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## Good-ish News from the Postal Service! Reduced pace for closing of mail processing facilities

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



Hoping that all of the smarter mailers were distracted at the Postal Madness 2012 seminar, the [Postal Service](#) announced on May 17 that they were reducing the pace at which they will close down mail processing facilities. Their original plan was to close more than 225 locations between May 2012 and February 2013. This would have represented an enormous realignment of transportation routes and processing in a very tight time frame. Mailers were justifiably concerned about the Postal Service's ability to execute a change of that dimension without badly disrupting service. The new plan is to slow the process of consolidating the network, closing 48 locations in August of this year, another 92 locations in the summer of 2013, and 89 more in the summer of 2014, thus spreading the joy over two years.

"After 2014," added postal officials, "everything will be swell."

Actually they did not say nor imply that everything, or for that matter *anything*, will be swell, but the editorial staff here felt it was a more uplifting view. Actually, the slowed down plan is a watering down of a multi-part "Plan to Profitability" that has bounced around like a Ping-Pong ball between the various rocks and hard places of Congress, commercial mailers, the Postal Regulatory Commission, postal unions, and a hapless public. The Plan to Profitability is a combination of network consolidations, service standard changes, Saturday delivery elimination, and fiddling with the [retirement](#) and health-care funds for postal employees. It could actually resolve many of the USPS' problems if it weren't for the opposition to virtually every provision by the aforementioned Congress, commercial mailers, PRC, postal unions and hapless public.

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Still, the short term news is good: expect less disruption than previously expected to delivery over the coming months. We still advocate commingling where possible to avoid transportation delays. Longer term predictions are more difficult. Stay tuned, because this story has a loooong way to go.

## New Folded Self-Mailer Rules to be implemented in January 2013 Smaller size limit, paper weight changes, and a new vision test unveiled

To distract themselves from declining mail volumes, senior postal officials have used the last few years to create new rules for letter-size fold self-mailers. Designed in cooperation with mailing industry representatives, these new rules allow for increased efficiency in postal sorting equipment. The designs have been well tested, and the proposed rule changes have been approved by the Postal Regulatory Commission, so these are not proposals – these will definitely go into effect.

The new design regulations are not difficult, but there are definitely significant differences from current rules, and the penalty for failing to conform is substantial. In most cases, folded self-mailers that fail to conform will be subject to non-machinable postage rates, **typically about 20 cents higher**. You can expect much slower delivery, too, as these pieces are transported on the USPS burro fleet, generally bypassing automated sorting equipment.

Contact Us Today!

Dave Lewis  
[dlewis@prolist.com](mailto:dlewis@prolist.com)  
301 924-4545  
[www.ProList.com](http://www.ProList.com)



The rules are complicated, but generally most mailers just need to pay attention to some key changes. Most current self-mailer designs will [work](#), but there are a few gotchas you should look out for:

- **Smaller size:** The largest size allowed for a folded self-mailer will be 5.5" high x 10.5" wide, down from today's 6-1/8" x 11-1/2". Today you can fold an 11 x 17 sheet in thirds and call it a letter size self-mailer – not in January.
- **Paper weights:** Minimum paper weights will go up based on size, fold type, overall piece weight, presence of perforations, interior enclosures, and zodiac sign. In most cases you'll be covered with 80# paper (Book grade, text offset), but if your folded letter-size self-mailer has perforations, die-cuts, or is a Sagittarius, you may want to double check.
- **Fold orientation:** The final folded edge must be on the bottom. Seriously. Must be. No extra tabs to sneak by anymore. If the bottom edge is open, open your wallet.
- **Extra-flap-thing rule:** We're not sure how to word this, but we'll try. If your self-mailer has 3 or more panels you will end up with a final panel on one side or the other. This final panel needs to be on the back of the mail piece, on the non-address side. Look at the illustrations from the Postal Service and it may make sense.

The long and the short of it is that you should let ProList take a look at all of your self-mailers before January to make sure they are compliant. We can even send our self-mailer SWAT team to your office to examine them. OK, it's not really a "SWAT" team, but we don't get a lot of excitement in this business, so humor us, please. Still, we will come to your office...we'll bring rulers and everything.

Again, these changes are not difficult, but they can be tricky, and the cost for a mistake can be high – so get your self-mailers up to snuff now.

Read the details on the new rules [here](#). Then call us.

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Dave Lewis  
ProList  
301-924-4545 x1006  
[www.prolist.com](http://www.prolist.com) [dlewis@prolist.com](mailto:dlewis@prolist.com)

Phone 301-924-4545



8341 Beechcraft Avenue | Gaithersburg, MD 20879-1509  
1-888-PROLIST | Fax 301-924-2373 | [www.ProList.com](http://www.ProList.com)