



January 22, 2013

New Postal Regulations Taking Effect Seriously. You really ought to read this.

ProList, Inc. is an Industry Innovator in data management and direct mail services solutions.

In a surprise move, the Postal Service introduced new regulations applying to letter-sized folded self-mailers on January 5, catching the nation's mailing community off guard. It is expected that mailers will be similarly startled by new Intelligent Mail barcode requirements on January 27. It seems that most mailers had treated the Postal Service's notices as referring to something in the "future" and since changes happening today would be in the "present", it was confusing when new rules actually came into existence. Some apparently believed these new "rules" were an elaborate postal prank, akin to the "Free Beer Tomorrow" sign posted humorously in some bars.

A ProNews investigation has revealed that the Postal Service has no sense of humor.

Folded Letter-Size Self-Mailers

To demonstrate their lack of a sense of humor, the Postal Service has indicated that there will be no "grandfathering" of old rules for old mail-pieces, and that they are granting no exceptions. "We gave a year's notice," a postal spokesman said, frowning, unaware of the confusion caused by "now" versus "future."

As real live self-mailers have come in, we have been surprised (seriously) at how harshly the rules are being interpreted. Key issues we have seen so far:

- Paper weight problems. Folded letter-size self-mailers must be on at least 70 pound paper if under an ounce, 80# over an ounce with a million subtle distinctions and exceptions;
- Glue-spot issues. If you are using glue spots to seal your self-mailers, you may need three spots where only two tabs are required;
- Inserts. If you have an insert in a quarter-folded self-mailer that is printed on lighter paper (this could be pages 3-4 in an unbound 6-page newsletter) there are paper weight requirements for that insert depending on size, weight and placement;
- Address panel. You cannot print the delivery address on the final folded panel. It's easier to show than explain.

These are just the highlights. These are major new rules, and what worked last year may not qualify this year. The penalty for violating any of these often obscure and obtuse rules is significant – a non-machinable surcharge of about 20 cents per piece. A 10,000 piece folded self-mailer printed on the wrong weight paper could cost an additional \$2,000 in postage. **Additional.** On 10,000 pieces.

PLEASE! Let us see and review your self-mailers before you go to press on them. This is a whole new world that could cost you thousands of dollars.

You can read a summary of the rules [here](#). Better still, send us a sample. It's free – all we want is your love and respect.

Contact Us Today!

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THESE RULES ARE IN EFFECT NOW. WE SAY IT IN ALL CAPS IF WE MUST.

Intelligent Mail Barcodes

The other rule that is not yet in effect but WILL BE REALLY, REALLY, SOON, is the requirement that you use an Intelligent Mail barcode in order to get an automation discount on your mail. This goes into effect on January 27, which is REALLY SOON. If ProList is printing your addresses, it's a pretty sure thing that we're already using the IMb, as we mailing hipsters call it. If we aren't, your customer service rep is most likely having a hissy fit with you to make sure we can. Some small windows don't show the entire barcode, but they really need to be very small to be a problem. If you are having data work done elsewhere, be sure they are including the IMb in the record. The penalty is not as severe as the folded self-mailer rules, but you don't really want to lose your automation discount.

One positive change from the USPS has to do with content requirements. For years the USPS has required that any reply mail pieces in an automated mailing needed to be automation compatible for the outbound mailing to receive a discount. They have backed off that rule now, so if you do not have an IMb on your reply piece you may remain calm. It's still a good idea to have an IMb on those pieces, but not critical. Some kinds of Business Reply Mail (BRM) may be impacted, but they will not impact your outbound rates.

Qualified Business Reply Mail (QBRM) users will need to have an IMb on their pieces in order to get the discounted QBRM rate on reply pieces. If you use QBRM you know who you are. Regular BRM users do not NEED an IMb, although it is suggested that they have one. In all cases you will get your replies, but there may additional costs.

Confused? No worries, give us a call and we'll work it out together.

New Rates Go Into Effect January 27, 2013 This is also really quite soon

Oh, yeah. Did we mention new postage rates kick in on January 27? The overall increase is about 2.5%, although it could be quite a bit more if you mail parcels.

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