MSC

**International Mail:** BETHESDA MD USA 20892-MSC

**Business Reply Mail:** BETHESDA MD 20814-9692

*Note: The ZIP Code "20894-MSC" should only be used by National Library of Medicine Buildings 38 and 38A*

*(See NIH Street Addresses at [Http://dmcs.ors.od.nih.gov/asp/mscaddresssearch.asp](http://dmcs.ors.od.nih.gov/asp/mscaddresssearch.asp))*

### (c) Delivery Address

A complete delivery address is necessary on all NIH official mail dispatched via the USPS. The address must have all of the elements to allow an exact match with the USPS ZIP+4 file (addressee name, firm, or other identifier; street number and name; secondary address (APT, STE, etc.); city and state; and a correct five-digit ZIP Code with ZIP+4 Code (if known).

The following format is recommended for addressing outgoing official mail:

#### **Delivery Address**

Recipient's Name

Recipient's Organization/Company

Recipient's Street Address

Recipient's City, State, ZIP Code or ZIP+4 (if known)

#### **Sample Delivery Address**

JANE DOE

SUNNY DAY INSTITUTE

6721 SMILEY AVE STE 400

BERKELEY CA 94700-3201

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## III. U.S. POSTAL SERVICE MAIL

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### 2) Forwarding Domestic First-Class Mail

To forward First-Class Mail to persons no longer assigned to NIH activities or employed by NIH, a forwarding address should be used to avoid mail from being returned to sender. Using a black or blue pen, draw a single diagonal line through the address and write the following statement and address directly above the address line and place the piece back into the mail stream:

FORWARD TO: Write the forwarding address

### 3) Returning Domestic First-Class Mail

First-Class Mail addressed to persons no longer assigned to NIH activities or employed by NIH and no forwarding address is available should be returned to the sender. Use a black or blue pen, draw a single diagonal line through the address and write the following statement directly above the address line and place the mail back into the mail stream:

RETURN TO SENDER: No longer at NIH/address unknown

## D. Helpful Mail Practices

- 1) Have personal mail sent to your home not the office
- 2) Whenever possible consolidate outgoing mail going to the same address. The cost will be lower for a consolidated package than multiple single-rate pieces
- 3) Whenever possible fold and place correspondence that is less than five pages in regular mailing envelopes instead of flat envelopes (9" x 12")
- 4) Do not place odd shaped items in envelopes that are not padded
- 5) Prior to contracting out large mailings contact the MCSB for assistance in receiving the best service at the best cost.

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### III. U.S. POSTAL SERVICE MAIL

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- 6) Before adding barcodes to mail pieces contact the MCSB so that the mail can be tested before it is dispatched to the USPS. This should be done during the design phase for the mail piece.
- 7) It is best to capitalize the entire address and avoid using punctuation
- 8) Type or print address information directly on envelopes, or apply computer generated labels. This will help eliminate most problems with USPS optical scanning equipment.
- 9) Separate inter-office correspondence, international, and domestic mail prior to placing them into the mail stream

#### **E. Business Reply Mail (BRM)**

Business Reply Mail (BRM) should only be used for official business. BRM service enables the NIH to pay the return postage for official reply mail. The Nine-Digit ZIP Code to use on Business Reply Mail is 20814-9692. The use of any other ZIP Code on Business Reply Mail will normally delay the receipt and delivery of this mail.

For assistance with designing a NIH BRM mailer (postcard, label or envelope), please contact the Mail Customer Service Branch at 301-496-3586.

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## **III. U.S. POSTAL SERVICE MAIL**

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### **1) Addressing Business Reply Mail**

The USPS requires Business Reply Mail to bear the permit number and the required Penalty Statement “Official Business Penalty for Private Use, \$300”. The following return address format is recommended for addressing Business Reply Mail:

#### **Business Reply Mail Address**

NIH Institute or Center (include Division, Branch, etc.)  
Recipient’s Name (Optional)  
Recipient’s Street Address (BLDG, ST, RM, and MSC)  
Recipient’s City, State, and Nine-Digit ZIP Code

#### **Sample Business Reply Mail Address**

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH/NIAAA  
DR. JOHN DOE  
22 SUCCESS PL RM 9030 MSC 0080  
BETHESDA MD 20814-9692

ICs should be aware that in addition to postage, a fee is paid for each reply received. In accordance with postal regulations, the address on Business Reply Mail (BRM) must be the address of the permit holder, which in this case will be a NIH location. Contractors distributing Business Reply Mail (BRM) on behalf of NIH must have NIH printed on the Business Reply Mail (BRM). A very important requirement of the USPS is that the unique ZIP Code 20814-9692 be used for NIH Business Reply Mail (BRM).

### **2) Prohibitions**

Business Reply Mail (BRM) envelopes, labels and post cards may not be used for any other purpose even if postage is affixed. Use of Business Reply Mail envelopes, labels or post cards for other than NIH official business is strictly prohibited and carries a penalty for private use. Special Services, for example, insurance, registered, certified, and return receipts are not available when using Business Reply Mail.

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*Any questions? Need assistance? Please contact the Mail Customer Service Branch (MCSB) on 301- 496-3586 or through email at [mcsbcs@mail.nih.gov](mailto:mcsbcs@mail.nih.gov)*

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## III. U.S. POSTAL SERVICE MAIL

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### F. International Mail

Special care should be taken when using any of the international mail services identified below. A return address should be used on each piece of mail. Appropriate customs forms should be completed and securely attached to all parcels. Extra packing material is encouraged for international parcels. Before sealing international parcels place a separate sheet of paper with both the destination and the return addresses inside the parcel in case the shipping label becomes detached. Make sure both the destination and the return addresses are placed on the parcel directly in the center of the top side of the envelope /box, with large clear print.

#### 1) Types of International/Foreign Mail

**(a) Global Express Guaranteed** - an expedited premium international document and non-document mail service. It provides reliable, high-speed, date-certain service to locations in most countries and territorial possessions. This service is a partnership between the U.S. Postal Service and FedEx. The official USPS delivery time frame is from 1-3 days.

**(b) Express Mail International (Formerly Global Express Mail)** - an on-demand type service equivalent to Domestic Express Mail Service. Mailable matter such as letters, documents and some merchandise may be sent to most foreign countries. The official USPS delivery time frame is from 3-5 days.

**(c) Priority Mail International** – The equivalent handling of Domestic Priority Mail. The official USPS delivery time frame is from 6-10 days.

**(d) First Class Mail International** - includes post cards, letters, flats, letter packages – regular printed matter, books, periodicals and small packets. This service is equivalent to the Domestic First-Class and Package Services Mail. There are some differences from domestic mail in size or weight requirements (noted by \*). There is no USPS official time frame for this mail class.

(i) First Class Mail  
International Postcards:



- |                            |                          |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Maximum length 6”        | Minimum length 5-1/2” *  |
| • Maximum height 4-1/4”    | Minimum height 3-1/2”    |
| • Maximum thickness 0.016” | Minimum thickness 0.007” |

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### III. U.S. POSTAL SERVICE MAIL

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(ii) First Class Mail  
International Letters:



- Maximum weight 3.5 ounces
- Maximum length 11-1/2"      Minimum length 5-1/2" \*
- Maximum height 6-1/8"      Minimum height 3-1/2"
- Maximum thickness 1/4"      Minimum thickness 0.007"

If your letter exceeds any of the above factors it will be classified and priced as a large envelope (flat).

(iii) First Class Mail  
International  
Large envelopes (flats):



- Maximum weight: 16 ounces\*
- Maximum height: 12"      Minimum height 6-1/8"
- Maximum length: 15"      Minimum length 11-1/2"
- Maximum thickness: 3/4"

A large envelope that exceeds any of these dimensions will be classified and priced as a package (parcel). Large envelopes must also be flexible, rectangular and uniformly thick. A large envelope that exceeds 13 ounces is classified and priced as Priority Mail.

(iv) First Class Mail  
International Packages:



- Maximum weight: 16 ounces\*
- Maximum length: 24" \*
- Maximum size no more than 36" in combined length + height + thickness\*

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## III. U.S. POSTAL SERVICE MAIL

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### 2) Addressing International Mail

When preparing mail to be sent to international countries, the following address format is necessary to insure delivery:

#### Delivery Address

Recipient's Name

Recipient's Street Address

Recipient's Postal Delivery Code, City, or Province

Recipient's Country Name in **CAPITAL** letters

#### Sample Delivery Address

Dr. K.B. Loo

45 Kane CT AP57

90032 Rome

ITALY

### 3) Preparing Global Express Guaranteed, Express Mail International, Priority Mail International, and First Class International:

#### (a) Global Express Guaranteed Service, Express Mail International

Appropriate USPS labels should be used for these services. The labels may be obtained from any DMMS mail center or from the Mail Customer Service Branch. After the label has been prepared (including foreign ZIP Code, if available), attach it to the front of the Global Express Mail or Express Mail International envelope in the area designated, seal the document and place into the NIH mail stream. Please do not remove any copies of these labels.

Although USPS service specific envelopes are preferred, plain white envelopes may be used if they are larger than the label and the label may be placed on the front of the envelope. AIR MAIL envelopes should not be used for Global Express Mail-Guaranteed or Express Mail International.

Parcels mailed using these services must also include a completed PS Form 2976-A, Customs Declaration and Dispatch Note that is placed within PS Form Envelope 2976-E. This form should be centered and placed next to the label on the top of the box, if possible. In addition, Global Express Guaranteed Service requires use of PS Form 6182, Commercial Invoice.

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### **III. U.S. POSTAL SERVICE MAIL**

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#### **(b) Priority Mail International and First Class Mail International**

Packaging should be sufficient to withstand the wear and tear of international handling. Do not leave room in the parcel for contents to shift around and don't over pack the parcel. If the parcel is damaged in transit, the contents of your parcel could be returned, lost or destroyed.

Letters of five pages or less should be folded and placed in a letter-sized envelope. Letters and documents with more than five pages and too large to place in letter envelopes but too small for boxes, should use the larger envelopes (9 x 12 flats) for mailings.

Customs forms are required for Priority Mail International and First Class International parcels.

#### **4) Customs Forms**

Customs forms are necessary for parcels dispatched to all countries. For the correct form contact the Mail Customer Service Branch for assistance.

#### **5) Forwarding and Returning International Mail**

International mail for persons no longer assigned or employed by NIH should follow the same procedures for forwarding and returning domestic mail, as explained on page 14.

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## III. U.S. POSTAL SERVICE MAIL

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### G. Permit Imprint Mail

Use of NIH Permit Imprint numbers for any purpose other than official government business is strictly prohibited. Authorization to use Permit Imprint numbers must be given to contractors performing mail services for NIH IC's. Each piece of mail prepared and dispatched to the USPS must contain "The National Institutes of Health" and the required Penalty Statement "Official Business Penalty for Private Use, \$300" in the return address. NIH ICs should obtain mailing documentation from contractors. Permit Imprint mailings must contain a minimum of 200 pieces or 50 pounds.

All Permit Imprint mailing must be faced (address facing in the same direction) and meet the preparation standards for the rate claimed. Mail must be deposited and accepted at the post office that issued the permit. ICs or their contractors should contact the Mail Customer Services Branch during the design stage and prior to depositing mail at the post office.

#### 1) Most commonly used types of Permit Imprints by NIH:

<u>Mail Type</u>	<u>USPS Required Form</u>
First-Class	PS Fm 3600-EZ or 3600-R
Presorted First-Class	PS Fm 3600-R
Priority	PS Fm 3600-R
Presorted Standard	PS Fm 3602-EZ or 3602-R
Parcel Post	PS Fm 3605-R
Media	PS Fm 3605-R
Library	PS Fm 3605-R

- (a) A completed PS Form 3615 should be presented to the Post Office (accompanied by the appropriate 3600 series form and mailing) when using the permit number for the first time at that location.
- (b) If depositing multiple mailings of different classes and weights at the Post Office it is recommended that a completed GPO Fm 712 and PS Fm 3602-G be presented in lieu of various PS Forms.

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## III. U.S. POSTAL SERVICE MAIL

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### 2) Preparing Permit Imprint Mailings

- (a) A return address and the Penalty Statement “Official Business Penalty for Private Use, \$300” must be placed on each piece bearing the NIH Permit Imprint number prior to depositing mail at the Post Office
- (b) Typed or computer-generated address labels should be used
- (c) The Permit Imprint must be legible and of a color that contrasts sufficiently with paper and background colors for machine readability
- (d) Whenever possible, place correspondence of five pages or less in regular business envelopes
- (e) Avoid the use of rubber stamps for Permit Imprint numbers and the indicia. The ink used for these stamps may be smeared. We recommend printing the Permit Imprint directly on the mail pieces.
- (f) Permit Imprints cannot be typewritten or hand-drawn.
- (g) Permit Imprints on mail pieces and labels must be aligned parallel with the return address and placed in the upper right corner of the address side or address label, as appropriate.
- (h) Presorted permit imprint mailings must be prepared in accordance with USPS regulations and be accompanied by standardized documentation produced by USPS approved software appropriate for the class of mail and rate claimed.
- (i) Please contact DMMS Mail Customer Service Branch to receive information on mail presort requirements

### 3) Permit Imprint Content and Format

The example formats on the next page are provided for the most commonly used Permit Imprints for NIH. It is extremely important that ICs and their contractors coordinate large Permit Imprint mailings with the Mail Customer Service Branch during the design phase and prior to depositing at the post office.

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### III. U.S. POSTAL SERVICE MAIL

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#### Examples of Permit Imprint Formats for NIH Official Mail

##### First-Class Official Mail

FIRST-CLASS MAIL  
POSTAGE & FEES PAID  
NIH/NICHD  
PERMIT NO. G-000

PRESORTED  
FIRST-CLASS MAIL  
POSTAGE & FEES PAID  
NIH/NICHD  
PERMIT NO. G-000

PRIORITY MAIL  
POSTAGE & FEES PAID  
NIH/NICHD  
PERMIT NO. G-000

##### Standard Official Mail

PRESORTED STANDARD MAIL  
POSTAGE & FEES PAID  
NIH/NHLBI  
PERMIT NO. G-000

##### Package Services Official Mail

MEDIA MAIL  
POSTAGE & FEES PAID  
NIH/NCI  
PERMIT NO. G-000

LIBRARY MAIL  
POSTAGE & FEES PAID  
NIH/NLM  
PERMIT NO. G-000

PARCEL POST MAIL  
POSTAGE & FEES PAID  
NIH/NCI  
PERMIT NO. G-000

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## IV. PARCEL GROUND SERVICE

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**A. Definition.** A nationwide, economical, date-certain, guaranteed parcel ground delivery service available to any physical address within the 48 contiguous United States, except to Post Office Boxes, (also excludes Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and US Virgin Islands).

This “add-on” service guarantees door-to-door delivery to most U.S. cities in one to six days (depending on distance) at significantly lower costs and improves transit time for parcels that could normally take up to 14 days for delivery via USPS Parcel Post. This service also allows customers to track parcels by telephone or using the Internet. Contact the Mail Customer Service Branch for assistance with tracking.

When parcels meeting weight requirements up to 70 pounds are received, DMMS will perform a cost and transit time comparison between the USPS and other carriers to determine which carrier will be the most cost effective and provide the least transit time for NIH parcels. Customers can expect improved delivery time and reduction in mailing costs.

**B. Procedures for Using Parcel Ground Service.** No special requirements are needed. Prepare the parcel in accordance with USPS addressing standards and place in the NIH outgoing mail stream. Customers with parcels too large to fit into collection boxes should contact the Mail Customer Service Branch to schedule a pick-up. Customers located near DMMS satellite mail facilities may always take packages there or call for assistance if the parcel is too large to carry.

Customers with high-volume mailings meeting weight requirements should contact the Mail Customer Service Branch at the beginning of the planning stage.

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## V. SUSPECT LETTERS AND PACKAGES

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### A. Screening Mail

Since September 11, 2001 and with growing concerns about the safety of our mail, the DMMS has prepared new policies and procedures for screening all incoming USPS mail.

- 1) All mail is screened by the Mail Customer Service Branch personnel as it enters the NIH mail system. For this reason, mail should not be accepted from any sources other than DMMS.
- 2) Even though mail is initially screened by DMMS each IC should establish procedures to screen incoming mail and report anything suspicious to the proper authorities.
- 3) If a suspicious letter or package is identified:
  - (a) DO NOT OPEN or handle excessively by squeezing, shaking, smelling, etc.
  - (b) Isolate the item, if possible by placing it in a plastic bag and moving it to a location away from the immediate work area.
  - (c) Immediately notify the proper authorities

### B. Suspect Letters and Packages Illustrations

The illustrations on the following two pages represent general checklists for suspect letters and packages. These lists are not all-inclusive and additional items could also identify a mail piece as suspicious. Common sense must prevail at all times. The presence of one or even two of the items on these checklists does not automatically mean the mail is a threat.

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## V. SUSPECT LETTERS AND PACKAGES

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### Suspect Letter and Package Checklist

Every NIH staff member should be cautious and vigilant for suspicious mail. This checklist will help to identify suspicious mail, packages, or other items:

- ✓ Is the addressee familiar with the name and address of sender?
- ✓ Package/letter has no return address
- ✓ Is the addressee expecting the package/letter? If so, verify expected contents
- ✓ Improper or incorrect title, address, or spelling of addressee name
- ✓ Title but no names
- ✓ Wrong title with name
- ✓ Handwritten or poorly typed addresses
- ✓ Misspelling of common words
- ✓ Return address and postmark are not from the same area
- ✓ Stamps (excessive postage, unusual stamps) versus metered mail
- ✓ Special handling instructions (special delivery, open by addressee only, etc)
- ✓ Restrictive markings such as confidential, personal, etc
- ✓ Over wrapped, excessive securing material such as tape, string or wrappings
- ✓ Oddly shaped or unevenly weighted packages
- ✓ Lumpy or rigid envelopes (stiffer than normal, heavier than normal, etc.)
- ✓ Lopsided or uneven envelope
- ✓ Oily stains or discolorations
- ✓ Item is leaking powder or an oily substance
- ✓ Strange odors
- ✓ Protruding wires or tinfoil
- ✓ Visual distractions (drawings, unusual statements, hand drawn postage, etc)

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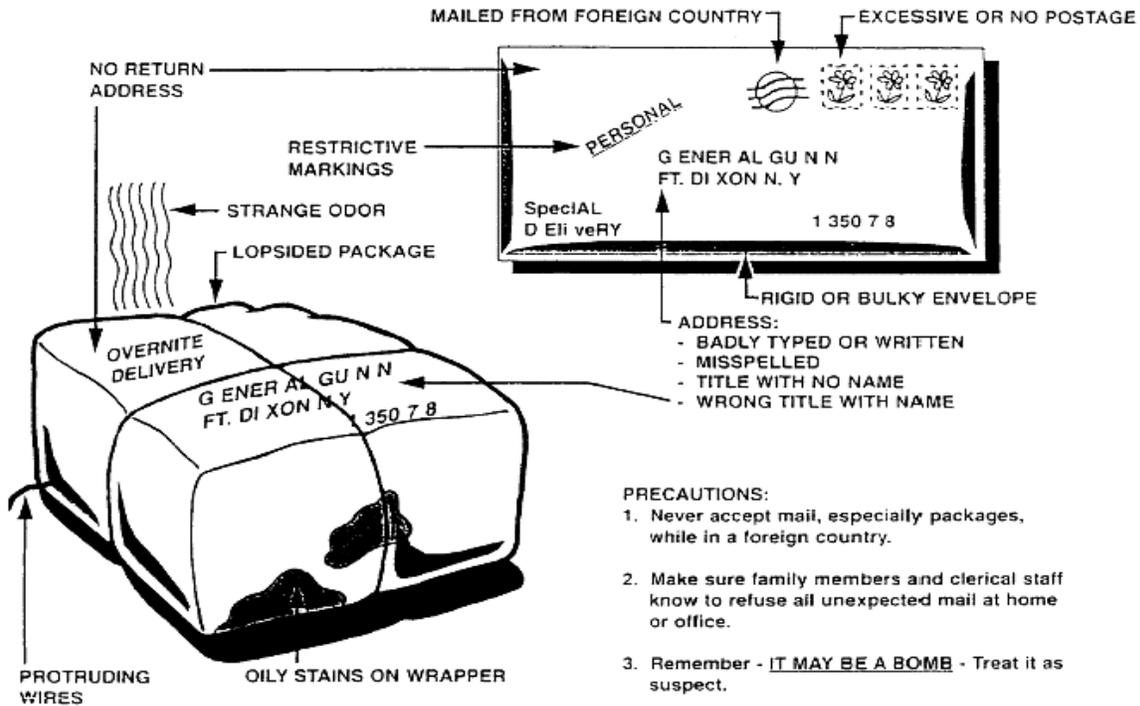
*Any questions? Need assistance? Please contact the Mail Customer Service Branch (MCSB) on 301- 496-3586 or through email at [mcsbcs@mail.nih.gov](mailto:mcsbcs@mail.nih.gov)*

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## V. SUSPECT LETTERS AND PACKAGES

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### Suspect Letter and Package Indicators WARNING!



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Any questions? Need assistance? Please contact the Mail Customer Service Branch (MCSB) on 301- 496-3586 or through email at [mcsbcs@mail.nih.gov](mailto:mcsbcs@mail.nih.gov)

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## VI. SAMPLES AND DIRECTIONS

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### A. Proper Addressing of Mail

LARRY E ELM  
NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH/NINDS  
31 WEAVER DR RM 31C00 MSC 0071  
BETHESDA MD 20892-0071  
OFFICIAL BUSINESS  
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE \$300

JUSTIN ARTIST  
MIRROR GRAPHICS INC  
805 S ARLINGTON BLVD APT 1A  
ARLINGTON VA 22200-1123

*½ inch clear zone to allow for USPS barcode*

- It is best to capitalize everything in the address and center on the envelope
- Eliminate all punctuation
- Use the USPS list of common address and state abbreviations (pp. 29-30)
- Always use a return address including IC, building address, room # and mail stop code
- Always place the street address or post office box on the line above the city and state
- Always place the ZIP+4 Code on the last line of the address
- Always leave the bottom ½ inch (both front and back) blank and unobstructed to allow for USPS barcode

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## VI. SAMPLES AND DIRECTIONS

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### B. How to Address Envelopes Completely and Correctly (Sample)

<p><b>LARRY E ELM</b> <b>NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH/NINDS</b> <b>31 WEAVER DR RM 31C00 MSC 0071</b> <b><u>BETHESDA MD 20892-0071</u></b> <b>OFFICIAL BUSINESS</b> <b>PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE \$300</b></p>	<p><b>JUSTIN ARTIST</b> <b>MIRROR GRAPHICS INC</b> <b>805 S ARLINGTON BLVD APT 1A</b> <b>ARLINGTON VA 22200-1100</b></p>
<p><i>1/2 inch clear zone to allow for USPS barcode</i></p>	

Always use your return address and include IC, RM, MSC, and the Penalty Statement.

Indicate whether it is North (N), East (E) West (W), or South (S).

Use the ZIP Code. And if you know the Zip+4, please use it

Is it Street, Avenue, Lane, Place, Road, Drive, Boulevard, or Circle?

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## VI. SAMPLES AND DIRECTIONS

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### C. USPS Directional Abbreviations

NORTH - N	EAST - E
SOUTH - S	WEST - W
NORTHEAST - NE	NORTHWEST - NW
SOUTHEAST - SE	SOUTHWEST - SW

### D. USPS Secondary Address Abbreviations

APARTMENT - APT	SUITE - STE
BUILDING - BLDG	ROOM - RM
FLOOR - FL	

### E. USPS Street Designator Abbreviations

ALLEY - ALY	ISLAND - IS	RIVER - RIV
ANNEX - ANX	JUNCTION - JCT	ROAD - RD
AVENUE - AVE	LAKE - LK	SPRING - SPG
BEACH - BCH	LANE - LN	SQUARE - SQ
BOULEVARD - BLVD	LODGE - LDG	STATION - STA
BRANCH - BR	LOOP - LOOP	STREET - ST
CENTER - CTR	MANOR - MNR	TERRACE - TER
CIRCLE - CIR	MEADOWS - MDWS	TUNNEL - TNL
COVE - CV	MILL - ML	TURNPIKE - TPKE
CROSSING - ZING	MISSION - MSN	UNION - UN
DRIVE - DR	ORCHARD - ORCH	VALLEY - VLY
ESTATES - EST	PARK - PARK	VIEW - VW
EXPRESSWAY - EXP	PARKWAY - PKY	VILLAGE - VLG
FALLS - FLS	PLAINS - PLNS	WALK - WALK
HEIGHTS - HTS	PLACE - PL	WAY - WAY
HIGHWAY - WY	PLAZA - PLZ	
HILL - HI	POINT - PT	
	PORT - PRT	

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## VI. SAMPLES AND DIRECTIONS

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### F. USPS Two-letter State Abbreviations

ALABAMA - AL	KENTUCKY - KY	OHIO -OH
ALASKA - AK	LOUISIANA - LA	OKLAHOMA - OK
ARIZONA - AZ	MAINE - ME	OREGON - OR
ARKANSAS - AR	MARSHALL ISLANDS - MH	PENNSYLVANIA - PA
CALIFORNIA -CA	MARYLAND - MD	PUERTO RICO - PR
COLORADO - CO	MASSACHUSETTS - MA	RHODE ISLAND - RI
CONNECTICUT - CT	MINNESOTA - MN	SOUTH CAROLINA - SC
DELAWARE - DE	MISSOURI - MO	SOUTH DAKOTA - SD
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA - DC	MISSISSIPPI - MS	TENNESSEE - TN
FLORIDA - FL	MONTANA - MT	TEXAS - TX
GEORGIA -GA	NEBRASKA -NE	UTAH - UT
GUAM -GU	NEVADA - NV	VERMONT - VT
HAWAII -HI	NEW HAMPSHIRE - NH	VIRGIN ISLANDS - VI
IDAHO - ID	NEW JERSEY - NJ	VIRGINIA - VA
ILLINOIS -IL	NEW MEXICO - NM	WASHINGTON - WA
INDIANA - IN	NEW YORK - NY	WEST VIRGINIA -WV
IOWA - IA	NORTH CAROLINA -NC	WISCONSIN - WI
KANSAS - KS	NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS - MP	WYOMING - WY

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## VII. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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**Accountable Mail** - Mail that requires special handling. This mail includes Registered, Certified, Express, Delivery Confirmation and some inter-office mail services.

**Activities** - NIH Institutes, Centers, and Divisions and specifically, laboratories, offices, etc.

**Business Reply Mail (BRM)** - Specially printed cards, envelopes and labels that may be mailed without prepayment of postage. The postage and fees are collected when the mail is delivered back to the sender.

**Clustered Mail Service** - A group of mail boxes centrally located in a designated area of a building where mail is picked up and delivered to NIH activities on-and off-campus.

**Domestic Mail** - Mail addressed and destined for delivery to locations within the United States and its territories.

**EPN** - Executive Plaza North

**Foreign or International Mail** - Mail addressed and destined for delivery to locations not in the United States or its territories.

**GPO** - Government Printing Office

**IC** - Institutes and Centers

**Inter-office Correspondence** - Generated by and intended for delivery to NIH activities on- and off-campus

**Mail Stop Code (MSC)** - The four-digit ZIP Code add-on used to locate, pick-up and deliver mail to NIH activities and clustered mail boxes on- and off-campus

**NSC** - Neuroscience Center

**NSA** - North Stonestreet Avenue

**Optical Character Reader (OCR)** – USPS computer-controlled automation equipment that locates, reads, and interprets address information

**Permit Imprints** - Simplified method to affix postage to each piece of mail.

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## VII. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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**Special** - Correspondence sent by NIH offices through inter-office mail that requires a signature upon delivery

**Tracer Action** – Action to locate a piece of non-delivered accountable mail

**USPS** - United States Postal Service

**ZIP+4** - a nine digit numeric code incorporating the original five-digit ZIP Code, a hyphen, and four additional digits. The first five digits identify the city and delivery office. The four-digit add-on identifies a specific delivery segment such as a city block, a floor of a building, a department with a firm, or a group of post office boxes.

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## NOTES

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