

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE STANDARD MAILBOXES, CURBSIDE

1. SCOPE AND CLASSIFICATION

1.1 Scope - This standard covers all curbside mailboxes. Curbside mailboxes are defined as any design made to be served by a carrier from a vehicle on any city, rural or highway contract route. This standard is not applicable to mailboxes intended for door delivery service (see 6.1).

1.2 Classifications - Based on their size and design, curbside mailboxes are classified as either:

T – Traditional, Full or Limited Service (see 3.2.1 & Figure 1)

C – Contemporary, Full or Limited Service (see 3.2.2)

L – Locked, Full or Limited Service (see 3.2.3 & Figures 2 & 3)

1.3 Approved Models

1.3.1 Approved Models - Manufacturers whose mailboxes have been approved by the United States Postal Service (USPS) will be listed in the Postal Operations Manual (POM) and published in the Postal Bulletin.

1.3.2 Interested Manufacturers - Manufacturing standards and current information concerning the manufacture of curbside mailboxes may be obtained by writing to:

USPS, Information Platform
Delivery & Retail Operation Equipment
8403 Lee Highway
Merrifield, VA 22082-8101

3. REQUIREMENTS

3.1 Quality – Mailbox manufacturers must ensure and be able to substantiate that units manufactured conform to the requirements of this specification.

3.1.1 Inspection - The Postal Service reserves the right to inspect units for conformance to this specification at any stage of manufacture. Inspection by the Postal Service does not relieve the manufacturer of the responsibility to provide performance that conforms to the requirements set forth in this specification. Prior to any visits, the Postal Service will provide a minimum notice of 30 business days. The Postal Service may, in its discretion, suspend the approval status of any manufacturer's model which is found to be out of conformance with approved drawings (see 5.2.2).

3.1.2 System - The manufacturer shall use a documented quality system acceptable to the Postal Service. As a minimum, the manufacturer's quality system shall include controls and record keeping in the following areas: (A quality system in compliance with ANSI/ASQC Q9002-1994 meets this requirement).

3.1.2.1 Inspection and testing;

3.1.2.2 Inspection, measuring, and test equipment;

3.1.2.3 Control of nonconforming products;

3.1.2.4 Document control; and

3.1.2.5 Corrective action.

3.1.3 System Evaluation - The Postal Service has the right to evaluate the acceptability and effectiveness of the manufacturer's quality system before approval and during tenure as approved source.

3.1.4 Records - All of the manufacturer's records pertaining to the approved product shall be kept for a minimum of three (3) years after shipment of product.

3.2 General Design - Mailboxes must meet regulations and requirements as stipulated by USPS collection and delivery, operation and policy (see 2.2). This includes carrier door operation as stated in 3.4, flag operation as stated in 3.7, in-coming mail openings and the retrieval of out-going mail. The opening style, design and size are determined by the manufacturer, however, the carrier must be able to deposit the customer's mail. Out-going mail of all designs must be able to be pulled straight out of the mailbox without interference from protrusions, hardware, etc. Mailboxes must be capable of passing the applicable testing requirements in 3.15. Mailboxes must not be made of any transparent, toxic, or flammable material (see 3.3). The mailbox must protect mail from potential water damage which may result from wet weather conditions see section 3.15.3. Any advertising on a mailbox or its support is prohibited. Additional specific requirements follow.

3.2.1 Traditional Designs (Limited & Full Service) – Mailbox designs which conform to Figure 1 and meet capacity requirements specified in 3.15.1 will be classified as Traditional. Designs incorporating a carrier signal flag (see 3.7) will be classified as full service mailboxes. Designs with no flag will be classified as limited service (see 3.12). As specified in 3.5, a rear door is permitted to enable the customer to remove mail without standing in the street. The use of locks, locking devices or inserts is prohibited.

3.2.2 Contemporary Designs (Limited & Full Service) – Mailbox designs which do not conform to dome-rectangular shape of Traditional designs but meet capacity requirements specified in 3.15.1 while not exceeding maximum dimensions of Figure 1 will be classified as Contemporary. Designs incorporating a carrier signal flag (see 3.7) will be classified as full service mailboxes. Designs with no flag will be classified as limited service (see 3.12). Although the shape and design is less restrictive, Contemporary mailboxes must meet the same applicable functional requirements. Contemporary designs can also incorporate a rear door, as specified in 3.5, to enable the customer to remove mail without standing in the street. The use of locks, locking devices or inserts is prohibited.

3.2.3 Locked Designs – Mailbox designs which provide security for customer's in-coming mail will be classified as Locked mailboxes (see Figures 2 & 3). Although the shape and design is less restrictive, Locked mailboxes must meet the same applicable functional requirements. Designs having a slot for in-coming mail must be at least 1.75 inches high by 10 inches wide. If a slot has a protective flap it must operate inward to ensure mail can be inserted in horizontal manner without requiring any additional effort of carriers (see Figure 3). The slot must be positioned on the front side of the mailbox facing the street. In addition, the slot must be clearly visible and directly accessible by mail carriers. Any designs, which allow for out-going mail, must meet all applicable requirements of this standard.

3.2.3.1 Full Service – Locked mailbox designs of this class allow for both in-coming and out-going mail as depicted in Figure 2. It is preferred¹ that both in-coming and out-going mail compartments be located behind a single carrier service door as shown in Figure 2. Alternate positioning of the in-coming mail compartment such as beneath or side-by-side with the out-going compartment is permitted provided that no additional carrier service is introduced.

3.2.3.2 Limited Service – Locked mailbox designs of this class only allow for in-coming mail as shown in Figure 3.

3.2.4 Mailbox Accessories – Decorative art and devices can be attached to the exterior of approved mailbox designs provided they do not interfere with mail delivery or present a safety hazard. Devices can also be mounted in the interior of approved mailboxes provided they do not cause the intended mailbox to fail capacity test described in 3.15.1 and do not interfere with mail delivery or present a safety hazard. Any advertising on a mailbox or its support is prohibited. Unrestricted spring-loaded devices and designs are prohibited. Auxiliary flags or devices used to signal the customer that the mail has arrived must operate automatically without requiring additional carrier effort.

3.3 Materials - Ferrous or nonferrous metal, wood (restrictions apply), plastic, or other materials may be used, as long as their thickness, form, mechanical properties, and chemical

¹The term 'preferred' as used throughout this document in conjunction with any requirement implies that compliance is desired but not mandatory.

properties adequately meet the operational, structural, and performance requirements set forth in this standard. Materials used must not be toxic, flammable or transparent.

3.3.1 Mailbox Floor - The entire bottom area of all mailboxes where mail would rest shall be fabricated to prevent mail from damage due to condensation or moisture. Except for the internal mail compartment of locked style mailboxes, all designs must not present a lip or protrusion that would prevent the mail from being inserted or pulled straight out of the mailbox. The surface of the floor cannot be made of wood material. The floor shall be ribbed as shown in Figures 1, 2, and 3 or dimpled, embossed, or otherwise fabricated provided the resulting surface area (touching mail) does not exceed .25 square inch (per dimple/impression) and is minimum of .12 inch high on centers not exceeding 1 inch. A mat insert having a raised surface contour may be used for the internal mail compartment of locked style mailboxes only (see Figures 2 & 3).

3.3.2 Carrier Signal Flag – Cannot be made of wood. Plastic is the preferred material.

3.3.3 Door Handle – Cannot be made of wood. Plastic is the preferred material.

3.4 Carrier Service Door – There shall be only one carrier service door which must provide access for mail delivery and collection intended by the unit and meet USPS delivery operational requirements (see 2.2). The door must meet the applicable testing requirements specified in 3.15.2. The carrier service door must operate freely and solely by pulling outward and downward with a convenient handle or knob. The design of the door, including hinges and handles must provide protection against wind, rain, sleet, or snow (see 3.15.3). Door latches must hold the door closed but allow easy opening and closing requiring no more than 5 pounds of force. Action of the latch must be a positive mechanical one not relying solely on friction of the hinge parts. The door shall not be spring-loaded. Magnetic latches are acceptable provided adequate closure power is maintained during ambient conditions specified in 3.15.6 and applicable testing described in 3.15. It is preferred that by either tactile or by sound (i.e. “snap” or “click”) carriers are alerted that door is properly shut. The door, once opened, must remain in the open position until the carrier pushes it closed. The door must rotate a minimum of 100 degrees when opened and it is preferred that the maximum rotation be limited to 120 degrees or less. When in a fully opened and rest position, the opening angle of the door cannot measure more than 180 degrees. No protrusions other than the handle/knob, door catch, alternate flag design, decorative features or markings are permitted on the carrier service door. Protrusions of any kind that reduce the usable volume within the mailbox when closed are not acceptable. See section 3.2.3 for carrier service door requirements for Locked mailbox designs.

3.4.1 Handle/Knob - The handle or knob shall have adequate accessibility to permit quickly grasping and pulling it with one hand (with or without gloves) to open the door. The handle or knob shall be located within the top 1/3 of the door. Various acceptable handle/knob designs with required dimensions are depicted in Figure 5. Other designs may be acceptable provided they allow enough finger clearance and surface area for carriers to grasp.

3.5 Rear Doors – Mailboxes may have a rear door, provided that it does not interfere with the normal delivery and collection operation provided by the carrier or require the carrier to perform any unusual operations. The rear door must not be susceptible to being forced open as a result of large mail items such as newspapers and parcels being inserted through the carrier door. The rear door must meet the applicable testing requirements specified in 3.15.

3.6 Locks – Locked mailbox designs shall have an effective means to ensure that in-coming mail is only accessible by the customer. The use of locks on Contemporary and Traditional mailbox designs is prohibited. Manufacturers must include the following statement in their instructions to customers:

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT IT IS NOT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MAIL CARRIERS TO OPEN MAILBOXES THAT ARE LOCKED, ACCEPT KEYS FOR THIS PURPOSE, OR LOCK MAILBOXES AFTER DELIVERY OF THE MAIL.

3.7 Carrier Signal Flag - Traditional, Contemporary, and Locked mailbox designs classified as Full Service shall have a carrier signal flag. The flag design must be one of the approved concepts depicted in Figures 1, 2, and 4. As shown in each figure, the flag must be mounted on the right side when facing the mailbox from the front. The flag must not require a lift or more than 2 pounds of force to retract. Additionally, when actuated (signaling out-going mail) the flag must remain in position until retracted by the carrier. The color of the flag must be in accordance with requirements described in 3.10. The operating mechanism of the flag must not require lubrication and must continue to operate properly and positively (without binding or excessive free play) after being subjected to test described in 3.15. Optionally, the flag may incorporate a self-lowering feature that causes it to automatically retract when the carrier service door is opened provided no additional effort is required of the carrier. The self-lowering feature cannot present protrusions or attachments and must not interfere with delivery operations in any manner or present hazardous features as specified in 3.2.

3.8 Marking - The mailbox must bear two inscriptions on the carrier service door: "U.S. MAIL" in a minimum of .50 inch high letters and "Approved By The Postmaster General" in a minimum of .18 inch high letters. These inscriptions may be positioned beneath the in-coming mail slot for Limited Service Locked Mailboxes as shown in Figure 3. Markings must be permanent and may be accomplished by applying a decal, embossing on sheet metal, raised lettering on plastic, engraving on wood or other methods that are suitable for that particular unit. The manufacturer's name, address, date of manufacture (month and year), and model number or nomenclature must be legible and permanently marked or affixed on a panel (rear, backside of door, bottom or side interior near the carrier service door) of the mailbox that is readily accessible and not obscured.

3.8.1 Modified Mailbox Marking - Mailboxes that use previously approved units in their design must include marking stating the new manufacturer's name address, date of manufacture and model nomenclature in a permanent fashion and location as described above. Additionally, The "U.S. MAIL" and "Approved By The Postmaster General" marking shall be reapplied if it is obscured or obliterated by the new design.

3.9 Coatings and Finishes - Choice of coatings and finishes is optional, provided all requirements of this standard are met. All coatings and finishes must be free from flaking, peeling, cracking, crazing, blushing, and powdery surfaces. Coatings and finishes must be compatible with the mailbox materials. Accept for small decorative accents, mirror-like coatings or finishes are prohibited. The coating or finish must meet the applicable testing requirements described in 3.15.5.

3.10 Color - The color of the mailbox and flag must be in accordance with the following requirements. The mailbox may be any color. The carrier signal flag can be any color except any shade of green, brown, white, yellow or blue. The preferred flag color is fluorescent orange. Also, the flag color must present a clear contrast with predominant color of the mailbox.

3.11 Mounting - The mailbox shall be provided with means for convenient and locked mounting that meets all applicable requirements of the POM. The manufacturer may offer various types of mounting accessories such as a bracket, post or stand. Although the USPS does not regulate the design of mounting accessories, it is pointed out that no part of them is permitted to project beyond the front of the mounted mailbox. Mounting accessories must not interfere with delivery operations as described in 3.2 or present hazardous features as described in 3.14. See section 6 for additional important information.

3.12 Instructions and Product Information

3.12.1 Assembly and Installation - A complete set of instructions for assembling and mounting the mailbox shall be furnished with each unit. The instructions must include the following conspicuous message:

CUSTOMERS ARE **REQUIRED** TO CONTACT THE LOCAL POST OFFICE BEFORE INSTALLING THE MAILBOX TO ENSURE ITS CORRECT PLACEMENT AND HEIGHT AT THE STREET. GENERALLY, MAILBOXES ARE INSTALLED AT A HEIGHT OF 41 – 45 in. FROM THE ROAD SURFACE TO INSIDE FLOOR OF THE MAILBOX OR POINT OF MAIL ENTRY (LOCKED DESIGNS) AND ARE SET BACK 6 – 8 in. FROM FRONT FACE OF CURB OR ROAD EDGE TO THE MAILBOX DOOR.

3.12.2 Limited Service Mailboxes – The following conspicuous note shall be included with each mailbox:

THIS IS A LIMITED SERVICE MAILBOX (WITHOUT FLAG) AND IT IS ONLY INTENDED FOR CUSTOMERS WHO DO NOT WANT POSTAL CARRIERS TO PICK-UP THEIR OUT-GOING MAIL. UNLESS POSTAL CARRIERS HAVE MAIL TO DELIVER THEY WILL NOT STOP AT LIMITED SERVICE MAILBOXES.

3.13 Newspaper Receptacles - A receptacle for the delivery of newspapers may be attached to the post of a curbside mailbox provided no part of the receptacle interferes with the delivery of mail, obstructs the view of the flag, or presents a hazard to the carrier or the carrier's vehicle. The receptacle must not extend beyond the front of the box when the door is closed. No advertising may be displayed on the outside of the receptacle, except the name of the publication.

3.14 Workmanship - The mailbox shall be properly assembled and utilize the best commercial practice workmanship standards in the fabrication of all components and assemblies. All movable parts shall fit and operate properly with no unintended catch or binding points. The unit must be free from harmful projections or other hazardous devices. The unit must not have any sharp edges, sharp corners, burrs or other features (on any surfaces) that may be hazardous to carriers/customers, or that may interfere with delivery operations as described in 3.2 (General Design).

3.15 Testing Requirements - Mailboxes will be subjected to all applicable testing described herein (specific requirements follow). A mailbox that fails to pass any test will be rejected. Testing will be conducted in sequence as listed herein and in Table III.

3.15.1 Capacity – Traditional and Contemporary designs must meet minimum capacity requirements tested by insertion and removal of a standard test gauge which measures 18.50” long x 5.00” wide x 6.00” high. The test gauge is inserted with its 6.00” dimension aligned in the vertical axis (perpendicular to the mailbox floor). The gauge must be capable of easy insertion and removal; and while inserted, allow for the door(s) to be completely closed without interference. The capacity of Locked designs, which have slots, chutes or similar features, will be tested and approved based upon whether standard USPS mail sizes (see Table I) can be easily inserted through the mail slot or opening. Retrieval of this mail from the locked compartment shall be equally as easy.

TABLE I
Standard Mail (Locked Designs)

Description	Size (L x H x Thk)
Express & Priority Mail Envelopes	12 1/2" x 9 1/2" x 1/2"
Priority Mail Box	8 5/8" x 5 3/8" x 1 5/8"

3.15.2 Operational Requirements - Carrier service doors, auxiliary doors, door catches/mechanisms, carrier signal flags and applicable accessory devices must be capable of operating 7,500 normal operating cycles (1 cycle = open/close) at room temperature, continuously and correctly, with out any failures such as breakage of parts. Testing may be performed either manually or by means of an automated mechanically driven test fixture which essentially mimics a manual operation. This test is applicable to all mailbox designs.

3.15.3 Water-Tightness – A rain test in accordance with UL 771, section 47.7 shall be performed to determine a mailbox’s ability to protect mail from water. The rain test shall be operated for a period of 15 minutes for each side. At the conclusion of the test, the outside of the unit is wiped dry and all doors are opened. The inside of the compartment must contain no water other than that produced by high moisture condensation. This test is applicable to all mailbox designs.

3.15.4 Salt Spray Resistance - A salt spray test shall be conducted in accordance with method A5 of ASTM G85, Standard Practice for Modified Salt Spray (Fog) Testing. The salt test shall be operated for 25 continuous cycles with each cycle consisting of 1-hour fog and 1-hour dry-off. The mailbox shall be tested in a finished condition, including all protective coating, paint, and mounting hardware and shall be thoroughly washed when submitted to remove all oil, grease, and other nonpermanent coatings. No part of the mailbox may show finish corrosion, blistering or peeling, or other destructive reaction upon conclusion of test. Corrosion is defined as any form of property change such as rust, oxidation, color changes, perforation, accelerated erosion, or disintegration. The build-up of salt deposits upon the surface shall not be cause for rejection. However, any corrosion, paint blistering, or paint peeling is cause for rejection. This test is primarily applicable to ferrous metal mailbox designs. It is also valid for mailboxes designs made of plastic, wood, or other materials which use any metal hardware.

3.15.5 Abrasion Resistance – The Mailbox’s coating/finish shall be tested for resistance to abrasion in accordance with method A of ASTM D968. The rate of sand flow shall be 2 liters of sand in 22 +3 seconds. The mailbox will have failed the sand abrasion test if less than 15 liters of sand penetrates its coating or if less than 75 liters of sand penetrates its plating. This test is applicable to metal mailbox designs only.

3.15.6 Temperature Stress Test – The mailbox under test shall be placed in a cold chamber at -65° Fahrenheit for 24 hours. The chamber shall first be stabilized at the test temperature. After remaining in the -65° environment for the 24-hour period, the unit shall be quickly removed from the cold chamber into room ambient and tested for normal operation. The removal from the chamber and the testing for normal operation shall be accomplished in less than 3 minutes. The room ambient shall be between 65° and 75° Fahrenheit. Normal operation is defined as operation required and defined by this document. The unit under test shall undergo a similar temperature test, as described above, at a temperature of 140° Fahrenheit. This test is applicable to all mailbox designs.

3.15.7 Structural Rigidity Requirements – Forces of specified magnitude (see Table II) shall be slowly applied at specific points on the mailbox under test (see Figure 6). These forces shall be held for a minimum of one minute and then released. After their release, the deformation caused by the forces shall be measured. If the deformation exceeds the limit specified in Table II, the mailbox under test has failed to meet the structural rigidity requirement. The doors shall remain closed for test positions 1 through 6. The application of the forces at positions 1 and 2 shall be applied with the mailbox in its normal upright position, supported by a horizontal board. The application of the forces at positions 3, 4, and 5 shall be applied with the mailbox lying on its side (flag side down). The mailbox shall be supported, on the under side, by a flat board that is relieved in the immediate area of the flag mechanism. The application of force at position 6 (Traditional style flags only) shall be applied with the mailbox lying on its side (flag side up). The application of force at position 6 shall be repeated at the top of the flag with the mailbox in its normal upright position. If visible cracks, in the material, have developed as a result of the testing, the mailbox under test has failed to meet the structural rigidity requirement. At the conclusion of the Structural Rigidity testing, if the mailbox under test fails to operate normally, as defined by this document, the mailbox under test has failed to meet the structural Rigidity requirement. This test is applicable to all mailbox designs.

TABLE II
Permanent Deformation Limits

Position	Deformation (inches)	Load (pounds)
1	1/8	200
2	1/8	200
3	1/8	50
4	1/8	50
5	1/8	100
6	1/2	2

3.15.8 Impact Test - Refer to the Figure 6 for load positions. Precondition the mailbox for 4 hours at -20° Fahrenheit. The following testing shall be performed within 3 minutes of removing the mailbox from the temperature chamber. At both load positions 3 and 4, with the mailbox lying on its side (flag side down) with the door(s) closed, apply an impact load equivalent to a 10-pound weight dropped from a height of 3-feet above the mailbox surface onto a bolster plate having a surface not larger than 2 inches by 2 inches. The mailbox shall be supported, on the underside, by a flat board that is relieved in the immediate area of the flag mechanism. If any noticeable perforation, occurrence of sharp edges, or cracking of the material, either inside or outside the mailbox, develops as a result of the impact; or if the door becomes inoperable or fails to close normally, the mailbox under test has failed to meet the impact resistance requirement. This test is applicable to all mailbox designs.