

# Overview to Intelligent Mail - Basic Service



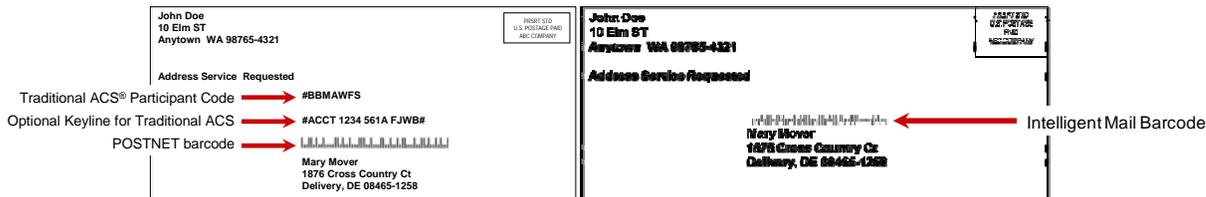
The United States Postal Service recently announced the retirement of the POSTNET™ barcode for automation price eligibility by January 2013. To continue to be eligible for automation prices, mailings of letter-size and flat-size mailpieces will need to have an Intelligent Mail barcode (IMb™) on the mailpieces.

The new migration to the Intelligent Mail barcode (IMb) applies to the following mail classes and processing categories:

- First-Class Mail® letters and flats
- Standard Mail® letters and flats
- Periodicals letters and flats
- Bound Printed Matter flats
- Qualified Business Reply Mail and Permit Reply Mail

The POSTNET barcode may still be used; however these mailpieces will not be eligible for automation postage pricing.

When comparing the POSTNET barcode and the Intelligent Mail barcode, you will see they both contain the Routing Code (zip+4), but the IMb has a much greater data capacity. In addition to the routing code, the Intelligent Mail barcode includes four additional fields: Barcode ID, Service Type ID (STID), Mailer ID (MID) and Serial Number. These additional fields allow mailers to define the class of mail, identify the services they wish to procure (e.g., tracking and address correction), and enables mailers to uniquely identify mailpieces. In the example below, you will see that with the POSTNET option, if a mailer wishes to use address correction services, additional information such as the participant code and keyline are required on the mailpiece to deliver the address correction information back to the correct recipient (sample on the left). Migrating to the Intelligent Mail barcode allows the mailer to use the IMb to request the address correction service information, thereby eliminating the need for a keyline and participant code.



## Intelligent Mail – Basic and Full-Service

The Intelligent Mail Service is built upon a suite of intelligent barcodes for mailpieces, handling units (trays and sacks) and containers. The Postal Service offers two Intelligent Mail Service options for mailers: Basic and Full-Service.

- Under the Basic option, mailers migrate from the POSTNET barcode to the Intelligent Mail barcode for mailpieces.
- Under the Full-Service option, in addition to using Intelligent Mail barcodes on mailpieces, mailers need to use the Intelligent Mail Tray labels on their handling units (trays, sacks), and the Intelligent Mail Container labels on their container placards. The Intelligent Mail barcodes affixed on the mailpieces, handling units and containers need to be unique for a period of 45 days. Under the Full-Service option, mailers are required to submit their mailing information such as Postage Statements

and Qualification Reports electronically. Mailers will receive additional benefits with the Full-Service option to include a discounted price, Start-the-Clock information indicating when their Full-Service mailings were inducted into the Postal mailstream and address correction information at no charge.

The intelligent barcodes for mailpieces, handling units and containers are comprised of the following data fields:

- An Intelligent Mail barcode (IMb) for mailpieces is a 31-digit barcode which consists of the routing code and four additional fields which add additional intelligence such as mail class, service requested, mailer identification and unique serial number for tracking. This barcode is used in place of the POSTNET barcode
- Intelligent Mail tray barcode (IMtb) is a 24-digit barcode printed on handling unit (tray and sack) labels to provide unique identification within postal processing. In addition to the destinating ZIP Code, Content Identification Number (which describes the presort makeup of the tray) and the Processing Code (which identifies the machinability of the mailpieces within the tray), this barcode contains three additional fields: the Mailer ID, Serial Number and Label Type. These three additional fields allow the mailer to uniquely identify the tray.. This barcode is used in place of the legacy 10-digit tray and sack barcode label
- The Intelligent Mail Container (IMcb) is 21-digit barcode printed on container placards to provide unique identification within postal processing. This barcode contains four fields which include an Application Identifier, Type Indicator, Mailer ID and Serial Number. These fields enable the mailer to uniquely identify the barcode affixed on container placards.

The following table highlights the key differences between the Basic and Full-Service options.

	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Full-Service</b>
Barcode on Mailpiece	31-digit IMb – uniqueness not required	31-digit IMb – Uniqueness required
Handling Unit	24-digit IMTB <i>or</i> Legacy 10-digit Tray and Sack Label – uniqueness not required	24-digit IMtb – Uniqueness required
Container Placards	21-digit IMcb, not required	21-digit IMcb - uniqueness required where containers are required
Mailing Information (eg Postage Statements, Qualification Report)	Hardcopy, Mail.dat <sup>®</sup> , Mail.XML <sup>®</sup> , or Postal Wizard	Mail.dat <sup>®</sup> , Mail.XML <sup>®</sup> , or Postal Wizard
Start-the-Clock	NA	Available
Full-Service ACS (address change)	NA	Available

## Getting Started With Intelligent Mail – Basic Option

The IMb for mailpieces is a maximum 31-character data string that converts into 65 bars of 4 different heights. IMb is comprised of a Barcode ID, Service Type Identifier (STID), Mailer ID (MID), Serial Number and Routing Code. Following is a detailed description on how to populate the fields within the Intelligent Mail barcode for mailpieces.



Intelligent Mail Barcode for Letters and Flats: 6-digit and 9-Digit Mailer IDs				
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)

Fields in Intelligent Mail barcode for Mailpieces

1. The **Barcode Identifier** is a 2-digit field that describes the level of presort for which the mailpiece is qualified to receive discount. This information may be printed on a mailpiece in human-readable form using the optional endorsement line (OEL).
  - a. Letter-size mail, with or without a printed OEL, may contain "00".
  - b. 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.

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Barcode IDs can be acquired by going to:

[https://ribbs.usps.gov/intelligentmail\\_mailpieces/documents/tech\\_guides/BarcodeIdentifier.pdf](https://ribbs.usps.gov/intelligentmail_mailpieces/documents/tech_guides/BarcodeIdentifier.pdf)

2. The **Service Type Identifier** (STID) is a 3-digit numeric field that represents the Intelligent Mail option (Basic or Full-Service), the class of mail, and additional services such as IMb Tracing or Address Correction, if any

STIDs can be acquired by going to:

[https://ribbs.usps.gov/intelligentmail\\_mailpieces/documents/tech\\_guides/stid.pdf](https://ribbs.usps.gov/intelligentmail_mailpieces/documents/tech_guides/stid.pdf)

3. The **Mailer Identifier** (Mailer ID or MID) field is a 6-digit or 9-digit number assigned by the Postal Service that identifies a specific agent in the mailing supply chain, such as a Mail Service Provider. Mail Owners and Mail Service Providers will be assigned 6-digit or 9-digit Mailer IDs based upon their annual mail volume as verified by the Postal Service. Six-digit MIDs are assigned to Mail Owners or Mail Service Providers whose annual volume is greater than 10 million pieces. Nine-digit MIDs are assigned to Mail Owners or Mail Service Providers whose annual volume is less than 10 million pieces. Mail Owners or Mail Service Providers may qualify for multiple nine-digit MIDs based on annual volume increments of one million pieces.

There are three methods for acquiring a Mailer ID (MID):

- o Single MID Generation via the Business Customer Gateway (BCG)
- o Bulk Acquisition via Manual Data Request
- o Bulk Acquisition and Verification via Mail.XML

The "MID/CRID Acquisition Quick Step Guide" provides step-by-step instructions on how a Mail Owner or Mail Service Provider can acquire MIDs and CRIDs.

4. The **Serial Number** is a numeric field defined by mail owner or mail service provider based on their business needs. The serial number will be a 6-digit or 9-digit number based on the length of the Mailer

ID being used in the barcode. When using the Basic option, the serial number does not need to be unique.

5. The **Routing Code** field contains the same Coding Accuracy Support System (CASS)-certified delivery-point 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. The Intelligent Mail barcode for mailpieces (IMb) with the 11-digit delivery point information is required on all letters and flats to receive automation prices.

## Things to Consider when Implementing Intelligent Mail – Basic Option

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1. **Work with key stakeholders:** Work with your software providers and Mail Service Providers to determine their capabilities in printing the Intelligent Mail barcode on your mailpieces.
2. **Review Guides, Specifications and Resources** – The following documents are recommended reading for getting started with Intelligent Mail. They can be found on RIBBS at RIBBS.usps.gov.

### Guides & Specifications:

- a. [A Resource Map to Intelligent Mail Documents](#) -which lists the locations of all the documents, guides and source materials that you will need in transitioning to Intelligent Mail services.
- b. **Mail Service Provider Quick Step** – this document introduces Mail Service Providers to Intelligent Mail and provides important information on obtaining and using MIDs, electronic documentation, resource guides and provisioning feedback for clients.
- c. **MID CRID Acquisition Quick Step** – this document provides the necessary steps to obtain a MID and CRID.
- d. **Overview to Intelligent Mail – Full-Service Option** – provides an overview of the requirements and benefits for Full-Service and the steps to participate.

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### Resources:

- e. Postal Service District Business Mail Entry at:  
<http://www.usps.com/ncsc/locators/find-bme.html>
  - f. Postal Mailpiece Design Analyst at: 855-593-6093 or [mda@usps.gov](mailto:mda@usps.gov)
  - g. *PostalOne!* Help Desk at: 800-522-9085 or [postalone@usps.gov](mailto:postalone@usps.gov)
3. **Plan and Build your Barcode** – If you are generating the IMb mailpiece barcode, handling unit (sack or tray label) barcode, and/or container label barcode on your own, you will need to do the following:
    - o Obtain Barcode Identifier  
*Barcode IDs can be acquired by going to:*  
[https://ribbs.usps.gov/intelligentmail\\_mailpieces/documents/tech\\_guides/BarcodeIdentifier.pdf](https://ribbs.usps.gov/intelligentmail_mailpieces/documents/tech_guides/BarcodeIdentifier.pdf)
    - o Plan for Services (Service Type Identifiers)  
*STIDs can be acquired by going to:*  
[https://ribbs.usps.gov/intelligentmail\\_mailpieces/documents/tech\\_guides/std.pdf](https://ribbs.usps.gov/intelligentmail_mailpieces/documents/tech_guides/std.pdf)
    - o Acquire a Mailer ID(s) from the Postal Service (see the acquisition process below & reference the “**MID/CRID Acquisition Quick Step**”).

## Printing Intelligent Mail Barcodes on the Mailpiece

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The placement of Intelligent Mail barcodes on the mailpiece 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.

Additional things to know about printing the IMb on a letter or flats:

- An IMb printed in the barcode clear zone must have a delivery point Routing Code or the USPS may affix a Letter Mail Labeling Machine (LMLM) label in order to apply a delivery point barcode.
- The IMb is taller and longer than the POSTNET barcode. The additional length consists of 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.

Please refer to the Domestic Mail Manual (DMM) for proper placement of the Intelligent Mail barcode for the applicable processing category.

## Overview of Intelligent Mail - Full-Service Option

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In the Full- Service option, mailers will use Intelligent Mail barcodes on mailpieces, handling units (trays, sacks), and containers where applicable. The Intelligent barcodes affixed on the mailpieces, tray and containers need to be unique for a period of 45 days from the induction date of the mailing (when the USPS verifies and accepts the mail). Under the Full- Service option, mailers are also required to submit their mailing information (i.e., Postage Statements and Qualification Reports) electronically through *PostalOne!*.

Mailers who participate in Full-Service will:

- Receive the Full-Service postage discount:
  - First-Class Mail Letters, Cards, and Flats: Subtract \$0.003 for each automation piece that meets the requirements of the Full-Service Intelligent Mail option.
  - Standard Mail Regular and Nonprofit Letters: Subtract \$0.001 for each letter that meets the requirements of the Full-Service Intelligent Mail option.
  - Standard Mail Regular and Nonprofit Flats: Subtract \$0.001 for each flat that meets the requirements of the Full-Service Intelligent Mail option (not available for saturation).
  - Periodicals Letters and Flats: Subtract \$0.001 for each addressed piece that meets the requirements of the Full-Service Intelligent Mail option.
  - Bound Printed Matter (BPM) Flats: Subtract \$0.001 for each flat that meets the requirements of the Full-Service Intelligent Mail option.
- Automated Address Correction at no charge - ACS is a post mailing service that allows mailers to receive change-of-address (COA) and other reasons for non-delivery electronically and reduce the number of manual (hardcopy) address notifications.
- Start-the-Clock Information – Start-the-Clock is the date and time when a mailpiece enters the mailstream.

Additional information on Intelligent Mail Full-Service can be found in the *Overview of Intelligent Mail – Full-Service*.