

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Prior to the implementation of Docket No. R2001–1 on June 30, 2002, customers and shippers wanting to mail lightweight parcels weighing 13 ounces or less and receive Delivery Confirmation or Signature Confirmation service could not choose First-Class Mail, even though the parcels otherwise would qualify for First-Class Mail based on their weight.

The Postal Service proposed in its Docket No. R2001–1 Request to extend Delivery Confirmation and Signature Confirmation to First-Class Mail parcels as a way of providing all parcel customers and shippers the opportunity to benefit from Delivery Confirmation and Signature Confirmation services without affecting their choice of subclass. The Postal Service believed that this change would increase not only the customer value of those special services but also the customer value of First-Class Mail as an effective class of mail for sending and receiving lightweight merchandise in parcels.

The extension of the two special services to First-Class Mail parcels was implemented on June 30, 2002. 67 FR 18684–18771 (April 16, 2002). This extension provided parcel customers with Delivery Confirmation and Signature Confirmation options afforded other parcel shippers using Priority Mail, Standard Mail, or Package Services. With a wide range of classes of mail and subclasses now eligible for these two services, shippers now have greater flexibility in determining which class to use for their parcels in order to meet particular customer requirements.

Another change resulting from proposals in Docket No. R2001–1 was the restriction of Delivery Confirmation and Signature Confirmation to parcels within the Package Services class of mail, which comprises the four subclasses of Parcel Post (including Parcel Select), Bound Printed Matter, Media Mail, and Library Mail. See 67 FR 18694–95. This restriction reflects operational concerns about the way the various processing categories of mail are sorted, distributed, and delivered, and the ability to provide Delivery Confirmation and Signature Confirmation services consistently. Before that change, all Package Services mail was eligible to use Delivery Confirmation and Signature Confirmation services, even though the two services could not be effectively provided to flat-size mail.

Both the First-Class Mail and Package Services changes addressed operational difficulties in isolating letter-size and flat-size mail for purposes of Delivery Confirmation and Signature

Confirmation scanning, as well as the goal of offering Delivery Confirmation and Signature Confirmation to all parcel-shaped mail. The restriction of the two special services to parcels within Package Services and First-Class Mail is in line with the need for the Postal Service to identify Delivery Confirmation and Signature Confirmation mailpieces for proper scanning by the delivery employee. Unlike letter-size mail and flat-size mail, Priority Mail (regardless of shape) and parcels of all other classes are held out at the delivery units and handled separately by clerks and carriers. This is not the case for letter-size and flat-size mail, which is generally processed on automated equipment and receives minimal manual handling, especially for firms that receive large quantities of mail daily.

For Delivery Confirmation, Signature Confirmation, and nearly all special services requiring accountability at the time of delivery such as a customer signature, parcels predominate. For the two conspicuous exceptions, Certified Mail and Registered Mail, the letter-size or flat-size mailpieces are designed and handled so that they are separated from other letter-size and flat-size mail before the point of handling in delivery operations. On the other hand, Delivery Confirmation and Signature Confirmation rely on manual separation of parcel mail and recognition of the special services on that mail by the postal employee at the delivery unit for proper handling.

In order to implement the Docket No. R2001–1 limitation of Delivery Confirmation and Signature Confirmation services to “parcel-shaped” mail, for all subclasses but Priority Mail, and to restrict Delivery Confirmation and Signature Confirmation to shapes that are readily identified for scanning, the Postal Service defined the term “parcel” in the *Domestic Mail Manual* (DMM) (sections C100.5.0 and C700.1.0h), with regard to using either of those two special services with First-Class Mail and Package Services mail, as follows:

- a. Has an address side with enough surface area to fit the delivery address, return address, postage, markings and endorsements, and special service label; and,
- b. Is in a box or, if not in a box, is more than 3/4 inch thick at its thickest point.

Proposed Changes

This current definition of “parcel” has created some uncertainty, particularly within First-Class Mail with the definition of a box. The Postal

Service therefore proposes a revision to this DMM language to clarify the definition of a “parcel.” The proposal uses, with some additions, the current mail processing category definitions in DMM C050 for machinable parcel, irregular parcel (a nonmachinable parcel), and outside parcel (a nonmachinable parcel). An outside parcel can consist of such items as automobile tires and partially wrapped nursery trees that are generally not placed entirely in a sack or other mailing container.

Until now, these parcel categories have been used only in conjunction with mail preparation standards for Standard Mail and Package Services mail and for the application of the nonmachinable surcharge to certain Parcel Post pieces. As presented in this proposed rule, the current definitions of a parcel are modified solely for the purposes of using Delivery Confirmation and Signature Confirmation services, including removing the 6-ounce minimum weight limit for so-called “machinable” parcels sent as First-Class Mail, and adding a rigidity requirement for machinable parcels measuring no more than 3/4 inch thick. This proposal does not modify any of the criteria in DMM C050 as they currently apply to the definition of Standard Mail and Package Services parcel mail preparation.

By using the existing standards and readily known parcel definitions, the Postal Service would more clearly define what constitutes a parcel for purposes of Delivery Confirmation and Signature Confirmation services, and their use would reduce the subjectivity of determining what distinguishes a “box” from a “flat” or a “letter.” At the same time, while ensuring, by the use of current parcel definitions in the DMM, that letter-size mail and flat-size mail are not construed as a parcel, the proposed revision would also ensure that shippers would benefit from a wide range of dimensions for various types of parcels. For example, a machinable parcel can measure as little as 6 inches long and 3 inches high if it is more than 1/4 inch thick. On the other hand, a Parcel Post outside parcel (nonmachinable) can weigh as much as 70 pounds and measure up to 130 inches in combined length and girth.

For the reasons above, the Postal Service proposes revising and clarifying the definition of a First-Class Mail parcel and a Package Services parcel solely for the purposes of using Delivery Confirmation or Signature Confirmation with either of those two mail classes. The proposed language adopts the current definitions in DMM C050 for the