Technical Summary for Mailers: Basic, Full-Service, and Beyond

Vision
The Intelligent Mail vision is to provide end-to-end visibility into the mail stream by identifying and tracking letters, flats, packages, unit loads, and containers -- enabling a streamlined approach to mail acceptance. As a first step in tracking unit loads we developed the Intelligent Mail Tray barcode containing 24 digits. This barcode will be used on the IM Tray label to uniquely identify each tray, tub, and sack as well as the mail's originator. This new label is intended to replace the legacy 10-digit tray label currently in use.

Strategy
As the Postal Service continues to automate mail processing, the business need for strict adherence to a standardized tray and sack label has become imperative. Mail processing automation initiatives rely heavily on tray and sack labels to provide necessary mail processing and customer related information. Unfortunately, the Postal Service's legacy 10-digit tray and sack barcode label format does not uniquely identify the handling unit, a prerequisite for tracking. The 24-digit IM Tray label is a cross-functional business solution that expands the legacy 10-digit tray and sack label format by adding data elements that will not only continue to support sortation and routing, but also establish a unique identifier on each label. The IM tray label formats provide unique identification of trays and sacks in addition to identifying the originator of the mail by the use of unique Mailer IDs (MIDs) assigned by the Postal Service. The entire barcode string, including the MID and the serial number (determined by the mailer) should uniquely identify the tray, sack, or tub. Without these elements, the potential benefits associated with in-transit visibility, manifest reconciliation, and automated mail acceptance are severely diminished.

Two Intelligent 24-digit tray label barcode types have been developed for mailers, one that allows for a 6-digit Mailer ID, and another that allows for a 9-digit Mailer ID. Mailer ID's are assigned to mailers by the Postal Service. Mailers requesting additional services are asked to check with their Postal Service Marketing representative to confirm the requirements for a specific program. See the tables on the next page of this document for details on the data contained in the two label types.

Note: Please note that the use of the IM tray label will allow mailers, as well as the Postal Service to more effectively and efficiently manage their operations, regardless of whether the associated mailer is signed up for any additional service, be it Basic or Full Service options[1]. Mailers are therefore strongly encouraged to use the IM tray label on each handling unit when preparing mailings, even on Basic automation mailings. The use of the IM tray label does not require the mailer to satisfy full service requirements and is not an indicator that the mailer qualifies for the full-service option. As such, the use of an approved electronic method to transmit mailing documentation that matches the preparation of the submitted mail (nesting) is not required. Deciding what other service options will better serve the specific business need of the customer is a decision left up to the specific mailer.

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[1] From May 11 2009, the USPS started offering two options for using Intelligent Mail barcodes.

Under the Basic Service option, mailers will use the Intelligent Mail barcode on their letter and flat mailpieces. The basic Intelligent Mail barcode contains routing information for the delivery address but does not need to uniquely identify the mailpiece.

Under the Full Service option mailers must:

- Use the Intelligent Mail barcodes on mailpieces;
- Use Intelligent Mail tray labels and Intelligent Mail container barcodes, and
- Submit statements and mailing documentation electronically. The documentation must also describe how mailpieces are linked to (or nested within) handling units, such as trays and sacks, and how mailpieces and handling units are linked to containers (when containerization is required).

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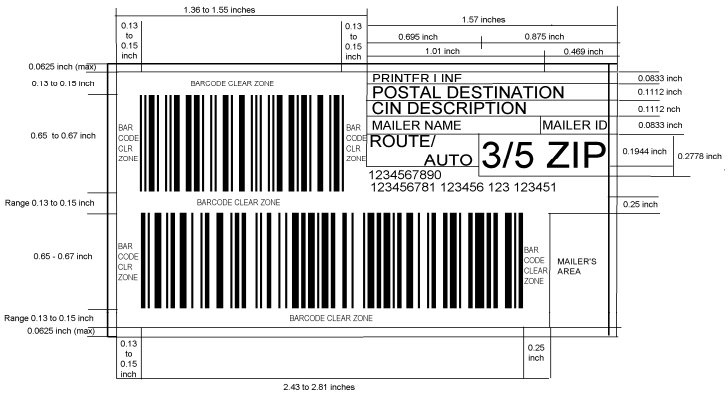
Detailed tray label specifications for both the 10/24-digit (SPUSPS - L - 3191) transitional label format (PDF/321K or Word/892KB) and the pure 24-digit (SPUSPS - L – 3216) label format are available on RIBBS (PDF/194K or Word/633KB).



Transitional 10+24-Digit Tray Label Format

Figure 1

Pure 24-Digit Tray Label Format

Figure 2

24-Digit Barcode Numeric Line

The 24-Digit Barcode Numeric Line is the numeric representation of the encoded 24-digit barcode data. To enhance readability, mailers should insert spaces in the 24-digit human-readable line as follows:

- For the 6-digit Mailer ID label, a space should be added between digits 9 and 10, and 15 and 16.
- For the 9-digit Mailer ID label, a space should be added between digits 9 and 10, and 18 and 19.

The tables below provide details about the data content of the new 24-digit IM tray barcodes available to mailers, one that allows for a 6-digit Mailer ID, and one that allows for a 9-digit Mailer ID.

Table I. IM Tray Barcode Data with a 6-Digit Mailer ID

Element	Digits	Purpose and Details
ZIP Code:	1 - 5	Identifies the tray or sack's ZIP Code destination. For 5-digit trays in accordance with the DMM®, the destination ZIP Code is the 5-digit ZIP Code. For 3-digit trays in accordance with the DMM, the destination ZIP Code is the 3-digit ZIP Code followed by two zeros.
CIN:	6 - 8	Describes the contents of the tray or sack based on the 3-digit content identifier numbers listed in the DMM. If no listing for the tray contents is found, three zeros are used.
Processing Code:	9	Use the value 1 for Automation Compatible, Barcoded, and Machinable Mail. Use the value 7 for all other mail. *1 and 7 are the only acceptable values.*
Mailer ID[2]:	10 -15	A unique, six-digit number assigned by the Postal Service to each mailer.
Serial Number:	16 - 23	A unique, eight-digit number for each tray or sack.
Label Type:	24	The Label Type is used as a qualifier for systems to recognize and parse the data within this barcode. The value is 1 when used with the 6-digit Mailer ID.

[2] A Mailer ID is required and should be obtained from the local Business Mail Entry Unit (BMEU) or Mailpiece Design Analyst (MDA), unless you plan to subscribe to OneCode Confirm or OneCode ACS. BMEUs can be located at http://www.usps.com/nationalpremieraccounts/findlocators.htm and MDAs can be contacted via the http://www.usps.com/replymail/mailpiece.htm online tool. Mail owners and mail preparers will be assigned a 6-digit or 9-digit Mailer Identifier based on criteria established by the Postal Service. All 6-digit Mailer Identifiers will begin with '0' through '8'; all 9-digit Mailer Identifiers will begin with '9'.

Table II. IM Tray Barcode with a 9-Digit Mailer ID

Element	Digits	Purpose and Details
ZIP Code:	1 - 5	Identifies the tray or sack's destination. For 5-digit trays in accordance with the DMM, the destination ZIP Code is the 5-digit ZIP Code. For 3-digit trays in accordance with the DMM, the destination ZIP Code is the 3-digit ZIP Code followed by two zeros.
CIN:	6 - 8	Describes the contents of the tray or sack based on the 3-digit content identifier numbers listed in the DMM. If no listing for the tray contents is found, three zeros are used.
Processing Code:	9	Use the value 1 for Automation Compatible, Barcoded, and Machinable Mail. Use the value 7 for all other mail. *1 and 7 are the only acceptable values.*
Mailer ID:	10 - 18	A unique, nine-digit number assigned by the Postal Service to each mailer.
Unique Identifier:	19 - 23	A unique, five-digit number for each tray or sack.
Label Type:	24	The Label Type is used as a qualifier for systems to recognize and parse the data within this barcode. The value is 8 when used with the 9-digit Mailer ID.

Obtaining the Intelligent Mail Tray Label

To get the Intelligent Mail Tray labels, mailers can:

- Produce labels using the specifications available on RIBBS;
- Use the Web-based Intelligent Mail Customer Label Distribution System (CLDS) to submit online label orders to the Label Production Center at Topeka, KS.

Implementation

To ease the transition from the current legacy 10-digit label to the new 24-digit label, the Postal Service developed a transitional label that includes both the legacy 10-digit barcode (I 2 of 5 symbology - ANSI/AIM BC2) and the new 24-digit IMTray barcode (ISS Code 128 symbology, subset C - ANSI/AIM BC4). This transition strategy provided the creation of a label that could be immediately deployed within the existing Postal Service environment without negatively impacting operational processes. While the size of some human readable text is sacrificed in the 10/24-digit IM tray label format, the two barcodes were necessary to make a smooth transition to the pure 24-digit IM tray label format. This strategy allowed the Postal Service to incrementally upgrade its infrastructure to recognize and implement the pure 24-digit IM Tray label. The pure 24-digit tray label contains only a single barcode, the 24-digit Intelligent Mail Tray barcode, along with additional human readable information.

The Postal Service has now completed its infrastructure upgrade in support of the pure 24-digit tray label format. At present, all indications are that the mailing industry can now migrate to the pure 24-digit tray label format. However, as there still seems to be a need for the legacy 10-digit as well as the 10/24-digit tray label formats, it is envisaged that these formats will still be acceptable for now but at some point could be retired.

Policy guidelines on the adoption and usage of the IM tray label formats shall be as stipulated in the *Mailing Standards of the United States Postal service, Domestic Mail Manual - DMM®* (DMM). For more details on the Intelligent Mail implementation, we recommend that you look at the USPS RIBBS website, where you can download presentations and documents covering a wide range of topics: https://ribbs.usps.gov/index.cfm?page=intelligentmail