



- P000 Basic Information
- P020 Postage Stamps and Stationery

## P023 Precanceled Stamps

**Summary** P023 describes precanceled stamps as the cancellation of adhesive postage stamps, stamped envelopes, or stamped cards before mailing. A permit is necessary for this action. It may be used for philatelic or postage payment purposes.

### 1.0 BASIC INFORMATION

**Definition** Precanceling is the cancellation of adhesive postage stamps, stamped envelopes, or stamped cards before mailing. Precanceling may be done by the USPS or by the mailer under a postal permit. Precanceled commemorative stamps are not available.

**Use** Precanceled postage is an optional postage payment method for mailings at Presorted and automation First-Class Mail rates and at all Standard Mail rates.

**By Mailer** A mailer meeting the standards in 3.0 may precancel adhesive stamps, stamped cards, and stamped envelopes with a mailer's precancel postmark. Stamped cards are precanceled at the time of printing and do not require a mailer's precancel postmark.

**Prohibition** Precanceled postage stamps may not be used on matter mailed in boxes, cases, bags, or other reusable mailing containers.

**Amount of Postage** The value of precanceled stamps affixed to each piece in a mailing must be either the exact amount due or another amount permitted by standard. If the exact amount is not affixed to each piece, documentation meeting the basic standards in P012 and those for the rate claimed must be submitted with the mailing unless excepted by P100 or P600. Refunds for overpayment must meet the standards in P014.

**Documentation** Unless excepted by standard, a precanceled stamp mailing must be accompanied by documentation subject to P012 if the mailing contains nonidentical-weight pieces or pieces without the full postage at the applicable rate.

**Markings and Endorsements** Whether the mailer or the USPS precanceled the stamps, each mailpiece with precanceled postage must bear markings and endorsements required for the rate claimed or services requested.

**Return Address** Mailpieces with any precanceled imprint must have a complete domestic return address. If the return address is outside the delivery area of the post office of mailing, the mailer must put a cancellation endorsement to the left of the postage showing city, two-letter state abbreviation, and ZIP Code of the office of mailing; or submit, at the time of mailing, a duplicate of the postage statement and a sample mailpiece, both in an envelope stamped and addressed to the postmaster at the post office shown in the return address; or use the cancellation endorsement "Mailed From ZIP Code" followed by the 5-digit ZIP Code assigned to the postmaster at the office of mailing.

**Place of Mailing** Mail bearing precanceled postage must be presented to the post office where the permit is held, at the times and places designated by the postmaster. Mail bearing precanceled postage must not be deposited in street collection boxes.

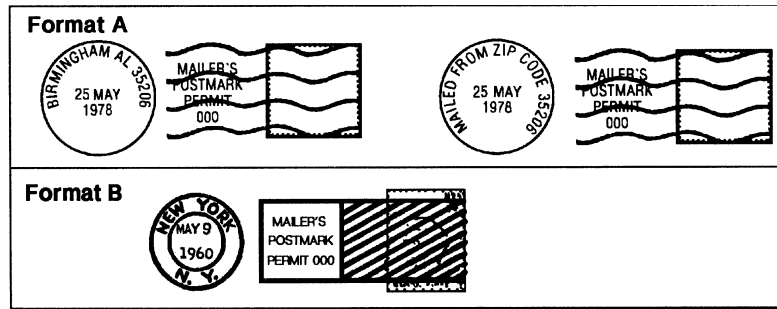


- Combinations**  
1.10 Precanceled mail may be combined in a mailing with mail paid with other means only if authorized by the USPS.
- Form of Cancellation**  
1.11 Stamps ordered with a precancel imprint have one visible line across their faces. Endorsement stamps precanceled by post offices have two visible parallel lines across the face of each stamp between which the name of the post office of mailing and its two-letter state abbreviation appear.
- Rate Designation**  
1.12 Precanceled stamps can be ordered with the rate category preprinted as the precancellation device. These stamps are for matter mailed as part of a qualifying mailing of the rate category shown on the stamps. Mailpieces bearing a rate category precancellation legend must include the return address. If the return address is not within the delivery area of the post office of mailing, the mailer must place a cancellation endorsement on the piece or provide information to the post office shown in the return address. Precanceled stamps with a preprinted rate marking may be used to pay single-piece postage if the piece bearing the stamps has the correct marking (e.g., "FIRST-CLASS MAIL") immediately under the postage.
- High Value Stamps**  
1.13 If precanceled postage on a single piece is more than \$1, the precanceled stamps must be overprinted or handstamped in black ink with the mailer's initials and the numerical abbreviations of the month and year for use (e.g., "A. B. Co. 9-78"). These stamps are acceptable on mail during the month shown and through the 10th of the following month.
- 2.0 PERMIT TO USE PRECANCELED STAMPS**
- Mailer Request**  
2.1 A mailer who wants to use USPS-precanceled stamps and stamped envelopes must complete Form 3615 and file it at the post office where mailings are to be deposited. If an applicant has a completed Form 3615 on file for other services, precanceled authorization is annotated on the existing application. There is no fee for this permit.
- Revocation**  
2.2 A permit may be revoked if used in operating any unlawful scheme or enterprise, or for buying or acquiring stamps or mailer's precancel postmarks for other than mailing, or for failing to comply with the format requirement or instructions on Form 3615. The permit holder has 10 days to file a written statement showing why the permit should not be revoked. The manager, customer service support (district), issues the decision on such appeals.
- 3.0 MAILER PRECANCELLATION**
- Authorization**  
3.1 [3-6-03] A mailer must request authorization to preprint rate markings on precanceled stamps or to use a precancel postmark on adhesive stamps, stamped cards, and stamped envelopes. The applicant must submit a specimen mailpiece showing the preprinting method or proposed precancel postmark. If more than one preprinted marking is prepared or more than one format is used, a specimen for each must be submitted. Form 3615 must be endorsed "Preprinting of Rate Markings," or "Mailer's Precancel Postmark," or both, as appropriate. The application and format samples must be submitted to the postmaster of the office where the precanceled mailings are to be deposited for approval by the district Business Mail Entry manager. If the application and samples are approved, the applicant receives written notice of approval from the postmaster and a unique permit number assigned by the postmaster.



- Denial**  
3.2 [3-6-03] If the application and format samples are not approved by the district Business Mail Entry manager, the applicant receives written notice from the postmaster stating the reasons for the denial and the applicant's appeal rights. The applicant may file a written appeal with the rates and classification service center (RCSC) serving the applicant's post office.
- Authorization Conditions**  
3.3 Mailer precancellation is authorized only for the specimen mailpieces submitted and approved. After that, a specimen must be submitted and approved for each new precancel postmark format or preprinted marking to be used.
- Revocation**  
3.4 A permit may be revoked for operating any unlawful scheme or enterprise, for buying or acquiring stamps for other than mailing, or for failing to comply with the required format standards. Within 10 days of receipt of the revocation notice, the permit holder may file a written appeal with the RCSC serving the post office where the permit is held. The RCSC issues the final agency decision.
- Content of Postmark**  
3.5 The mailer's precancel postmark must contain specific elements:
- a. The mailing date (day, month, and year) if used on First-Class Mail; the month and year of mailing may be shown on Standard Mail.
  - b. The words "Mailer's Postmark" followed by the permit number and enough lines to deface (cancel) the postage.
  - c. Either the city, state, and 5-digit ZIP Code of the post office where the precancel permit is held and the mailing is to be deposited, or the words "Mailed From ZIP Code" followed by the 5-digit ZIP Code of the mailing office. (If that post office is assigned more than one 5-digit ZIP Code, the precancel postmark must show the 5-digit ZIP Code assigned to the postmaster.)
- Acceptable Content of Postmark**  
3.6 The precancel postmark may include the words or authorized abbreviations of the rate marking required for the rate claimed. Alternatively, if authorized under 3.1, the mailer may preprint rate markings required by other standards on adhesive stamps to be used for mailings at the corresponding rates. Such preprinted markings must be in uppercase letters of at least 6-point type, printed in black indelible ink on the stamp where optimum contrast is possible. A preprinted rate marking applied by the mailer, by itself or with a precancel postmark, must not obscure other printing on the stamp that is part of the USPS design (e.g., "USA").
- Cancellation**  
3.7 Black ink must be used for cancellation. It must provide enough indelibility and contrast to prevent reuse of the stamps. The precancel permit number must not be obscured by the cancellation.
- Required Format**  
3.8 A mailer must use one of the Format A designs in Exhibit 3.8. Format B may be used only by a mailer previously authorized to do so and who has the necessary die. The only permissible alternative or modification to any format is the addition of a rate marking permitted by 3.6.

**Format for Mailer's  
Precancel Postmarks**  
Exhibit 3.8



**4.0 PHILATELY**

Subject to USPS policy in G090, precanceled postage may be bought for philatelic purposes as well as postage payment. A stamp collector may mail matter bearing precanceled postage if the collector has a permit to use precanceled postage at the post office where the mail is presented. Creating philatelic oddities or precanceling issues or denominations that would not otherwise see legitimate mail use is not permitted. Mail orders must include a stamped, self-addressed envelope.