

## 505 Return Services

### Overview

- 1.0 Business Reply Mail (BRM)
- 2.0 Permit, Pre-paid (Metered), and Courtesy Reply Mail
- 3.0 Merchandise Return Service (MRS)
- 4.0 Parcel Return Service
- 5.0 Bulk Parcel Return Service

### 1.0 Business Reply Mail (BRM)

#### 1.1 Business Reply Mail (BRM) Prices and Fees

##### 1.1.1 General BRM Charges

[5-31-15] For BRM cards, letters and flats, an annual permit fee under 1.2 is required, and a per-piece fee under 1.1.8 is applied to each mailpiece, in addition to the applicable First-Class Mail or Priority Mail postage. See [Notice 123—Price List](#), for applicable prices and fees.

##### 1.1.2 High-Volume Basic BRM

[5-31-15] An annual account maintenance fee is required for high-volume BRM.

##### 1.1.3 Basic Qualified BRM (QBRM)

[5-31-15] In addition to prices and fees under 1.1.1, an annual account maintenance fee is required for basic QBRM (which applies to a card meeting the applicable standards in 1.6 and 201.1.0 or a letter meeting the applicable standards in 1.6 that is not eligible for and claimed at the QBRM price for cards).

##### 1.1.4 High-Volume Qualified BRM

[5-31-15] In addition to 1.1.1, annual permit and account maintenance fees, and a quarterly fee, are required for high-volume QBRM.

##### 1.1.5 Bulk Weight Averaged Nonletter-Size BRM

[5-31-15] In addition to 1.1.1, permit holders participating in bulk weight averaged nonletter-size BRM under 1.8 must pay an annual account maintenance fee, and a monthly maintenance fee.

##### 1.1.6 Special Standards for BRM Pieces with an Optical Disc

A letter-size BRM piece containing one standard optical disc will not be charged a nonmachinable surcharge if the piece meets the standards in 233.2.8. A flat-size BRM piece containing one standard optical disc and weighing no more than 2 ounces will be charged postage applicable for a 1-ounce First-Class Mail flat if the piece meets the standards in 233.2.8.

##### 1.1.7 Postage

[5-31-15] Each piece of returned BRM is charged the applicable single-piece First-Class Mail or Priority Mail postage (223.1.0, and 133.1.0). Cards must meet the standards in 201.1.0 to qualify for card price postage. Any card larger than those dimensions is charged the applicable First-Class Mail letter price. For Priority Mail or

First-Class Mail BRM pieces exceeding 13 ounces in weight, if the zone cannot be determined from a return address or cancellation, then the permit holder is charged zone 4 postage based on the weight of the piece. For QBRM, see 1.6.3.

### 1.1.8 Per Piece Fees

[5-31-15] Per piece fees listed in 1.1 are charged for each piece of returned BRM postcard, letter or flat (in addition to postage in 1.1.1). If a permit holder has not paid an annual account maintenance fee and established a BRM advance deposit account, then the basic (higher) BRM per piece fee must be paid. If a permit holder has paid the annual account maintenance fee and has established a BRM advance deposit account, then the high-volume (lower) BRM per piece fee is paid. For QBRM, see 1.6.4.

### 1.1.9 Advance Deposit Account and Annual Account Maintenance Fee

[5-31-15] A permit holder may choose to pay an annual account maintenance fee and establish an advance deposit account, which qualifies returned BRM pieces for the high-volume per piece fee. The account maintenance fee must be paid once each 12-month period at each Post Office where a permit holder holds an advance deposit account. Payment of the account maintenance fee is based on the anniversary date of the initial payment. The fee may be paid in advance only for the next 12-month period and only during the last 60 days of the current 12-month period. The fee charged is that which is in effect on the date of payment. A separate advance deposit account solely for BRM is not required. An advance deposit account can be used for BRM under these conditions:

- a. For each withdrawal, only one statement is provided for each annual account maintenance fee paid.
- b. If a permit holder distributes BRM with different addresses (including Post Office box numbers) under the same permit number going to the same delivery unit and has only one business reply account, then the BRM is separated by each different address but only one statement is provided and only one annual account maintenance fee is paid.
- c. The permit holder must pay an annual account maintenance fee for each separate statement (accounting) requested. If only one annual account maintenance fee is paid, then the permit holder receives only one statement.
- d. The permit holder must maintain a sufficient balance in the BRM advance deposit account to cover postage and per piece fees for returned mailpieces. The permit holder is notified if funds are insufficient. After three calendar days, if no funds are deposited, then the BRM on hand is charged the basic BRM per piece fee and postage and charges are collected from the permit holder (e.g., in cash) prior to delivery.
- e. BRM addressed to several different firms at the same delivery unit may be delivered to an agent authorized by a valid BRM permit holder. The agent pays one annual account maintenance fee for all the firms represented by the agent in the same delivery unit. If the agent, or any of the firms represented by the agent, wants a separation of charges, then separate (additional) account maintenance fees must be paid.

**1.1.10 Renewal of Annual Account Maintenance Fee**

[5-31-15] An annual renewal notice is provided to each BRM permit holder with a BRM advance deposit account. The notice and the payment for the next 12 months must be returned by the expiration date to the Post Office that holds the advance deposit account. After the expiration date, if the permit holder has not paid the annual account maintenance fee but still has a valid BRM permit, returned BRM pieces no longer qualify for the high-volume BRM per piece fee and are charged the basic BRM per piece fee in 1.1.8.

**1.1.11 Payment Options**

[5-31-15] Permit holders may pay for postage and per piece fees on returned pieces by cash or check upon delivery, through a regular postage due account (604.6.3), or through a BRM advance deposit account (1.1.9). A regular postage due account is not charged an annual account maintenance fee and does not qualify the permit holder for high-volume BRM per piece fees.

**1.2 Permits****1.2.1 Required**

[5-31-15] Any mailer who wants to distribute BRM must apply for and receive a permit. The permit number, city, and state where the permit is held must appear on all pieces of BRM.

**1.2.2 Application Process**

[5-31-15] The mailer may apply for a BRM permit by submitting a completed Form 3615 to the Post Office issuing the permit and paying the annual permit fee. If a completed Form 3615 is already on file for the mailer for other permits at that office, then the mailer must submit the annual BRM permit fee and the USPS amends Form 3615 by adding the BRM authorization.

**1.2.3 Annual Permit Fee**

[5-31-15] A permit fee must be paid once each 12-month period at each Post Office where a BRM permit is held. Payment of the permit fee is based on the anniversary date of the permit's issuance. The fee may be paid in advance only for the next 12 months and only during the last 60 days of the current service period. The fee charged is that which is in effect on the date of payment. Agents authorized by a permit holder 1.7 are not required to pay an annual permit fee at the Post Office where their BRM is received.

**1.2.4 Renewal of Annual Permit Fee**

[5-31-15] An annual renewal notice is provided to each BRM permit holder by the USPS. The notice and the payment for the next 12 months must be returned by the expiration date to the Post Office that issued the permit. After the expiration date, if the permit holder has not paid the annual permit fee, then returned BRM pieces are treated as follows:

- a. Postcards of no obvious value are treated as waste and disposed of at the delivery unit.
- b. Letter and flat pieces with a return address are endorsed "Business Reply Permit Canceled" and are returned to the sender.

- c. Pieces without a return address are endorsed “Business Reply Permit Canceled” and forwarded to the mail recovery center for handling.

### 1.2.5 Other Post Offices

[5-31-15] A permit holder may distribute BRM through any Post Office for delivery at any Post Office under 1.7.

### 1.2.6 Revocation of a Permit

[5-31-15] The USPS may revoke a BRM permit because of format errors or for refusal to pay permit fees (annual, accounting, quarterly, or monthly), postage, or per piece fees. If the permit was revoked due to format errors, then a former permit holder may obtain a new permit and permit number by completing and submitting a new Form 3615, paying the required BRM annual permit fee, paying a new annual account maintenance fee (if applicable), and, for the next 2 years, submitting two samples of each BRM format to the appropriate Post Office for approval.

## 1.3 Basic Standards

### 1.3.1 Description

[5-31-15] [3-2-15] Business Reply Mail (BRM) service enables a permit holder to receive First-Class Mail and Priority Mail back from customers. The permit holder guarantees payment of the applicable First-Class Mail or Priority Mail postage, plus a per piece fee, on all returned BRM which includes any incomplete, blank, or empty BRM cards and envelopes and any mailable matter with a BRM label affixed. BRM cards, envelopes, self-mailers, and flats may be distributed by a BRM permit holder in any quantity for return to any Post Office in the United States and its territories and possessions, including military Post Offices overseas. High-Volume BRM under 1.1.2 is a subset of BRM that qualify pieces for a reduced per piece fee. QBRM, under 1.1.3, 1.1.4 and 1.6, is a subset of BRM available for specific automation-compatible letter-size pieces that qualify for an automation postage price and a reduced per piece fee. Domestic BRM may not be distributed to foreign countries (see the International Mail Manual for International Business Reply Service (IBRS)). BRM may not be used for any purpose other than that intended by the permit holder, even when postage is affixed. In cases where a BRM card or letter is used improperly as a label, the USPS treats the item as waste.

### 1.3.2 Extra Services

[5-31-15] No extra services are permitted with BRM, except for BRM parcels bearing an Intelligent Mail package barcode with imbedded USPS Tracking service.

### 1.3.3 Official Mail

Authorized users of official (penalty) mail may distribute BRM subject to the additional standards in 703.7.0, which supersede any conflicting standards in 1.0.

### 1.3.4 Samples

[5-31-15] Prior to printing, permit holders are encouraged, but not required, to submit preproduction samples of BRM to the USPS for approval. QBRM pieces require USPS approval (1.6).

### 1.3.5 Error Notification

[5-31-15] If the USPS discovers a BRM format error, the responsible permit holder or authorized agent receives written notification of the error. The permit holder must correct the error and make sure that all future BRM pieces meet appropriate specifications. The repeated distribution of BRM with format errors is grounds for revoking a BRM permit (1.2.6).

### 1.3.6 Combined Pieces as a Single Item

[5-31-15] Two or more BRM pieces may be mailed as a single piece if the BRM pieces are identically addressed and prepared for mailing in accordance with 201.1.0. The permit holder is charged postage based on the total weight of the combined piece plus one per piece fee. If the combined pieces become separated, then the permit holder must pay postage and a per piece fee for each individual piece. Combined pieces are not eligible for QBRM postage prices or per piece fees.

### 1.3.7 With Postage Affixed

[5-31-15] BRM with postage affixed is handled the same as other BRM. No effort is made to identify or separate BRM pieces with postage affixed. The amount of affixed postage is not deducted from the postage or per piece fees owed. The permit holder may request a credit or refund for postage affixed to BRM under 604.9.2.

## 1.4 Mailpiece Characteristics

### 1.4.1 Paper Weight

BRM paper envelopes must have a minimum basis weight of 20 pounds (500 17- by 22-inch sheets). Other pieces (cards and self-mailers) must meet the basis weight requirements in 201.3.0.

### 1.4.2 Nonpaper Envelopes

USPS Engineering must approve nonpaper envelopes for mailability. See 201.3.0.

### 1.4.3 Envelope Reflectance

Envelope material must not have a red fluorescence exceeding 4.0 phosphor meter units.

### 1.4.4 Sealing and Edges

BRM pieces must be rectangular, with four square corners, and parallel opposite sides, but may have finished corners as described in 201.1.0 for letter-sized pieces or 201.1.0 for flat-sized pieces. BRM pieces are not mailable if they are sealed with wax, clasps, string, staples, or buttons.

### 1.4.5 Window Envelopes

[5-31-15] The following standards apply to BRM prepared in an open-panel or a covered window envelope:

- a. All window envelopes:
  1. When a mailpiece has a barcode in the address block, the mailpiece must meet the applicable standards in 202.5.1 for letters or 202.5.2 for flats.
  2. The address showing through the window must be that of the permit holder or an authorized representative.

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3. The facing identification mark (FIM) must be printed on the envelope as specified in [708.9.0](#).
  4. See [601.6.4](#) for required clearances for information showing within a window envelope.
- b. Covered window envelopes:
1. The “No Postage Necessary” imprint, the business reply legend, and the horizontal bars must be printed either directly on the envelope or on the insert appearing through the covered window. The minimum size of the information appearing in the covered window is 2 inches high and 4-1/4 inches long. Horizontal bars may be omitted only on letter-size BRM bearing Intelligent Mail barcodes.
  2. The window cover must be of a nontinted clear or transparent material (e.g., cellophane or polystyrene) that permits the barcode and its background, as viewed through the window material, to meet the reflectance standards in [708.4.4](#). The edges of the window cover must be securely glued to the envelope.
- c. Open panel window envelopes:
1. The “No Postage Necessary” imprint, the business reply legend, and the horizontal bars must be printed directly on the envelope. Horizontal bars may be omitted only on letter-size BRM bearing Intelligent Mail barcodes.
  2. Other required and optional elements in [1.5](#) may be printed on the insert appearing through the address window.

**1.4.6 Self-Mailers and Reusable Mailpieces**

[\[5-31-15\]](#) In addition to the standards in [1.4](#) and [1.5](#), self-mailers and reusable mailpieces must meet the standards in [201.3.14](#) and [601.6.5](#) (or [601.6.6](#)). Permit holders must provide instructions to the user for re-folding and sealing (see [601.6.5](#) or [601.6.6](#).) so that upon return the piece meets sealing and folding requirements in [201.3.0](#).

**1.4.7 Cards**

Cards must meet the standards in [201.1.2](#).

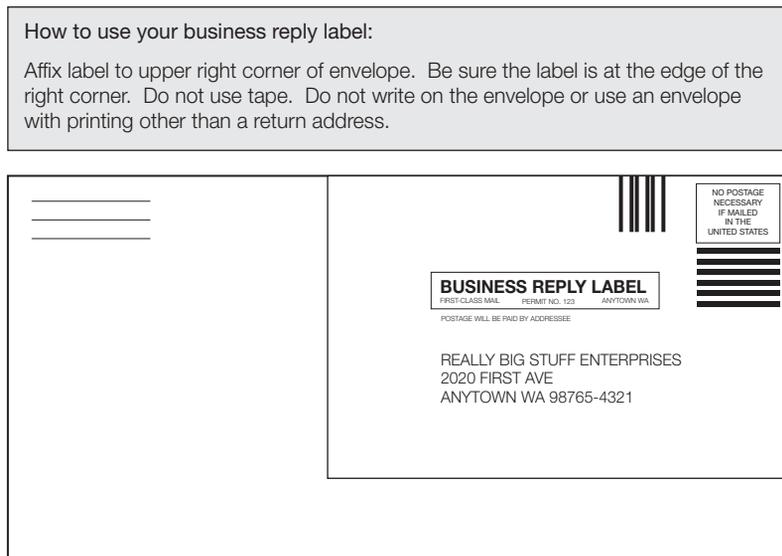
**1.4.8 Labels for Letter-Size Pieces**

[\[5-31-15\]](#) The minimum size of a BRM label for use on letter-size pieces is 2 inches high and 3 inches long. BRM labels on ordinary letter-size pieces are not required to have a FIM or a ZIP+4 barcode, but all other format standards in [1.5](#) must be met. In cases where a BRM card or letter is used improperly as a label, the USPS treats the item as waste. The following standards apply to BRM labels for use on letter-size pieces:

- a. The minimum size of a BRM label is 2-5/8 inches high and 4-1/4 inches long. All format elements, including a FIM, must be printed on the label. Exception: The vertical series of horizontal bars must be at least 3/4-inch high. Horizontal bars may be omitted on BRM letter-size pieces bearing Intelligent Mail barcodes. The back of the label must be coated with a permanent adhesive strong enough to firmly attach the label to an envelope.

- b. The permit holder must provide instructions to the user describing how the label should be applied to a mailpiece and what precautions must be observed when applying the label (see [Exhibit 1.4.8](#)). A pictorial diagram showing proper placement of the label must be included with the instructions. At a minimum, the instructions must include the following directions:
  - 1. Place the label squarely in the upper right corner of the envelope.
  - 2. Do not write on the envelope or label.
  - 3. Do not use a window envelope, an envelope that is less than 1 inch higher than the label an envelope that is more than 4-1/2 inches high, or an envelope with any printing other than a return address.
  - 4. Do not use tape to affix the label.
- c. When the label is affixed to an envelope, the address must be placed within the OCR read area (see [202.2.1](#)).
- d. Pieces with business reply labels cannot qualify for QBRM prices.

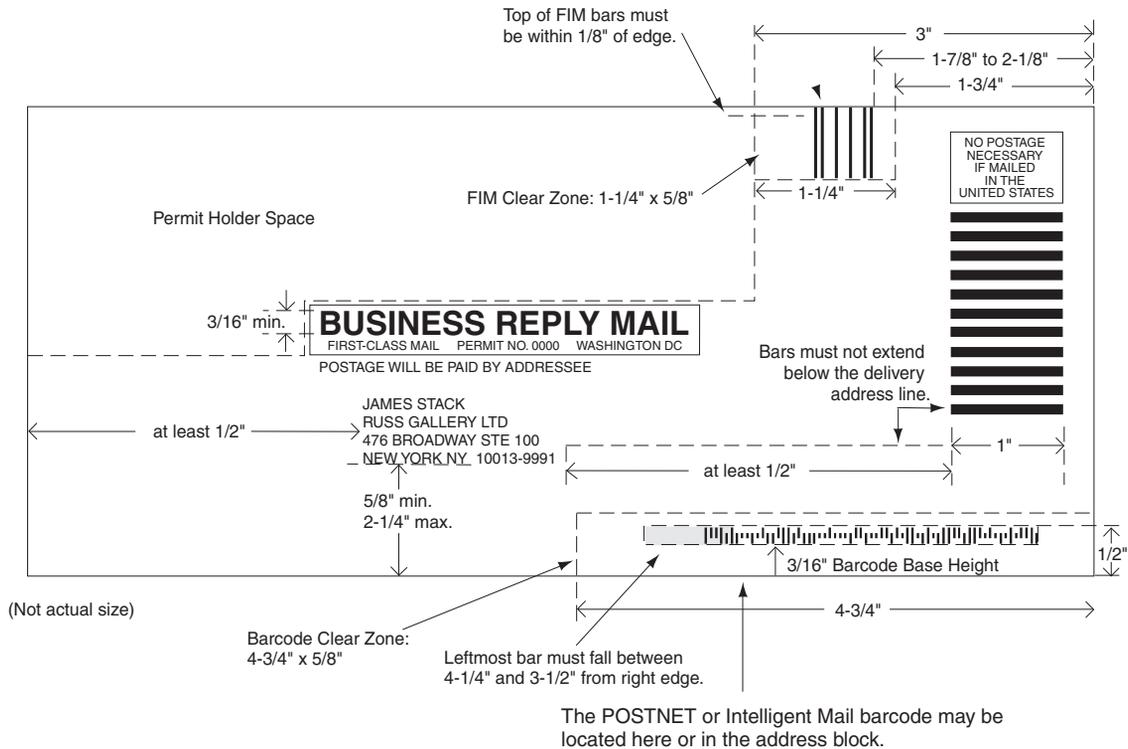
**Exhibit 1.4.8 Instructions for Affixing Business Reply Label**



**1.5 Format Elements**

**1.5.1 General**

[5-31-15] Except for BRM parcels under 3.0, all pieces of BRM are subject to these format elements. The USPS may revoke a BRM permit because of format errors under [1.2.6](#). An Intelligent Mail barcode (IMb) is not required, except for QBRM prices; if an IMb is used, it must be printed and placed under [1.5.10](#) and as shown in [Exhibit 1.5.1](#). Pieces of QBRM and bulk weight averaged nonletter-size BRM are subject to additional format standards listed in [1.6](#) and [1.8](#). BRM format elements are shown in [Exhibit 1.5.1](#).

**Exhibit 1.5.1 Business Reply Mail Format****1.5.2 Printing and Print Reflectance**

[5-31-15] All forms of printing are permissible if legible to the satisfaction of the USPS. Handwriting, typewriting, and hand stamping may not be used to prepare BRM. Printed borders are not permitted on letter-size BRM, but are permitted on envelopes greater than 6-1/8 inches high or 11-1/2 inches long or 1/4 inch thick. All ink colors are acceptable if the piece meets the appropriate reflectance standards in 708.4.4.

**1.5.3 "No Postage Necessary" Imprint**

The imprint "NO POSTAGE NECESSARY IF MAILED IN THE UNITED STATES" must be printed in the upper right corner of the address side of the piece, except as allowed under 601.6.6 for reusable mailpieces with outgoing permit imprint indicia. The "NO POSTAGE NECESSARY" imprint must not extend more than 1-3/4 inches from the right edge of the piece.

**1.5.4 Business Reply Legend**

[5-31-15] The legend "BUSINESS REPLY MAIL" or "BUSINESS REPLY LABEL", as appropriate, must appear on all pieces. This legend must appear above the address in capital letters at least 3/16 inch high. At the permit holder's discretion, the business reply legend may be surrounded by a rule or border.

### 1.5.5 Permit Number and Postage Endorsement

Directly below the business reply legend, the words “FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. [NO., CITY, STATE]” (representing the permit holder's number and Post Office that issued the permit) must appear in capital letters. Directly below that, the endorsement “POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE” must appear in capital letters. At the permit holder's discretion, the permit number and postage endorsement may be surrounded by a rule or border.

### 1.5.6 Delivery Address

**[5-31-15]** The delivery address on a piece of BRM may not be altered to redirect the mailpiece to any address other than the one preprinted on the piece. The complete address (including the permit holder's name, delivery address, city, state, and USPS assigned BRM ZIP + 4) must be printed directly on the piece, except as allowed under 1.4.5 or under item a below, subject to these conditions:

- a. Preprinted labels with only delivery address information (including an Intelligent Mail barcode under 1.5.10) are permitted, but the permit holder's name and other required elements must be printed directly on the BRM piece.
- b. On letter-size pieces, the complete delivery address must appear within the OCR read area (see 202.2.1).
- c. There must be at least a 1/2-inch clearance between the ZIP Code and the horizontal bars.
- d. A unique ZIP Code (i.e., firm ZIP Code) must not be used for BRM unless the ZIP Code has been assigned specifically for BRM (see Form 6805). A unique 4-digit add-on to denote BRM may not be used with a unique 5-digit ZIP Code not specifically assigned to BRM.

### 1.5.7 Horizontal Bars

A vertical series of horizontal bars parallel to the length of the piece must be printed directly below the imprint “NO POSTAGE NECESSARY IF MAILED IN THE UNITED STATES.” The bars must be uniform in length, at least 1 inch long and 1/16 inch to 3/16 inch thick, and evenly spaced. On letter-size nonbarcoded BRM, the bars must not extend below the delivery address line (the line above the line containing the ZIP Code). On barcoded BRM, the bars must not extend lower than 5/8 inch from the bottom edge of the piece. Horizontal bars may be omitted on BRM letter-size and cards bearing Intelligent Mail barcodes.

### 1.5.8 Facing Identification Mark (FIM)

A FIM must be printed on all letter-size BRM and on business reply labels affixed to letter-size mail (see 1.4.8d). FIM B must be used with BRM without a barcode. FIM C must be used with any BRM printed with a barcode. The FIM must meet the physical standards in 708.9.0.

### 1.5.9 Company Logo

A company logo is permitted:

- a. On nonbarcoded BRM, if it is placed outside the OCR read area (see 202.2.1).
- b. On letter-size barcoded BRM, if it is placed no lower than 5/8 inch from the bottom edge of the piece.

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- c. On any piece, if the logo does not interfere with any required format elements.

### **1.5.10 Additional Standards for Letter-Size and Flat-Size BRM Bearing an IMb**

[5-31-15] When an Intelligent Mail barcode is printed on any BRM pieces, it must contain the barcode ID, service type ID, and correct ZIP+4 routing code, as specified under 708.4.3. The IMb must be placed on the address side of the piece and positioned as part of the delivery address block under 202.5.7 or within the barcode clear zone in the lower right corner of the piece if printed directly on the piece.

## **1.6 Additional Standards for Qualified Business Reply Mail (QBRM)**

### **1.6.1 Description**

[5-31-15] Qualified business reply mail (QBRM) is a subset of business reply mail. Permit holders distribute automation-compatible letter-size pieces that qualify for automation postage prices and reduced per piece fees. In addition to meeting the eligibility requirements below, the authorization to participate in QBRM under 1.6.2, and the format standards in 1.5, QBRM is First-Class Mail that:

- a. Is letter-size and is prepared to meet the automation compatibility requirements in 201.3.0 (except 201.3.13.1).
- b. Meets all the Business Reply Mail (BRM) standards in 1.3 through 1.8.
- c. Has postage and per piece charges deducted from a BRM advance deposit account.
- d. Is authorized to mail at QBRM prices and fees under 1.6.2. During the authorization process, a proper ZIP+4 Code is assigned to the mailer (under 1.6.2) for each price category of QBRM to be returned under the system (one for card priced pieces, one for letter-size pieces weighing 1 ounce or less, and one for letter-size pieces weighing over 1 ounce up to and including 2 ounces).
- e. Bears the proper ZIP+4 Code, assigned by USPS for the appropriate price category, in the address of each piece. The ZIP+4 Codes assigned for this program must be used only on the organization's appropriate QBRM pieces.
- f. Bears the correct Intelligent Mail barcode, correctly prepared under 1.8 and 708.4.0, that corresponds to the unique ZIP+4 code in the address on each piece distributed.
- g. Bears a properly prepared facing identification mark (FIM) C on each piece distributed (see 708.9.0).

### **1.6.2 Authorization**

[5-31-15] To participate in QBRM, a mailer with a valid BRM permit and having paid the annual account maintenance fee, must submit Form 6805 to the Postmaster or manager, Business Mail Entry for the Post Office to which the QBRM pieces are to be returned. USPS assigns to the mailer a proper BRM ZIP+4 Code, as applicable, reviews Form 6805 and preproduction samples provided by the mailer for compliance with relevant standards, and if approved, issues the mailer an authorization via the Form 6805.

### 1.6.3 Postage

Each piece of returned QBRM is charged the automation postage price for QBRM pieces in 1.2. Pieces that do not meet the format requirements for QBRM cannot qualify for automation postage prices and are charged First-Class Mail postage according to 1.6.1.

### 1.6.4 Per Piece Fees

[5-31-15] Per piece fees are charged for each piece of returned QBRM (in addition to postage in 1.6.3). Pieces that do not meet the format requirements for QBRM cannot qualify for QBRM per piece fees and are charged the high-volume BRM per piece fees in 1.1.2.

### 1.6.5 Annual Account Maintenance Fee and Advance Deposit Account

[5-31-15] Permit holders are required to pay QBRM postage and per piece fees through a BRM advance deposit account, which requires payment of an annual account maintenance fee (see 1.1.9).

### 1.6.6 Quarterly Fee for High-Volume QBRM

Mailers may choose to pay a quarterly fee in addition to the annual account maintenance fee. Payment of the quarterly fee entitles mailers to a lower per piece fee (the high-volume QBRM per piece fee listed in 1.1.4). The quarterly fee and annual account maintenance fee must be paid at each Post Office where mail is returned and for each separate billing desired. Mailers are eligible for the high-volume QBRM rates and per piece fees only for the time they pay the quarterly fee (i.e., mailers can opt out of the quarterly fee and related high-volume QBRM per piece fees simply by not paying the fee for the next quarter). The quarterly fee cannot be paid or renewed retroactively to receive a lower per piece fee on pieces already paid for and delivered. The quarterly fee can be paid for any three consecutive calendar months.

### 1.6.7 Payment Period for Quarterly Fee

The quarterly fee must be paid in advance for at least one but no more than four quarterly periods. A quarterly period begins on either the first day of the month (if a mailer pays on or before the 15th of the month) or the first day of the following month (if a mailer pays after the 15th of the month) and continues for three consecutive calendar months. A mailer who pays the quarterly fee is entitled to the high-volume QBRM per piece fee from the date of payment through the end of the quarterly period. The fee paid is that which is in effect on the date of payment.

## 1.7 BRM Distributed and Received by Agents of a Permit Holder

### 1.7.1 Description

[5-31-15] Permit holders may give permission to subsidiary offices, agents, or authorized representatives to distribute and receive BRM using a single (corporate) permit number. BRM pieces are distributed by and returned to agents, who pay postage and per piece fees on those returned pieces. Agents may use any type of BRM service meeting the applicable standards in 1.0 and under the following additional conditions:

- a. Permit—The main permit holder or “corporate” office applies for the permit number and pays the permit fee. The agent must present a letter of authorization from the permit holder showing the name, address, and telephone

number of the local agent authorized to receive the BRM to the Post Office where the BRM is to be returned. Any time there is a change to the original permit application or the authorization letter, each agent must provide an amended letter of authorization to their local Post Office.

- b. Annual Permit Fee—Agents do not pay a separate annual permit fee but must submit evidence (usually a copy of Form 3544) to the local office once each 12-month period to show that the annual permit fee has been paid. This evidence is not required if permit holder has a centralized account processing system (CAPS) account, through which the local Post Office can determine that the permit fee has been paid.
- c. Postage, Per Piece Fees, and Annual Account Maintenance Fees—Agents receiving BRM or QBRM are responsible for paying all the postage and per piece fees, and applicable annual account maintenance fees, under 1.1 for the type of service received.
- d. Payment Guarantee—The permit holder is ultimately responsible for postage and per piece fees for all pieces returned under that permit number. If a local agent refuses or neglects to pay postage or per piece fees on returned pieces, then those pieces are forwarded to the Post Office that issued the original permit for collection of postage and per piece fees from the permit holder. Once forwarded to the permit holder, these pieces cannot qualify for QBRM postage and per piece fees. The permit holder's refusal to accept and pay the required postage and per piece fees for BRM offered for delivery is grounds for immediate revocation of the BRM permit (1.5.6).
- e. Format—BRM distributed by agents must meet all required format standards in 1.4 and 1.5. Authorized representatives distributing BRM on behalf of a permit holder must have the permit holder's name and permit number printed on the BRM and their own names and addresses printed below the permit holder's name, except:
  1. When the agent is a branch of an authorized business.
  2. The permit holder notifies a Post Office that authorized representatives may use the permit holder's permit number without printing the permit holder's name.

## 1.8 Bulk Weight Averaged Nonletter-size BRM

### 1.8.1 Description

Bulk weight averaging is a method of counting, rating, and billing incoming nonletter-size BRM based on principles of mathematical statistics. Probability sampling techniques are used to measure the characteristics of the total BRM volume by examining a fraction of the volume. Statistically valid samples that are drawn from the incoming BRM volume each postal accounting period are used by Post Offices to compute average postage due per pound and average piece count per pound factors. The net bulk weight of mail received is multiplied by these conversion factors to get the estimated volume received and postage and fee amounts.

### 1.8.2 Eligibility

BRM pieces rated by the weight averaging method must:

- a. Meet the basic standards for BRM in [1.0](#).
- b. Not be letter-size ([201.1.0](#)) or card-size ([201.1.2](#)).
- c. Not exceed 5 pounds.

### 1.8.3 Postage, Per Piece Fees, and Other Fees

**[5-31-15]** Returned pieces of bulk weight averaged nonletter-size BRM are charged postage and per piece fees according to [1.1.5](#). Permit holders participating in bulk weight averaged nonletter-size BRM must pay an annual account maintenance fee and a monthly maintenance fee (see [1.1.5](#)).

### 1.8.4 Application Process

**[5-31-15]** A permit holder who wants to use bulk weight averaged BRM for nonletter-size pieces must submit a written request to the Postmaster of the office where the BRM permit is held. The Postmaster forwards this information to the manager, Customer Service Standardization, USPS Headquarters (see [608.8.0](#) for address). The request must include the following information:

- a. Permit holder's name and address.
- b. Name and location of the Post Office at which BRM will be received and a CAPS account number, if available.
- c. Information about the number of pieces expected to be returned over a 24-hour period and a 30-day period, and a breakdown of the weight distribution of those pieces (in nearest ounces or pounds) (e.g., X number of 3-ounce pieces, Y number of 4-ounce pieces, and Z number of 5-ounce pieces).
- d. Based on the estimated volume in [1.8.4c](#), a 24-hour estimate and a 30-day estimate of postage and per piece fees using the postage and charges listed in [1.1.5](#).
- e. A statement indicating whether the piece volume has seasonal variation and, if applicable, estimates of monthly volumes for a 12-month period.

### 1.8.5 Authorization

The permit holder's request will be reviewed and approved by the manager, Customer Service Standardization, USPS Headquarters. If the request is approved, then a letter of authorization is sent to the permit holder from the Post Office where the BRM permit is held. The permit holder signs a service agreement and, if necessary, is assigned a Post Office box address.

### 1.8.6 Denial of Authorization

If the permit holder's request is not approved, then the Post Office sends a written notice, giving reasons for the denial. The permit holder has 15 days following receipt of the notice to file a written appeal of the decision with the postmaster and to furnish further information. If the postmaster still finds that the application should be denied, then the postmaster forwards the file to the manager, Customer Service Standardization, USPS Headquarters, who issues a final written decision to the permit holder.

505.1.8.7

### 1.8.7 Revoking Authorization

[5-31-15] A Postmaster may terminate authorization for bulk weight averaged BRM by sending written notice to the permit holder, for any of the following reasons:

- a. The permit holder provided incorrect or incomplete information on the request for authorization.
- b. The permit holder's BRM pieces no longer meet the eligibility requirements in 1.0.
- c. The USPS finds that bulk weight averaging no longer provides adequate revenue protection.
- d. The permit holder no longer desires to participate in bulk weight averaging.

### 1.8.8 Notice and Appeal

Termination takes effect 15 days from the permit holder's receipt of the notice unless the permit holder files a written appeal within that period with the postmaster. The postmaster forwards the permit holder's appeal together with all pertinent information to the manager, Customer Service Standardization, USPS Headquarters, who issues a final agency decision to the permit holder. The permit holder may continue to use the bulk weight averaging method until a final decision is made on the appeal.

## 2.0 Permit, Pre-paid (Metered), and Courtesy Reply Mail

### 2.1 Permit Reply Mail

#### 2.1.1 Description

[5-31-15] Permit reply mail (PRM) enables a permit imprint permit holder to receive First-Class Mail and Priority Mail back from customers by prepaying postage for reply pieces at the time of mailing. Mailers must distribute PRM pieces as part of the contents of an outgoing First-Class Mail mailing (see 230) only by using a valid permit imprint (604.5.0) account.

#### 2.1.2 Extra Services

[5-31-15] No extra services are permitted with PRM.

#### 2.1.3 Permit Holder Intentions

PRM may not be used for any purpose other than the purpose intended by the permit holder, even when postage is affixed.

#### 2.1.4 Special Standards for PRM Pieces with an Optical Disc

A letter-size PRM piece containing one standard optical disc will not be charged a nonmachinable surcharge if the piece meets the standards in 233.2.8. A flat-size PRM piece containing one standard optical disc and weighing no more than 2 ounces will be charged postage applicable for a 1-ounce First-Class Mail letter if the piece meets the standards in 233.2.8.



### 2.3.4 Permit Reply Mail Legend

The legend, “PERMIT REPLY MAIL,” must appear on all pieces. The legend must appear above the address in capital letters at least 3/16 inch high. At the permit holder’s discretion, the permit reply mail legend may be surrounded by a rule or border.

### 2.3.5 Permit Number and Postage Endorsement

Directly below the permit reply mail legend, the words, “FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. [NO., CITY, STATE]” (representing the permit holder’s number and the Post Office that issued the permit) must appear in capital letters. The permit holder may replace the permit number and the Post Office with a company permit as described in 2.4. Directly below that, the endorsement, “POSTAGE HAS BEEN PREPAID BY ADDRESSEE,” must appear in capital letters. At the permit holder’s discretion, the permit number and postage endorsement may be surrounded by a rule or border.

### 2.3.6 Delivery Address

[5-31-15] The complete address (including the permit holder’s name, delivery address, city, state, and ZIP+4 Code) must be printed on the piece. The delivery address on a PRM mailpiece may not be altered to redirect it to any address other than the one preprinted on the piece. PRM pieces must bear an Intelligent Mail barcode meeting the standards in 202.5.0 and 708.4.0.

### 2.3.7 Facing Identification Mark

A facing identification mark (FIM) C must be printed on all letter-size PRM. The FIM C must meet the physical standards in 708.9.0.

### 2.3.8 Company Logo

[5-31-15] A company logo is permitted on letter-size PRM, provided the logo is placed no lower than 5/8 inch from the bottom edge of the piece and it does not interfere with any required format element.

## 2.4 Company Permit Reply Mail Imprint

### 2.4.1 Definition

A company permit reply mail imprint is one in which the exact name of the company holding the permit is shown in the permit reply mail indicia in place of the city, state, and permit number.

### 2.4.2 Use

A customer may use a company permit reply mail imprint if, for 1 year from the date of mailing, the permit holder or its agent keeps records of each mailing paid with a company permit reply mail imprint and makes them available for USPS review on request. These records must include the weight of a single piece; the total number of pieces mailed; the total postage; and the dates and Post Offices of mailing. A complete sample mailpiece must be included for each mailing.

### 2.4.3 Format

To create a company permit reply mail imprint, replace the words “PERMIT No. [NO., CITY, STATE]” (representing the permit holder’s number and the Post Office that issued the permit), with “PERMIT PAID BY [COMPANY NAME]” (representing the name of the company in the delivery address of the mailpiece) in capital letters.

## 2.5 Prepaid (Metered) Reply Mail

### 2.5.1 Description

[5-31-15] Mailers may use indicia generated by any postage evidencing system (see 604.4) to prepay reply postage on Priority Mail Express, on Priority Mail when the price is the same for all zones, on First-Class Mail, and on single-piece price Media Mail and Library Mail under the following conditions.

- a. The postage amount must be sufficient to prepay the full postage due.
- b. Print indicia directly on the mailpiece or on a label, and place indicia under [201.4.3](#).
- c. Indicia used to prepay reply postage must not show the date.
- d. Pre-address the mailpiece for return to the authorized user only.
- e. Print the words “NO POSTAGE STAMP NECESSARY POSTAGE HAS BEEN PREPAID BY” directly above the address.
- f. Mailers may use FIM A on barcoded letter-size First-Class Mail reply mail except when using PC Postage.
- g. When using PC Postage, mailers must use FIM D for prepaid reply mail when the indicium is printed directly on the mailpiece.
- h. The address side must appear as described in this section and shown in the illustration below. Nothing may be added except a return address, FIM, or barcode.

505.2.6



## 2.6 Courtesy Reply Mail

Courtesy reply mail (CRM) is reply mail other than BRM or MRM endorsed in other mail, with or without prepayment of postage, for return to the address on the reply piece. If postage is required, the customer returning the piece affixes the applicable First-Class Mail postage. Each piece must meet the physical standards in [201.1.0](#) or [201.2.0](#).

## 2.7 Enclosed Reply Cards and Envelopes

[\[5-31-15\]](#) Mailers may enclose reply cards or envelopes (i.e. BRM under [1.0](#); Permit Reply Mail under [2.1](#) and [2.4](#), Prepaid (Metered) Reply under [2.5](#), or Courtesy Reply Mail under [2.6](#)), addressed for return to a domestic delivery address, within automation mailings subject to provisions in [201.3.0](#) for enclosures.

## 3.0 Merchandise Return Service (MRS)

### 3.1 Prices and Fees

#### 3.1.1 Permit Fee

[\[5-31-15\]](#) An annual Returns Services permit fee must be paid once each 12-month period at each Post Office where a Merchandise Return Service (MRS) permit is held. The fee (in effect on the date of the payment) may be paid for the next 12 months, during the last 60 days of the service period, before the anniversary of the permit's issuance. An approved merchandise return permit on Form 3615 must be on file at every Post Office to which parcels are returned.

### 3.1.2 Advance Deposit Account and Account Maintenance Fee

[5-31-15] There is an annual Returns Services account maintenance fee for the advance deposit account. The permit holder must pay postage and extra service fees through an advance deposit account and must pay an annual account maintenance fee. When an advance deposit account is kept at each entry location, a separate permit (except as provided under 3.2.11 and for qualified national permit holders using scan based payment for returns) needed and the annual merchandise return service permit and annual account maintenance fees must be paid at each Post Office. The fee (in effect on the date of the payment) may be paid for the next 12 months, during the last 60 days of the service period, before the anniversary date of the initial fee payment. A separate advance deposit account for MRS is not required; the annual account maintenance fee is charged if MRS postage and fees are paid from an existing account:

- a. For each withdrawal, only one statement is provided for each annual account maintenance fee paid.
- b. The permit holder must pay an annual account maintenance fee for each separate statement (accounting) requested.

### 3.1.3 Postage

[5-31-15] Merchandise return service parcels are charged single-piece price postage and extra service fees based on the class or subclass marking on the label. If a parcel is unmarked or marked Media Mail, Library Mail, or Bound Printed Matter, then it is charged Parcel Select Nonpresort prices. If the postage for the returned parcel is zoned and there is no way to determine its zone of origin (i.e., no postmark or return address), then postage is calculated at zone 4 (for Priority Mail, or for pieces marked "Ground" and charged at Parcel Select Nonpresort prices). Postage is deducted from an advance deposit account.

### 3.1.4 Postage Due Weight Averaging

MRS mailers may participate in the Postage Due Weight Averaging program described in 705.20.0.

### 3.1.5 Priority Mail Commercial Base and Commercial Plus Prices

[5-31-15] Priority Mail Commercial Base and Commercial Plus prices are available to MRS permit holders when the following criteria are met:

- a. Commercial Base prices are available for permit holders using MRS for Priority Mail items (223.1.2) when all MRS requirements for Priority Mail are met.
- b. Commercial Plus prices are available for permit holders using MRS for Priority Mail items who qualify for Commercial Base prices (223.1.2) and whose account volume exceed 100,000 pieces in the previous calendar year or who have a customer commitment agreement with the USPS (223.1.3.2).

## 3.2 Basic Standards

### 3.2.1 Description

[5-31-15] Merchandise return service allows an authorized Returns Services holder to pay the postage and extra service fees on single-piece priced Priority Mail, or First-Class Package Service or ground return service parcels (Parcel Select Nonpresort) that are returned to the permit holder by the permit holder's customers via a special barcoded label (see 3.5.10) produced by the permit holder.

### 3.2.2 Availability

Merchandise return service is available to the permit holder for mailing to the postage due unit at any Post Office where authorized by an approved application.

### 3.2.3 Payment Guarantee

The permit holder guarantees payment of the proper postage and extra service fees (except for insurance and certificate of mailing purchased by the sender) on all parcels returned via a special label produced by the permit holder.

### 3.2.4 Where Service Established

Merchandise return service may be established at any Post Office in the United States and its territories and possessions or at any U.S. military Post Office overseas (APO/FPO). It is not available for any foreign country.

### 3.2.5 Official Mail

Any authorized user of official (penalty) mail may use merchandise return service subject to the standards in 703.7.0, which supersede conflicting standards below.

### 3.2.6 Application Process

[5-31-15] The applicant must submit a completed Form 3615 and the annual permit fee to the Post Office issuing the permit, or amend an existing Form 3615 on file at that office by adding the merchandise return service authorization to existing Returns Service permit authorizations. Except for MRS labels generated by the USPS Application Program Interface (API), Form 3615 must be accompanied by copies of the MRS labels (including printed copies of labels intended to be faxed to customers or transmitted to customers electronically) and the instructions provided to the permit holder's customers. All MRS labels that have preprinted USPS Tracking barcodes must be approved by the USPS. If articles are to be returned from customers as Registered Mail, the applicant must indicate "Registered Mail" on the application. After a MRS permit is obtained, any change to label formats or customer instructions must be approved by the Post Office where the permit is held. The permit is valid for 12 months after the approval date of the application.

### 3.2.7 Permit Renewal

[5-31-15] To renew the MRS permit, the permit holder must send the annual fees (under 3.1.1 and 3.1.2) to the issuing Post Office by the expiration date of the permit, or authorize the Postmaster to deduct the fee from the advance deposit account, or establish a CAPS link for EFT. If a permit holder's outbound permit account shows any amount of outbound parcel volumes, the annual Returns Services permit and account maintenance fees may be waived at the time of renewal. Written authorization is not needed for permit renewal if there is no change to the authorization on file at the delivery unit.

### 3.2.8 Nonrenewed Permit

[5-31-15] If the permit is not renewed, merchandise return mail bearing the sender's return address is returned to the sender; otherwise, it is treated as dead mail.

### 3.2.9 Permit Cancellation

[5-31-15] The USPS may cancel a MRS permit if the permit holder refuses to accept and pay postage and fees on merchandise return service parcels, fails to keep sufficient funds in the advance deposit account to cover postage and fees, or distributes merchandise return labels or tags that do not meet USPS standards.

### 3.2.10 Reapplying After Cancellation

[5-31-15] To receive a new MRS permit at the same Post Office after a merchandise return permit is canceled, the applicant must amend the Form 3615 on file at that office to reflect the new application date; pay a new permit fee; submit for approval two samples of any label format to be used; provide evidence that the reasons for the permit cancellation are corrected; and provide and keep funds in an advance deposit account to cover normal returns for at least 2 weeks.

### 3.2.11 Using Other Post Offices

[5-31-15] The permit holder may distribute merchandise return labels for return through other Post Offices (i.e. stations or branches under a Main Post Office) without paying an additional permit fee if the permit holder opens and keeps their advance deposit account at the Post Office where the permit is issued and supplies that Postmaster the name, address, and telephone number of a representative in each additional station or branch if different from the information on the application.

## 3.3 Additional Standards for MRS

### 3.3.1 Extra and Additional Services

[5-31-15] The MRS permit holder may obtain extra and additional services with MRS as follows:

- a. Insurance—Which may be combined with special handling) for MRS containing only matter not required to be mailed at First-Class Mail prices under [133.3.0](#). To request insurance, the permit holder must preprint or rubber-stamp “Insurance Desired by Permit Holder for \$\_\_\_\_\_ (value)” to the left of and above the “Merchandise Return Label” legend and below the “Total Postage and Fees Due” statement on the merchandise return label. The value part of the endorsement, showing the dollar amount of insurance for the article, may be handwritten by the permit holder. If is paid for by the MRS permit holder, then only the MRS permit holder may file a claim ([609](#)).
- b. Registered Mail—May be obtained by the MRS permit holder under the following conditions:
  1. The customer using the MRS label must declare the full value of the article to be registered when presented at the Post Office. Registered Mail service may be obtained only on articles returned at Priority Mail or First-Class Package Service prices and may not be combined with any other extra service.

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2. A permit holder wanting to add Registered Mail service under an existing permit must submit a written request to the Post Office where the permit is held, with samples of the merchandise return labels and a copy of the instructions to be provided to the permit holder's customers. The permit holder must not distribute labels that request Registered Mail service before receiving USPS written approval.
- c. Special Handling—The permit holder may obtain special handling service with MRS.
- d. Pickup on Demand Service—The permit holder may obtain Pickup on Demand service with MRS. Pickup on Demand service may be combined with Certified Mail (Priority Mail only), USPS Tracking, and special handling.
- e. USPS Tracking—(which may be combined with insurance and special handling or both) is included with MRS when the MRS labels are properly formatted under [3.5.10](#).
- f. Mailing Acknowledgment—The permit holder may prepare a detachable mailing acknowledgment form, subject to these conditions:
  1. The acknowledgment must not bear adhesive but must be attached to the label and perforated or designed for easy separation at the time of mailing.
  2. The acknowledgment establishes no USPS liability for the parcel if damaged, lost, or stolen.
  3. The acknowledgment provides documentation for account management between the mailing customer and the permit holder. The USPS charges no fee, keeps no records, and does not provide copies of or further information about the acknowledgment.
  4. A merchandise return service parcel containing the detachable mailing acknowledgment form must be presented to the USPS acceptance employee at the time of mailing to be executed.
  5. Each mailing acknowledgment part of the label must include a unique parcel identification number assigned by the permit holder; the return address of the customer mailing the parcel, in the upper part of the detachable form; the permit holder's address, in the lower part of the form; an initials section in the acknowledgment portion for use by the USPS acceptance employee; and space in the acknowledgment part where the USPS acceptance employee places the date stamp.

### 3.4 Additional Standards for Permit Holder's Customer

#### 3.4.1 Customer Options

[5-31-15] If the permit holder has not indicated the extra services listed in [3.3.1a](#) through [3.3.1d](#) a customer may request the extra services listed in [3.3.1a](#) through [3.3.1d](#) at their own expense.

#### 3.4.2 Insurance

[5-31-15] If insurance is paid by the customer, then only the customer may file a claim.

### 3.4.3 Certificate of Mailing

A customer mailing merchandise return service articles may also obtain a certificate of mailing at the customer's own expense at the time of mailing by presenting the certificate at a Post Office to obtain the receipt.

## 3.5 Labels

### 3.5.1 Distribution of Labels

[5-31-15] Merchandise return service labels may be distributed to customers as an enclosure with merchandise, as a separate item (including when requested electronically through the *Business Customer Gateway* for printing and delivery to the end-user by USPS), as part of a double postcard subject to 201.1.2.8 and the approval of the PCSC, as an electronic transmission for customer downloading and printing, or through one of the permit holder's designated pickup facilities. Any such label distributed to a customer must meet the format standards in 3.5.10, including the requirement to furnish instructions.

### 3.5.2 Mailer Price Markings

[5-31-15] It is recommended that permit holders preprint a price marking (or "Ground" for ground service charged at Parcel Select Nonpresort prices) on the merchandise return service labels they distribute to ensure that returned parcels will be given service and charged postage according to the wishes of the permit holder. Regardless of weight, all unmarked parcels will be treated as Standard Post and charged Parcel Select Nonpresort prices.

### 3.5.3 Label Preparation

[5-31-15] Any photographic, mechanical, or electronic process or any combination of such processes other than typewriting or handwriting may be used to prepare the MRS label and detachable acknowledgment form. The background may be any light color (excluding brilliant colors) that allows the address, postmark, and other endorsements to be readily discerned. If labels are faxed to customers or electronically transmitted to customers for their local printing, the permit holder must advise their customers of these preparation requirements as part of the required instructions required under 3.5.5. All MRS labels bearing the required IMpb (with imbedded USPS Tracking) must be certified for use by the USPS prior to distribution. Labels with USPS Tracking barcodes cannot be faxed to customers.

### 3.5.4 Labeling Methods

[5-31-15] If all applicable content and format standards are met (including the written instructions required by 3.5.5), a merchandise return service label may be produced by any of the following methods:

- a. As an impression printed by the permit holder directly onto the mailpiece to be returned.
- b. As a separate label preprinted by the permit holder for affixing by the customer onto the mailpiece to be returned. The reverse side of the label must bear an adhesive strong enough to bond the label securely to the mailpiece.
- c. Printed and delivered by USPS to the customer (end-user) when requested electronically by the permit holder or its agents through the *Business Customer Gateway*.

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- d. As an electronic file created by the permit holder for local output and printing by the customer. The electronic file must include instructions that explain how to affix the label securely to the mailpiece to be returned and that caution against covering with tape or other material any part of the label where postage and fee information is to be recorded.

**3.5.5 Labeling Instructions**

[5-31-15] Written instructions must be provided with the label that, at a minimum, directs the customer to do the following:

- a. "If your name and address are not already preprinted in the return address area, print them neatly in that area or attach a return address label there."
- b. "Attach the label squarely onto the largest side of the mailpiece, centered if possible. Place the label so that it does not fold over to another side. Do not place tape over any barcodes on the label or any part of the label where postage and fee information will be recorded."
- c. "Obliterate any other addresses and barcodes on the outside of the parcel."
- d. "Mail the labeled parcel at a Post Office, drop it in a collection box, leave it with your letter carrier, or schedule a package pickup at [usps.com](https://usps.com)."

**3.5.6 Special Handling Endorsement**

[5-31-15] To request special handling, the permit holder must preprint or rubber-stamp "Special Handling Desired by Permit Holder" to the left of and above the "Merchandise Return Label" legend and below the "Total Postage and Fees Due" statement on the merchandise return label.

**3.5.7 Registered Mail Endorsement**

To request Registered Mail service, the permit holder must preprint or rubber-stamp "Registered Mail Service without Postal Insurance Desired by Permit Holder" or "Registered Mail Service with Postal Insurance Desired by Permit Holder," as applicable, to the left of and above the "Merchandise Return Label" legend and below the "Total Postage and Fees Due" statement on the merchandise return label. The First-Class Mail or Priority Mail marking must also be preprinted or hand-stamped on the labels.

**3.5.8 Placement of Extra Service Labels**

[5-31-15] The permit holder must either leave a clear space on the merchandise return label to the right of the return address for the placement of the applicable extra service label (see 503.1.7.2 for additional standards for extra service labels) or instruct the customer to affix the merchandise return label to the article so that the USPS acceptance employee can place the extra service label on the article directly above the merchandise return label.

**3.5.9 Additional Standards for Special Handling Labels**

[5-31-15] In addition to meeting the standards under 3.5.6 and 3.5.8, as applicable, the permit holder must provide "Special Handling" labels with instructions to customers about their placement on the parcel.

**3.5.10 Label Format Elements**

[5-31-15] The label used for merchandise return service must meet the standards in the Parcel Labeling Guide available on RIBBS.

**3.6 Enter and Deposit****3.6.1 Customer Mailing Options**

[5-31-15] The permit holder's customers must mail the parcel within the service area of the Post Office shown in the return address on the label by depositing it at the main Post Office or any associated office, station, or branch; in any collection box (except a Priority Mail Express box); with any rural carrier; on business routes during regular mail delivery if prior arrangements are made with the carrier; as part of a collection run for other mail (special arrangements might be required); or at any place designated by the Postmaster for the receipt of mail. Parcels with extra services must be mailed either with the rural carrier or at the main Post Office or any associated office, station, or branch. Any such parcels deposited in collection boxes are returned to the sender or, if there is no return address, treated as undeliverable mail.

**3.7 Additional Standards for USPS Return Services****3.7.1 Permit and Account Fees**

[5-31-15] An annual Returns Services permit fee, under 3.1.1, and annual account maintenance under 3.1.2, are required for the USPS Return Services described in 3.7.

**3.7.2 Extra Services**

[5-31-15] USPS insurance is the only extra service that can be purchased for USPS Returns (Priority Mail Return Service, First-Class Package Return Service and Ground Return Service). There is no included insurance provided for Priority Mail Service pieces.

**3.7.3 Prices**

[5-31-15] Commercial Base prices are available for permit holders receiving Priority Mail Return Service and First-Class Package Return Service mailpieces under 3.7. Permit holders may combine cumulative volumes for Priority Mail Return Service and First-Class Package Return Service. Eligibility for Commercial Plus prices are available to permit holders who qualify for Commercial Base prices, and at least one of the following:

- a. Have cumulative Priority Mail Return Service, First-Class Package Return Service, and Ground Return Service volume exceeding a combined total of 25,000 return pieces in the previous calendar year.
- b. Have cumulative returns Commercial Plus cubic (see 1.1.4) volume exceeding a combined total of 85,000 pieces returned in approved packaging in the previous calendar year.
- c. Have cumulative returns and outbound volume exceeding a combined total of 90,000 pieces in the previous calendar year.
- d. Have a signed Commercial Plus returns customer commitment agreement with USPS.

- e. Have a signed commercial plus Critical Mail commitment agreement with USPS.

### 3.7.4 Postage

[5-31-15] Postage is calculated based on the weight of the parcel and zone, except for First-Class Package Return Service, for which postage is based on the weight of the parcel and Critical Mail returns, for which postage is based on flat rate pricing. Customers must pay postage under a scan based payment program (705.23.0) and using an eVS/CAPS account.

### 3.7.5 Description

[5-31-15] Priority Mail Return Service (including Critical Mail), First-Class Package Return Service and Ground Return Service provide return service options to customers who meet the applicable standards in 3.0. Except for restricted material described in Publication 52, any mailable matter may be mailed using any of the USPS Return Service options. Any content that constitutes First-Class Mail matter may only be mailed using Priority Mail Return Service or using First-Class Package Return Service at Commercial Plus prices.

### 3.7.6 Labels

USPS Return Service labels must meet the standards in the Parcel Labeling Guide available on RIBBS. USPS Return Services standard label sizes are 3 inches by 6 inches, 4 inches by 4 inches, or 4 inches by 6 inches must be certified by the USPS for use prior to distribution. All other label sizes require written approval from the National Customer Support Center (NCSC). The label must include an Intelligent Mail package barcode, accommodate all required , be legible, and be prepared in accordance with 708.5.0 and Publication 205 at [https://ribbs/evs/documents/tech\\_guides/pubs/Pub205.PDF](https://ribbs/evs/documents/tech_guides/pubs/Pub205.PDF). Permit holders or their agents may distribute approved USPS Return Servicelabels and instructions by means listed under 3.5.4. Permit holders or their agents must provide written instructions to the label end-user (mailer) as under 3.5.5. The label used for USPS Returns must meet the standards in the Parcel Labeling Guide available on RIBBS.

### 3.7.7 Additional Standards for Priority Mail Return Service

[5-31-15] Priority Mail Return Service may contain any mailable matter weighing no more than 70 pounds. Lower weight limits apply to Commercial Plus cubic (see 1.1.4), APO/FPO mail is subject to 703.2.0 and 703.4.0, and Department of State mail is subject to 703.3.0. Priority Mail Return Service receives expeditious handling and transportation, with service standards in accordance with Priority Mail. Priority Mail Return Service items mailed under a specific customer agreement is charged postage according to the individual agreement. Otherwise Priority Mail Return Service eligibility is under 3.7.3. Commercial Base and Commercial Plus prices are the same as for outbound Priority Mail in [Notice 123—Price List](#).

### 3.7.8 Additional Standards for First-Class Package Return Service

[5-31-15] First-Class Package Return Service handling, transportation, and eligibility of contents is the same as for outbound First-Class Package Service parcels under 233. Parcels weighing more than 13 ounces but less than 16 ounces may be included in the eligibility calculation for Commercial Plus prices and parcels weighing 13 ounces or less are eligible for Commercial Base prices.

### 3.7.9 Additional Standards for Ground Return Service

[5-31-15] Ground Return Service provides ground transportation for mailpieces containing mailable matter weighing no more than 70 pounds and meeting the content standards in 153.3.0. Ground Return Service assumes the handling and transportation and service objectives for delivery of Standard Post.

## 4.0 Parcel Return Service

### 4.1 Prices and Fees

#### 4.1.1 Permit and Account Fees

[5-31-15] The participant must pay an annual Returns Services permit fee at the Post Office where the permit is held, and must pay postage through an advance deposit account by paying an annual account maintenance fee. See [Notice 123—Price List](#) for applicable fees.

#### 4.1.2 Parcel Return Service Prices

[5-31-15] Parcel Return Service prices are based on the price that applies to the weight increment of each addressed piece, and on the designated return facility, RDU, RSCF, or RNDC. The price is charged per pound or fraction thereof; any fraction of a pound is considered a whole pound. For example, if an item weighs 4.225 pounds, the weight increment is 5 pounds. The minimum price per piece is the 1-pound price and these additional standards apply:

- a. Parcel Return Service—Nonmachinable Prices: Parcels exceeding the maximum machinable dimensions in 201.7.5 or are considered an outside parcel under 201.7.7 are subject to nonmachinable prices.
- b. Balloon and Oversized Prices: RSCF and RNDC parcels that weigh less than 20 pounds but measure more than 84 inches in combined length and girth are charged the applicable price for a 20-pound parcel (balloon price). Regardless of weight, any parcel that measures more than 108 inches (but not more than 130 inches) in combined length and girth must pay the oversized price.
- c. Standard Post Prices: PRS-labeled parcels shipped from origin ZIP Codes 006-009, 967-969, and 995-999 that are picked up at an RNDC are subject to retail Standard Post prices.

#### 4.1.3 Postage

[5-31-15] There are three PRS price categories:

- a. Parcel Return Service — RDU. Parcels returned as Standard Post to, and retrieved in bulk from, a designated delivery unit.
- b. Parcel Return Service — RSCF. Parcels returned as Standard Post to, and retrieved in bulk from, a designated SCF.
- c. Parcel Return Service — RNDC. Parcels returned as Standard Post to, and retrieved in bulk from, a designated NDC.

#### 4.1.4 Standard Post Prices

PRS-labeled parcels shipped from origin ZIP Codes 006-009, 967-969, and 995-999 that are picked up at an RNDC are subject to retail Standard Post prices.

## 4.2 Basic Standards

### 4.2.1 Description

[5-31-15] Parcel Return Service (PRS) applies to parcels that are picked up in bulk by authorized permit holders or their agents. Permit holders guarantee payment of postage for all parcels mailed with a PRS label. By providing an approved PRS label to its customers, the merchant or other party designates the permit holder identified on the label as their agent for receipt of mail bearing that label, and authorizes the USPS to provide that mail to the permit holder or its designee. The permit holder must retrieve parcels at each of the return network distribution centers (RNDC). For this purpose, an RNDC is each NDC as noted in [L601](#). PRS permit holders also may retrieve parcels at one or more designated return sectional center facilities (RSCFs) or designated return delivery units (RDUs). Payment for parcels returned under PRS is deducted from a separate advance deposit (postage-due) account funded through the Centralized Account Processing System (CAPS). The permit holder must be authorized to use eVS (see [705.2.9](#)).

### 4.2.2 Conditions for Mailing

[5-31-15] Parcels may be mailed as PRS when all of the following conditions apply:

- a. Parcels contain eligible matter as described in [153.3.0](#) and [153.4.0](#).
- b. Parcels bear a PRS label that meets the standards in [5.4](#).
- c. Parcels show the permit number, and the permit holder has paid the annual PRS permit fee and the annual PRS account maintenance fee.

### 4.2.3 Customer Mailing Options

[5-31-15] Returned parcels may be deposited as follows:

- a. At any Post Office, station, or branch.
- b. In any collection box (except a Priority Mail Express box).
- c. With any letter carrier.
- d. As part of a collection run for other mail (special arrangements may be required).
- e. At any place designated by the postmaster for the receipt of mail.

### 4.2.4 Application Process

[5-31-15] Companies who wish to participate in PRS must send a request on company letterhead to the manager, Business Mailer Support (see [608.8.0](#) for address). The request must contain the following information:

- a. Company name and address.
- b. An individual's contact name, telephone number, fax number, and e-mail address.
- c. The price category or categories to be used, and the proposed retrieval locations (delivery units, sectional center facilities, and network distribution centers).
- d. A description of the electronic returns manifesting system to be used to document returns listed by location and price eligibility.

#### 4.2.5 Approval

[5-31-15] The manager, Business Mailer Support reviews each request and proceeds as follows:

- a. If the applicant meets the criteria, the manager, Business Mailer Support approves the letter of request and sends an authorization letter outlining the terms and conditions for the program.
- b. If the application does not meet the criteria, the manager, Business Mailer Support denies the request and sends a written notice to the applicant with the reason for denial.

#### 4.2.6 Permit Cancellation

[5-31-15] USPS may cancel a PRS permit for any of the following reasons:

- a. The permit holder fails to pay the required postage and fees for returned parcels.
- b. The permit holder does not maintain adequate available funds to cover postage and fees for returned parcels.
- c. The permit holder does not fulfill the terms and conditions of the PRS permit authorization.
- d. The return labels do not conform to the specifications in [5.4](#).

#### 4.2.7 Reapplying After Cancellation

[5-31-15] To receive a new PRS permit after cancellation under [5.1](#), the mailer must:

- a. Submit a letter to the manager, Business Mailer Support requesting a permit and a new agreement.
- b. Pay a new Returns Services permit fee.
- c. Provide evidence showing that the reasons for cancellation no longer exist.
- d. Maintain adequate available funds to cover the expected number of returns.

#### 4.2.8 Extra Services and Endorsement

[5-31-15] Pieces using PRS may not bear an ancillary service endorsement (see [102.4.0](#) and [507.1.5](#)). See [503](#) for available extra services for PRS.

#### 4.2.9 Pickup Schedule and Location

[5-31-15] Permit holders or their agents must set up recurring or standing appointments to retrieve PRS parcels. If the permit holder (or agent) has existing appointments to deliver Parcel Select parcels to destination facilities and those facilities are one of the NDCs, designated RSCFs, or designated RDUs, those appointments can be used for retrieving PRS parcels at the same time. Permit holders or their agents must retrieve parcels on a regular schedule as follows:

- a. From RNDs, at a minimum of every 48 hours, excluding Sundays and USPS holidays.

- b. From all listed RSCFs, at a minimum of every 24 hours, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and USPS holidays. The Postal Service maintains a list of active RSCFs and provides permit holders 30-day notice of changes to the list. This list is available on the Facility Access and Shipment Tracking system (FAST) at <https://fast.usps.com/fast/>.
- c. From RDUs, according to the authorization letter. The USPS maintains a list of active RDUs and provides permit holders 30-day notice of changes to the list. This list is available on the Facility Access and Shipment Tracking system (FAST) at <https://fast.usps.com/fast/>.
- d. For parcels picked up from RNDs and that are shipped from origin ZIP Codes 006-009, 967-969, and 995-999, see 5.3.

#### 4.2.10 Parcels Endorsed Hold for Pickup

[5-31-15] PRS participants must pay the appropriate Parcel Return Service RDU price under 5.3 for any unclaimed, refused, undeliverable as addressed, or recalled parcels that are endorsed "Hold For Pickup" (under 508.7.0) and that bear the marking "PARCEL RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED" or "PRS REQUESTED" followed by a unique 569 prefix ZIP Code.

#### 4.2.11 Noncompliant Labels

[5-31-15] PRS permit holders must use USPS-certified labels meeting the standards in 4.3. When noncompliant labels are affixed to PRS parcels, which travel through the Postal network to the delivery address of the label, the permit holder will be assessed the appropriate Standard Post price, calculated from the parcel's entry point in the USPS network to its delivery address. If the parcel's entry point cannot be determined, then postage will be calculated at zone 4.

### 4.3 Labels

#### 4.3.1 Label Preparation

[5-31-15] PRS labels must be certified by the USPS for use prior to distribution as defined in the service agreement. In addition, permit holders must obtain USPS certification for barcode symbologies. Except for by FAX, any photographic, mechanical, or electronic process or any combination of these processes may be used to produce PRS labels. The background of the label may be any light color that allows the address, barcodes, and other required information to be easily distinguished. If labels are electronically transmitted to customers for their local printing, the permit holder must advise customers of these printing requirements as part of the instructions in 4.3.3

#### 4.3.2 Labeling Methods

[5-31-15] If all applicable contents and formats are approved (including instructions to the user), permit holders or their agents may distribute a PRS label by any of the methods provided under 3.5.4.

#### 4.3.3 Labeling Instructions

[5-31-15] Regardless of label distribution method, permit holders or their agents must always provide written instructions to the user of the PRS label as provided under 3.5.5.

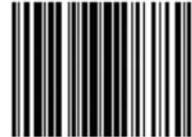
#### 4.3.4 Label Format Elements

[5-31-15] [1-25-15] PRS labels must meet the standards in the Parcel Labeling Guide available on RIBBS. There is no minimum size for PRS labels; however, the label must be big enough to accommodate all of the label elements and standards in this section. All PRS label elements must be legible. Except where a specific type size is required, elements must be large enough to be legible from a normal reading distance and be separate from other elements on the label.

#### 4.3.5 PRS Label Format Examples

The following are PRS label format examples. Note: The ZIP Code 56999 appears in each example for demonstration purposes only.

- a. Parcel Return Service label using a separate PRS barcode and postal routing barcode.

John Smith 901 D ST SW STE 101 WASHINGTON DC 20024-2198	 NDC ZIP - 56999	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">           NO POSTAGE            NECESSARY IF            MAILED IN THE            UNITED STATES         </div> 
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <b>PARCEL RETURN SERVICE</b>            ABC RETURNS INC <span style="float: right;">PERMIT NO. 77999</span> </div>		
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <b>USPS PARCEL RETURN SVC</b>              9158 0268 3733 1000 0010 154         </div>		AGENT / CLIENT NAME <b>PARCEL RETURN SERVICE</b> <b>56999</b>
		<div style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 10px; font-weight: bold; font-size: 24px;">X01</div>

505.5.1

- b. Parcel Return Service label using a concatenated barcode.

John Smith 901 D ST SW STE 101 WASHINGTON DC 20024-2198	NO POSTAGE NECESSARY IF MAILED IN THE UNITED STATES
	
<b>PARCEL RETURN SERVICE</b> ABC RETURNS INC <span style="float: right;">PERMIT NO. 77999</span>	
<b>NDC ZIP - USPS PARCEL RETURN SVC</b>  420 56999 9158 0268 3733 1000 0010 14	AGENT / CLIENT NAME <b>PARCEL RETURN SERVICE</b> <b>56999</b>
	<b>X01</b>

## 5.0 Bulk Parcel Return Service

### 5.1 Bulk Parcel Return Service (BPRS) Permit and Fees

#### 5.1.1 Permit and Per Piece Fees

**[5-31-15]** A BPRS permit is required to participate in BPRS; no annual fee is required to obtain a BPRS permit. Each piece returned through BPRS is charged only the per piece fee, not postage, regardless of weight. See [Notice 123—Price List](#) for applicable fees.

#### 5.1.2 Advance Deposit Account

**[5-31-15]** The permit holder must pay BPRS fees through an advance deposit account. A separate advance deposit account for BPRS is not required; the annual account maintenance fee is charged if BPRS fees are not paid from an existing account and the permit holder desires a single, separate accounting of all charges deducted from that account.

#### 5.1.3 Postage Due Weight Averaging

BPRS mailers may participate in the Postage Due Weight Averaging program described in [705.20.0](#).

## 5.2 Basic Standards

### 5.2.1 Description

[5-31-15] Bulk parcel return service (BPRS) allows mailers of large quantities of Standard Mail or Parcel Select Lightweight machinable parcels that are either undeliverable-as-addressed or un-opened and refused by addressees to be returned to designated postal facilities. The mailer has the option of picking up all returned parcels from a designated postal facility at a predetermined frequency specified by the USPS or having them delivered by the USPS in a manner and frequency specified by the USPS. For this service, a mailer establishes a BPRS permit and pays a per piece charge for each parcel returned from an advance deposit account.

### 5.2.2 Availability

[5-31-15] A mailer may be authorized to use BPRS when the following conditions apply:

- a. All returned parcels are initially prepared as regular or Nonprofit Standard Mail, or Parcel Select Lightweight, and are machinable parcels as defined in 201.7.5.
- b. At least 10,000 Standard Mail or Parcel Select Lightweight machinable parcels will be returned to a designated postal facility during a 12-month period.
- c. Parcels are returned to the mailer either because they are undeliverable-as-addressed or because they are un-opened and refused by the addressee.
- d. Parcels bear an approved BPRS label or one of the following BPRS endorsements (507.2.0) on the outbound mailpiece:  
“Return Service Requested — BPRS”  
“Address Service Requested — BPRS”
- e. Parcels have a return address that is in the delivery area of the Post Office that issued the BPRS permit.
- f. The postal facility designated for returned parcels is located in the United States, its territories or possessions, or is a U.S. military Post Office overseas (APO or FPO).
- g. The mailer has a valid postage due advance deposit account and BPRS permit.
- h. BPRS parcels may be combined with the shipper paid forwarding service (507.4.2.9).
- i. Standard Mail or Parcel Select Lightweight parcels that qualify for a Media Mail or Library Mail price under the applicable standards, and that contain the name of the Package Service price in the mailer’s ancillary service endorsement (507.1.5.3d.), are not eligible for BPRS.

### 5.2.3 Payment Guarantee

[5-31-15] The permit holder guarantees payment of all applicable fees. The Post Office returns BPRS items to the permit holder only when there are sufficient funds in the advance deposit account to pay the fees on returned pieces.

#### 5.2.4 Application Process

[5-31-15] To obtain a BPRS permit, a mailer must send a written request to the Postmaster at each Post Office where parcels are to be returned that includes the following:

- a. Request for the BPRS permit.
- b. Information pertinent to each requested delivery point that documents either the receipt of, or that there are reasonable grounds to expect, at least 10,000 machinable parcels originally mailed at regular or non-profit Standard Mail or Parcel Select Lightweight prices during the past, or next, 12 months.
- c. A description of the returned parcels (e.g., piece size and packaging).
- d. A statement of the desired frequency and location of the parcel pickup or delivery point.
- e. Sample documentation that will be used to substantiate the number of parcels returned daily to each location.
- f. If a label will be furnished for returning opened parcels, the labels must be USPS approved, prepared in accordance with 5.4, and be accompanied by complete instructions for its use as described in 3.5.5.
- g. A written statement agreeing to pay the per piece fee for each returned parcel from a centralized advance deposit account.

#### 5.2.5 Authorization

[5-31-15] A BPRS mailer will be required to sign a postage due service agreement with each Post Office that issues a permit for the return of BPRS parcels. Upon approval of a mailer's request, the Post Office issues an authorization letter and provides a postage due service agreement with a BPRS permit number. The permit number is used for account administration and is required on BPRS labels under 5.4, when used.

### 5.3 Permits

#### 5.3.1 Permit Renewal

[5-31-15] A Post Office provides BPRS permit holders with annual renewal notices advising that their permits are due to expire. A notice must be returned to the issuing Post Office with the fee payment or authorization for the postmaster to deduct the fee from the advance deposit account by the permit expiration date. Written authorization is not necessary for renewal of a permit if there is no change to the authorization on file at the Post Office where the parcels are returned. If a permit holder does not renew a BPRS permit after having been given notice, the USPS will endorse the mail "Bulk Parcel Return Service Canceled" and will charge postage due at the single-piece First-Class Mail or Priority Mail price as appropriate for the weight of the piece. If the single-piece First-Class Mail or Priority Mail price is not paid, the mail is forwarded to the nearest mail recovery center.

#### 5.3.2 Permit Cancellation

[5-31-15] A BPRS permit may be canceled by the USPS for any of the following reasons:

- a. Failure to meet the minimum volume requirement of 10,000 parcels returned during a 12-month period to each postal facility.
- b. Failure of the mailer to pay the required postage and fees for returned parcels.
- c. Insufficient funds in an advance deposit account to cover postage and fees that are due for returned parcels.
- d. Failure to fulfill the terms and conditions of the BPRS permit authorization.
- e. Failure to conform return labels to the specifications in section 5.4.

**5.3.3 Reapplying After Cancellation**

[5-31-15] A mailer must do the following to receive a new BPRS permit at the same Post Office where a permit was previously canceled:

- a. Submit a letter to that office requesting a BPRS permit and new agreement.
- b. Provide evidence showing that the reasons for cancellation of the previous permit no longer exist.
- c. Maintain adequate funds in an advance deposit account to cover the number of returns expected over at least a 2-week period.

**5.3.4 Extra Services**

[5-31-15] Extra services cannot be added to pieces returned via bulk parcel return service.

**5.4 Optional BPRS Label**

[5-31-15] An authorized BPRS permit holder has the option to use a label to identify BPRS parcels for return to a designated postal facility. The label is prepared at the mailer's expense and must meet all format standards in the Parcel Labeling Guide available on RIBBS, including an IMpb meeting the standards in 708.5.0.

