



## What You Need to Know About USPS Intelligent Mail Package Barcodes

The USPS is putting a major focus on the package market because it is their best opportunities for growth. Although letter and flat volumes are destined to decline, we are all ordering more products online and the USPS is in a unique place to handle many of them. They deliver to every address each day and have lower rates than UPS and FedEx on many light weight items going to residences. This being said, the USPS realizes that they need to step up their tracking efforts to more in-line with what clients expect with the private carriers. To accomplish this, they have changed their barcoding requirements and at the start of 2013 mandated a change to the Intelligent Mail Package Barcode (IMpb).

### What is the IMpb

- Postal Services newest tracking barcode for parcels and extra services.
- Each barcode contains the following information that gives the USPS significant details on the package:
  - Mailer ID – Who sent the piece.
  - Service Indicator – What class and special services were used.
  - Source Identifier – How was postage applied (Permit, PC Postage, Meter etc.)
  - Serial Number – Makes each piece unique and traceable.
  - 5-digit zip code to where the item is going
  - Required on all tracking and extra service barcodes for all First-Class Package Services, Parcel Select, Parcel Select Light Weight, Bound Printed Matter, Media Mail and Library Mail Parcels in order to claim Presort and entry pricing.
  - Effective January 28, 2013 with an added transition period until July 28, 2013

### Why is This Good for the USPS?

By having this information in the IMpb barcodes, the USPS will be able to better monitor their delivery networks to improve service. They are in the process of closing over half of their production facilities and it is more important than ever that they have





detail on how parcels are moving through their network. Clients expect this level of information with the private carriers and the USPS needs this data to better compete.

Since the level of service is incorporated into the IMPB, it eliminates the need for multiple USPS barcodes on an item. It also allows the USPS to add new services easily and have them incorporated into the same label. These are some examples that the USPS gives that will provide increased value to customers for the future.

- Hold for Pick-Up
- Adult Signature
- Return Services
- Day Certain Delivery
- Critical Mail
- Package Intercept
- Scan-Based Payment

### **Why is This Good for Mailers?**

- Commercial Customers will receive point to point tracking including Delivery Confirmation at no charge on the following classes of mail.
  - Priority Mail
  - First-Class Package Services
  - Parcel Select
  - Parcel Select Light Weight
- The barcode supports a 6 digit mailer ID which allows for a 14 digit serial number. Longer serial numbers enable customers to incorporate order or reference numbers within the tracking barcode.
  - Reduces multiple barcodes on a package
  - Saves printing toner/ink when barcodes are combined
  - Potential to simplify operations and improve customer service
- The 3-digit Service Type Code embedded in the IMPB identifies the product and service combinations allowing for better record keeping.

### **What if I am a Small Volume Package Mailer?**





The biggest benefit to come out of this change is the USPS made Delivery Confirmation on Priority Mail free vs. the \$.75 that they used to charge at the counter. To do this, you will need to order rolls of barcode labels from the USPS through the following method:

- Call 800-610-8734
- Select Option 1 when prompted, and then select Option 1 on the next menu.
- Choose UPS Label 400 for Priority Mail
- Orders will be shipped within a week
- Packaged in pads of 50
- Large order quantities shipped in rolls of 8,000
- Customers shipping more than 10,000 per year must acquire and use a MID (Mailer ID)

### **Here are the different ways of using these free tracking labels for Priority Mail:**

- Postage Meters – Follow the instructions above to order the Label 400 and apply at the time you meter your items.
- PC Postage – Will be able to automatically print the proper barcodes.
- USPS Click and Ship – The system will automatically generate the proper barcodes.
- USPS Counter Service – You can have the Delivery Confirmation Label applied right at the counter at no cost!

### **Where can I get more Information?**

Clearly there is a lot more information about this change, especially if you are a large package shipper. The goal was only to give you the highlights. The [USPS RIBBS site](#) provides the best information and gives updates as they happen.

### **Conclusion**

We can clearly see from these changes that the USPS is working hard to offer higher levels of package information to better manage their internal networks, to provide information to mailers and to streamline their package tracking processes. We live in an age of information and we all expect to be able to access information at our





fingertips. This is the platform that the USPS can expand with and change our expectations on what they can offer for the future.

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