Critical Mail™ Communications Notice for BMEU Employees

The purpose of this work instruction is to standardize processes for Critical Mail acceptance and handling at Business Mail Entry Units or any facility accepting USPS mail.

Use this document to monitor and ensure that employees and USPS mail acceptance facilities are following the proper procedures for Critical Mail acceptance and processing.

What is Critical Mail:

Critical Mail is a new shipping option for commercial shippers (not sold at Retail) who send documents, tickets, and other urgent materials. Critical Mail pieces are charged a flat rate regardless of domestic destination or weight up to 3.0 ounces for letters and 13 ounces for flats. Critical Mail is strictly for automation-compatible letters and flats, with packaging supplied exclusively by USPS. Critical Mail highlights include:

- ***The Critical Mail letters and flats will travel within the First-Class Mail letter or flat automation mail stream.***
- USPS supplied automation compatible letter and flat envelopes are required (see picture).
- Critical Mail includes Delivery Confirmation at no additional charge.
- The extra services available are Signature Confirmation, Insurance, and Adult Signature.
- Customers must meet the Comercial Plus Price minimum of 5,000 pieces annually. Priority Mail letter/flat and Critical Mail shipments can be used together to meet the minimum.
- Critical Mail has two options for postage payment, PC Postage and Permit Imprint.
- Letters and flats up to the maximum weight (specified above) must meet automation requirements (e.g. max of ¼ inches in thickness for letters, max of ¾ inches in thickness for flats).
- The pieces must include an **Intelligent Mail barcode (IMb)** on the piece representing the finest depth of code achievable from the address (9/11 digits of ZIP Code information are not required).

Preparation and Packaging:

When shipping Critical Mail, customers are required to use USPS-produced envelopes. Critical Mail envelopes are provided by the USPS and must be used only for Critical Mail. **Authorized Critical Mail Customers can easily order envelopes by calling 1-800-610-8734.** .

No presort preparation is required for Critical Mail. Mailing must be submitted as follows
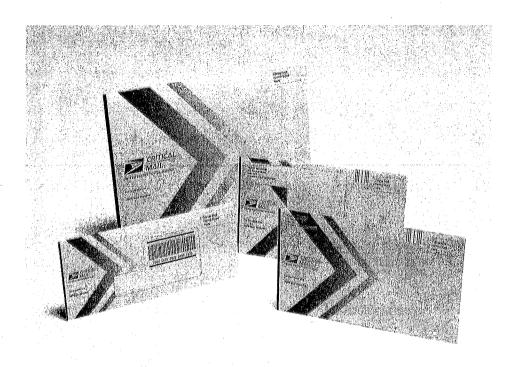- Letters must be prepared in USPS-provided letter trays; "faced" and the trays must be covered with sleeves.
- Flats must be prepared in USPS-provided flat trays; "faced-up" and trays must be covered with green lids and strapped.

Acceptance:

Postage for Critical Mail entered at a BMEU may only be paid by Permit Imprint and acceptance units should review Critical Mail mailings in the same manner as a single-piece First-Class Mail mailing paid by permit imprint. Critical Mail pieces paid with permit imprint must bear the marking **"Critical Mail"**. This marking must be placed in the permit indicia. In addition, all other required

wording must be placed in the indicia as applicable, i.e "U.S. Postage Paid", city and state, and permit number.
Permit Imprint mailings must be a minimum of 200 pieces or 50 lbs and submitted electronically on Postage Statement PS Form 3600PM or by eVS. Mailings must be deposited at the Post Office that issued the permit, at a time and place designated by the postmaster.

Critical Mail^{TM} FAQs

What if it's over 3 or 13 ounces for a letter or flat or not automation compatible?

> Critical Mail pieces entered as letters that exceed 3.0 ounces, ¼ inches in thickness, or do not meet automation letter standards will be charged the Priority Mail retail single-piece price. Critical Mail pieces entered as flats that exceed 13 ounces, ¾ inches in thickness, or do not meet the standards for automation flats will be charged the Priority Mail retail single-piece price.

Is Critical Mail Priority Mail?

> No, Critical Mail will travel within the First-Class Mail automation mail stream

Is Critical Mail available at retail?

> No, Critical Mail is only available to Commercial Plus mailers (5,000 piece per year minimum)

Who are the target customers for Critical Mail?

> Customers who use FedEx/UPS 2-3 Day Air for documents, gift cards, tickets or other urgent materials
> Customers looking for high visibility (tracking) at a competitive price

How does Critical Mail get tracked?

> Our automation equipment has the capability to read barcodes as letters and flats are processed. As each Critical Mail Delivery Confirmation barcode passes by a reader, that information is passed to our "Track and Confirm" data base.