from different mailings in the same sack will not be permitted.

f. Flats Mail in Trays

No comments were received regarding this issue. The Postal Service is retaining the position set forth in the August 30 notice that First-Class flats will be prepared in flat trays and Standard Mail flats will be prepared in sacks. A commenter to the June 29 notice questioned the rationale for this policy. The Postal Service plans to initially limit the use of trays to First-Class flats to allow for a more gradual change to a future operating environment in which all nonpalletized flat mail will be prepared in trays. Currently, the Postal Service processes First-Class flats in trays. Generally, flat trays are better handled at GMFs and airmail facilities (AMFs) (where the Postal Service has tray handling systems) than sacks, which are more amenable to processing at bulk mail centers (BMCs). When barcoded flat mail is distributed on flat sorting machines using the barcode, there are instances where the flat mail is dispatched in flat trays to the next handling or destination regardless of class. Therefore, as part of the transition of all classes of flats mail to tray preparation, allowing automation-compatible (barcoded) flat mail in trays would be the likely next step, but this will not take place until after implementation of the current Classification Reform proposals.

g. Last Package Rule

A question concerning how to label a mixed ADC sack containing only a 5-digit package was asked in response to the June 29 notice. The Postal Service deferred an answer to this question until completion of the DMM standards. Under the presort standards set forth in this proposed rule, a 5-digit package left over after filling all possible 5-digit, 3-digit, and ADC sacks will be placed in a sack bearing a mixed ADC sack label.

h. 3–Digit Schemes

No comments were received regarding this issue in response to the August 30 notice. The Postal Service is retaining the position that, while a 3-digit scheme sort for flats may be investigated at a later date, it will not be implemented with Classification Reform.

5. Addressing

a. AIS Product Cycle

Concurrent with Classification Reform, the Postal Service is proposing to increase the frequency at which it updates all of its AIS Products, such as ZIP+4 and CRIS. This change would

increase the frequency of required mailer updates to address matching systems. Because this change will affect all AIS products and must be applied universally, it will impact all mailers using AIS products for preparing mailings, not just those mailing in the reformed subclasses.

The proposal to increase the frequency of AIS product updates is designed to improve the currency of the data that is used during the matching process and reflects the significant advancements in list management technology that have been made since the original product cycle was developed. Now that the Postal Service is experiencing more rapid change in address information and carrier route codes, it has become critical that mailers update their data files more frequently.

Under this proposal, the frequency of AIS product releases would increase from quarterly to bimonthly. The Postal Service also proposes to eliminate inconsistencies in the implementation dates of new product releases. These currently range from 45 days with ZIP+4 products to 75 days for some CRIS products. Under this proposal, all products would have to be put into use within 45 days of the release date of the product update. There are no plans to increase the frequency with which ZIP+4 code or delivery point code matches must be reprocessed from the current ''within 12 months of the mailing date'' standard for any of the unreformed subclasses.

Because these changes are systemic and because it would be costly and confusing to maintain two different sets of product update frequencies, the Postal Service proposes to apply these changes to all affected mailings, regardless of whether that mail will also be affected by Classification Reform. For example, carrier route codes would be updated more quickly with the initiation of bimonthly CRIS releases and with the reduction in the permissible implementation period from 75 to 45 days. This would apply to both reformed and unreformed subclass mailings.

Although these changes in AIS product frequency were previously planned and could have been proposed independently, the Postal Service has chosen to propose to implement them with the implementation of Classification Reform to consolidate changes to mail preparation standards.

b. Carrier Route Updates

Eight comments were received about the Postal Service's proposal that mailings at carrier route rates incorporate carrier route codes updated

within 90 days prior to the date of mailing using certified software. One commenter suggested that the Postal Service eliminate the requirement for certified software, indicating that it limited the creativity of mailers in applying the carrier route codes to their mail. The Postal Service requires the use of certified software to verify the accuracy of the matches and to provide documentation of the time and age of the information being used to apply carrier route codes. The certification process verifies the results of address matching, not the means by which it was achieved. Thus, there are no limits to the creativity that may be applied to the matching process if the result represents the correct carrier route code for the address.

Four commenters suggested that the coding date should be increased to 120 days, whereas two other commenters approved the proposal to increase the frequency of ZIP+4 matching to 90 days. The Postal Service has no plans to increase the frequency of ZIP+4 matching at this time. Carrier route assignments are more frequently changed to accommodate the operational needs of the Postal Service to balance carriers' workload. Thus, the Postal Service believes that the 90-day coding standard is reasonable. However, it is not the Postal Service's intent to require mailers to update their carrier route codes if no more current source of information is available. The Postal Service believes that the most current data available should be used in assigning carrier route codes. If new data files are not available, mailers should continue to use the existing route assignments until new AIS products have been released by the Postal Service.

c. Move Updates

Seventeen comments were received concerning the proposal to require First-Class bulk mailers to update the addresses of their customers who have moved within 6 months prior to the mailing date. Several mailers seemed confused about the exact class of mail to which this standard applies; it would apply only to Retail Presort and Automation First-Class mailings.

The Postal Service believes that the methods currently available to provide customers with updated address information offer a wide range of options that can meet the needs of mailers at a reasonable cost. For example:

(1) Use of the endorsement ''Address Correction Requested'' means that the mailpiece will be returned to sender with the new address information