

# United States Postal Service<sup>®</sup> Intelligent Mail<sup>®</sup> Barcode

## Frequently Asked Questions



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## What is the Intelligent Mail® barcode?

The Intelligent Mail barcode, formerly referred to as the 4-State Customer barcode, is a new Postal Service barcode used to sort and track letters and flats. The Postal Service is promoting use of the Intelligent Mail barcode because it expands the ability to track individual mailpieces and provides customers with greater visibility into the mailstream.

## How does it work?

The Intelligent Mail barcode combines the data of the existing POSTNET™ and the PLANET Code® barcodes, as well as other data, into a single barcode. The Intelligent Mail barcode is a type of height-modulated barcode, that uses four distinct vertical bar types (Full, Tracker, Ascender and Descender) as shown below.



Note: The Postal Service Flat Mail Identification Code Sort (FICS) program uses another type of 4-state barcode that looks similar to the Intelligent Mail barcode, but it is applied as an ID tag on non-barcode flat mail pieces only.

## How do mailers benefit from the Intelligent Mail barcode?

The Intelligent Mail barcode is the result of the Postal Service's efforts to develop more robust codes capable of encoding more information, while minimizing the space used on the mailpiece. The Intelligent Mail barcode:

- Has a greater overall data capacity than existing barcodes.
- Provides mailers with more digits for their use, allowing for unique identification of up to a billion mailpieces per mailing.
- Provides more accurate and detailed information about mailings which can enable better decision making.
- Increases mailpiece "real estate" by eliminating the need for multiple barcodes.
- Allows for participation in multiple USPS service programs with a single barcode.

## What services use the Intelligent Mail barcode and when can I start using it?

The Postal Service offers a suite of services for letters and flats using the Intelligent Mail barcode. Business Mail Entry Units (BMEU) started accepting letters with Intelligent Mail barcode in September of 2006. In May of 2007 the Postal Service expanded use of the Intelligent Mail barcode by allowing mailers to use it on automation-rate flat-size mailpieces.

Since then, mailers have had the option to use the Intelligent Mail barcode on letter and flat mail for the Confirm® Service, referred to as OneCode Confirm™ and; a version of Address Change Service™ (ACS™) called OneCode ACS™.

Mailers can use Intelligent Mail barcode on First-Class Mail®, Standard Mail®, and

Periodicals when participating in OneCode Confirm and OneCode ACS.

Current Confirm subscribers should contact Confirm Customer Assistance at 800-238-3150 for instructions on how to use their Subscriber ID within the Mailer ID field and to modify their account to accept the Intelligent Mail barcode.

## What about automation prices?

Since March 2007, mailers using the Intelligent Mail barcode have been able to qualify for automation prices as long as all other automation requirements are met including meeting addressing, readability, and other requirements for processing on automated equipment.

The Intelligent Mail barcode must contain a proper routing ZIP Code™ and a valid Mailer ID (MID) to satisfy the criteria for automation prices. Mailers without a previously-assigned MID should contact their local Mailpiece Design Analyst (MDA) at <http://www.usps.com/replymail/mailpiece.htm>.

Mailers printing the Intelligent Mail barcode solely to qualify for automation prices must populate the Service Type ID field with one of the following values: 700 for First-Class Mail, 702 for Standard Mail, 704 for Periodicals, or 706 for Bound Printed Matter.

Remittance mail such as CRM and MRM may use the Intelligent Mail barcode by populating the Service Type ID field with the First-Class Mail designation. Mailers using Business Reply Mail (BRM) without any services should populate the Service Type ID field with 708.

## Am I required to use the Intelligent Mail barcode in lieu of POSTNET and PLANET codes?

Currently, use of Intelligent Mail barcode is optional; however, because it offers significant advantages over POSTNET and PLANET Code barcodes (including using less mailpiece "real estate" and offering more overall data capacity), most customers have found it makes good business sense to adopt this new format, today. The Postal Service will require use of the Intelligent Mail barcode to qualify for automation prices beginning May 2011.

## Where can I place the Intelligent Mail barcode?

When used to qualify for an automation price, the Intelligent Mail barcode follows the same placement rules as POSTNET barcodes. On letters, it can be placed in the address block or in the barcode clear zone found on the lower right corner of the envelope. On flats, the Intelligent Mail barcode can be placed anywhere on the address side as long as it is at least 1/8 inch from any edge of the piece.

## What are the dimensions of the barcode?

The 31-digit Intelligent Mail barcode (65 bars) is slightly longer than the 11-digit POSTNET (62 bars). The print specification allows mailers some flexibility in choosing the height and width of the barcode they produce.

## Will I have problems passing MERLIN® program requirements?

No. The Postal Service's Mail Evaluation Readability and Lookup Instrument (MERLIN) program is a tool that assists with the acceptance of business mail. The Intelligent Mail barcode tolerances are similar to POSTNET's and will work with MERLIN.

## Will I need to complete CASS™ or MASS™ certification again?

The Coding Accuracy Support System (CASS) certification enables the Postal Service to evaluate the accuracy of address-matching software programs. The CASS process is applicable to mailpieces with the Intelligent Mail barcode, but there is no need to redo this certification.

The Multi-line Accuracy Support System (MASS) certification is an extension of CASS. It has an annual certification requirement and the Intelligent Mail barcode certification is now incorporated into this process.

## What tools are available to help me or my provider adopt the Intelligent Mail barcode?

A number of tools and other resources are available on the Rapid Information Bulletin Board System (RIBBS) web site at <http://ribbs.usps.gov/OneCodeSolution/> such as online encoder/decoder, encoder software for a range of platforms and Intelligent Mail barcode fonts.

## Where can I find more information on the Intelligent Mail barcode?

For the latest information on the Intelligent Mail barcode, including the full dimension specification, visit the Rapid Information Bulletin Board System (RIBBS) website at: <http://ribbs.usps.gov/OneCodeSolution/>

EXHIBIT 1: Today, four lines used for ACS, POSTNET and PLANET CODE services.

**Address Service Requested**  
**#BWNGKVC**  
**#9999 9920 0104 276#**  
  
**JOHN SMITH**  
**249 AMBERVIEW LN**  
**MEMPHIS TN 38141-8346**  


EXHIBIT 2: With Intelligent Mail barcode, one line combines all services and other data.

  
**JOHN SMITH**  
**249 AMBERVIEW LN**  
**MEMPHIS TN 38141-8346**