

POSTAL SERVICE**39 CFR Part 111****Revisions to Standards for Palletization****AGENCY:** Postal Service.**ACTION:** Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: This proposed rule modifies previously published proposed revisions to the Domestic Mail Manual (DMM) standards concerning the preparation of mail on pallets. See 59 FR 42536-42540 (August 18, 1994). As a result of further review of postal operating needs and comments received in response to the proposal, both in writing and at a public meeting, the Postal Service has modified its original proposal and has decided to provide additional opportunity for comment.

This proposed rule is intended to establish certain basic preparation standards, such as levels of sortation and maximum pallet loads, that mailers will be required to meet for all classes of mail. Mailers will have more flexibility in other areas of pallet preparation, such as top-capping, stacking, pallet box construction, absolute minimum volumes, and stretchwrapping of pallets.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before August 30, 1995.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be mailed or delivered to the Manager, Business Mail Acceptance, U.S. Postal Service, 475 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Room 8430, Washington, DC 20260-6808. Copies of all written comments will be available for inspection and photocopying between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, in room 8430 at the above address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Cheryl Beller, (202) 268-5166.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The proposed revised makeup standards grew out of the proposed rule published in the **Federal Register** on August 18, 1994 (59 FR 42536-42540). These standards are based both on current Postal Service processing needs and safety concerns and on mailers' comments concerning their processing abilities, service needs, and transportation methods.

1. General

This proposed rule is intended to establish certain basic preparation standards, such as levels of sortation and maximum pallet loads, that mailers will be required to meet for all classes of mail. Mailers will have more flexibility in other areas of pallet preparation, such as top-capping,

stacking, pallet box construction, absolute minimum volumes, and stretchwrapping of pallets.

Pallet loads may be prepared according to best industry practices, provided that these standards result in pallets that can be handled safely and that maintain their integrity throughout transportation and postal processing. Recommended guidelines, developed by Postal Service Engineering, will also be published in the DMM for those mailers seeking assistance in establishing optimal preparation methods to ensure that their products arrive at the proper destinations in the condition expected.

The use of pallets that are not provided by the Postal Service and that are not prepared to the required levels of sortation (sometimes referred to as "courtesy pallets") is recognized as a key issue to many mailers. A revised policy regarding the definition, preparation, and acceptance of such pallets is included in the new proposed rule published below.

The Postal Service will rely on a consistent mechanism to enforce standards and provide feedback to those mailers who are not preparing pallets in a manner that maintains the integrity of loads throughout transportation and processing. Under the revised proposed standards, all pallets presented to the Postal Service for acceptance, whether the pallets are provided by the Postal Service or the mailer, must meet the basic standards in the DMM pertaining to the following:

- a. Pallet labels.
- b. Physical pallet dimensions (40 inches by 48 inches, designed for four-way entry, etc.).
- c. Pallet load integrity, stacking, and minimum and maximum loads and heights.
- d. Package, sack, and tray preparation.
- e. Permissible levels of sortation applicable to the class and type of mail placed on the pallets.

The flexibility in pallet minimum weights and the increase in maximum pallet height and tiers of trays described below should promote and facilitate mailers' adherence to makeup requirements. Exceptions for acceptance of pallets that do not meet basic DMM standards for height, weight, safety, load integrity, and permissible levels of sortation undermine efforts to assure safe and efficient handling of palletized loads. Such exceptions will not be permitted. (See section 8, Pallets Not Prepared to Finest Depth of Sort, which provides some relief for mailers who currently have difficulty preparing mailings on pallets to the required levels of sortation.)

In addition, the Postal Service will consider individual pallet shipments that are entered under the plant-verified drop shipment (PVDS) program to be bedloaded if the load integrity of the pallets is compromised when they are presented for acceptance at a destination entry postal facility, such that the shipment requires driver unloading.

The Postal Service will establish a standardized system to monitor load integrity of customers' pallets at mailers' plants where mailings are prepared (when mail is verified by on-site postal personnel) and at postal facilities where mailings are entered and will inform mailers when their preparation methods result in pallets that do not meet the basic pallet integrity and safety standards (for example, the load on pallet is not secure, has toppled, is leaning, or exceeds the maximum weight or height restrictions). In conjunction with a steering committee of customers, the Postal Service is currently formulating specific standards for identifying, quantifying, handling, and providing feedback regarding pallet load integrity problems and requests comments on that issue. Where possible, this feedback system will be incorporated into the existing Drop Shipment Appointment System (DSAS).

After notification and an opportunity to make changes to improve load integrity, if the mailer's methods still do not work, the mailer will be required to meet the specifications developed by Postal Service Engineering for strapping of single pallets, stretchwrapping of pallets, pallet box construction and dimensions, stacking of pallets, maximum height/tiers of trays, and top-cap use. The specifications were published in the original proposed rule and are included in the proposed DMM revisions that follow. Mailers will be suspended from the pallet program if their pallets continue to fail to meet the minimum load integrity levels that Postal Service Engineering specifications are aimed to reach.

2. Bulk Mail Center Processing Needs

The proposed sortation and preparation standards described below will address existing capacity constraints and keep the bulk mail center (BMC) network flowing smoothly by moving as much mail as possible farther into the distribution network through pallet cross-dock operations.

These standards will further the Postal Service's current priority of providing relief to the BMCs for processing packages of flats and trayed letter mail. Relaxed standards on pallet minimum and maximum load size for