

4.0 LABEL FORMAT

4.1 Label Preparation

PRS labels must be certified for use by the Postal Service prior to distribution. In addition, permit holders must obtain Postal Service certification for barcode symbologies. Any photographic, mechanical, or electronic process or any combination of such 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.

4.2 Labeling Methods

If all applicable content and format standards are approved (including instructions to the user), a PRS label may be distributed by any of the following methods:

- a. As an enclosure with merchandise when initially shipped, as part of the original invoice accompanying the merchandise, or as a separate label preprinted by the permit holder. If the reverse side of the label bears an adhesive, it must be strong enough to bond the label securely to the mailpiece.
- b. As an electronic file created by the permit holder for local output and printing by the customer.

4.3 Instructions

Regardless of label distribution method, written instructions always must be provided to the user of the PRS label that, at a minimum, direct the user to do the following:

- a. "If your name and address are not already printed in the return address area, please print them neatly in that area or attach a return address label there."
- b. "Attach the label provided by the merchant squarely onto the largest side of the mailpiece, unless you need to use another side to make the parcel more stable. Place the label at least 1 inch from the edge of the parcel, so that it does not fold over to another side. If you are using tape to attach the new label, do not put tape over any barcodes on the label, even if the tape is clear, because the reflection interferes with barcode readers."
- c. "If you are reusing the original container to return the merchandise, use the label to cover your original delivery address and the barcodes and any other postal information on it. If it is not possible to cover all that information with the label, either remove old labels

containing these items, mark them out completely with a permanent marker, or cover them completely with blank labels or paper that cannot be seen through. If that cannot be done, or if the original container is no longer sound, please use a new box to return the merchandise and attach the return label to that new box."

- d. "Once repackaged and labeled, you can mail the parcel at a post office, deposit it in a collection box, or give it to the carrier at the original delivery address. If the parcel is addressed to Return Delivery Unit, mail it at a local post office near the original delivery address. If the parcel is addressed to Return Bulk Mail Center, you can mail it at any post office or collection box in the town, city, or metropolitan area of the original delivery address."

4.4 Label Format Elements

There is no minimum size for PRS labels; however, the label must be of a sufficient size to accommodate all 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 of a type size large enough to be legible from a normal reading distance and to separate them from other elements on the label. Examples of PRS label formats are shown in Exhibits 4.4a, 4.4b, 4.4c, and 4.4d. The following elements are required:

- a. Postage Guarantee. The imprint "No Postage Necessary if Mailed in the United States" must appear in the upper right corner.
- b. Horizontal Bars. A minimum of three horizontal bars must appear directly below the imprint in the upper right corner. The bars must be uniform in length, at least 1 inch long, $\frac{1}{16}$ inch thick, and evenly spaced.
- c. Parcel Return Service Legend. The legend must be placed directly above the address and include:
 - (1) Line 1: In capital letters at least $\frac{3}{16}$ inch high, PARCEL SELECT RETURN SERVICE or BOUND PRINTED MATTER RETURN SERVICE, as appropriate. Bound Printed Matter may be abbreviated BPM.
 - (2) Line 2: In all capital letters, Permit holder's name, left justified, followed by PERMIT NO., followed by the permit number.
 - d. Customer's return address. The return address of the customer using the label to mail the parcel back to the permit holder must appear in the upper left corner. If it is not preprinted by the permit holder or merchant, space must be provided for the customer to enter the return address.

- e. Address. The address must be the physical location of the return facility, as shown in the Drop Ship Product. The address must consist of at least three lines. If needed, the ZIP Code may appear left-justified on the line directly below the city and state line.

- (1) Line 1: In all capital letters RETURN DELIVERY UNIT, or RETURN BULK MAIL CENTER, as appropriate. Center may be abbreviated CTR.

- (2) Line 2: Street address, including number.

- (3) Line 3: City, state, and ZIP Code.

- f. Parcel Return Service Barcode. A PRS barcode must be printed directly on the label. The barcode may appear in any location on the label, except the upper left, upper right, and lower right corners. The barcode must meet the standards for barcodes in Publication 91, with the following exceptions:

- (1) The barcode must be produced using the UCC/EAN Code 128 barcode symbology.

- (2) The service type code (STC) contained in the barcode must identify the rate associated with the label destination. For labels addressed to a return delivery unit, the STC must be 58. For labels addressed to a return bulk mail center, the STC must be 57.

- (3) Human-readable text above the barcode must read USPS PARCEL RETURN SERVICE. If the barcode is a single concatenated barcode with the postal routing code described in 4.4g, the text above the barcode must read BMC ZIP—USPS PARCEL RETURN SERVICE.

- (4) The clear zone between the barcode, human-readable text, and the horizontal bar above and below the barcode must be at least $\frac{1}{16}$ inch.

- g. Postal Routing Barcode. If a single concatenated barcode is not used for the PRS Barcode, a postal routing barcode also must be printed directly on the label. The barcode may appear in any location on the label, except the upper left, upper right, and lower right corners. Postal routing barcodes must meet the standards in C850, with the following exceptions:

- (1) The barcode symbology must be produced using the UCC/EAN Code 128 barcode symbology.

- (2) The human-readable text below the barcode must read BMC ZIP—followed by the 5-digit ZIP Code for the BMC facility. The ZIP Code must be the correct ZIP Code for the RBMC as provided by the Postal Service. For RDU-addressed labels, the RBMC that services the location of the RDU must be used as the BMC 5-digit ZIP Code in the postal routing barcode.

- h. Mailer Identification (ID). An individual mailer ID must appear in the