

rulemaking, and reorganized to consolidate and replace current M042, M043, M044, and M048 into new M045.]

#### *M041 General Pallet Standards*

### 1.0 PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

#### 1.1 Standards

All pallets presented to the USPS, whether USPS- or mailer-provided, must meet the standards in 1.2 through 1.4. Mail on such pallets must meet the standards applicable to the class and rate claimed.

#### 1.2 Construction

Pallets must be made of high-quality material that can hold loads equal to a gross weight of 2,200 pounds. Pallets must measure 48 by 40 inches and must allow for four-way entry by fork trucks and two-way entry by pallet jacks.

#### 1.3 Securing

Except for pallet boxes under 4.3, loaded pallets of mail must be secured either with at least two straps or bands or wrapped with stretchable or shrinkable plastic strong enough to retain the integrity of the pallets during transportation and handling.

#### 1.4 Nonconforming Mailers

The USPS informs mailers or their agents who present palletized mailings, including plant-verified drop shipment (PVDS), when their pallets fail to meet basic pallet integrity and safety standards. After July 1, 1996, once notified and allowed to make changes to improve load integrity, if a mailer's methods, or those of the mailer's agent presenting PVDS mailings, do not work, the mailer is considered nonconforming. A nonconforming mailer is required to meet the specifications for nonconforming mailers for top-cap use, stacking of pallets, pallet box construction, and maximum height/tiers of trays in 2.0 through 4.0. After July 1, 1996, mailers will be suspended from the pallet program if their pallets continue to fail to meet the minimum load integrity levels.

### 2.0 TOP CAPS

#### 2.1 Use

Top caps are used as follows:

a. Except under 2.1b and 2.1c, all pallets of sacks, letter mail trays, parcels, packages or bundles of mail, or pallet boxes must be top-capped if the pallets are double- or triple-stacked when presented to the USPS for acceptance.

b. The top pallet need not be top-capped if the strapping or banding securing the stacked pallets together

neither damages the mail on the top pallet nor allows the stack to shift.

c. Lower pallet(s) containing either parcels or packages or bundles of mail, need not be top-capped if the top surface of each pallet load provides a sturdy, flat surface, parallel to the pallet base, that allows for safe and efficient stacking of pallets placed on top, preventing sliding of the top pallet(s), damage to pieces, and crushing of the load.

#### 2.2 Construction

Any material may be used as a top cap if it provides a flat, level surface horizontal to the base pallet, protects the integrity of the mail below it while supporting a loaded pallet above it, and allows easy entry of a forklift to remove the upper pallet(s). Flimsy paper or fiberboard (e.g., the ends of paper rolls) or similar material is inadequate and may not be used as a top cap.

#### 2.3 Securing

A top cap must be secured to the pallet horizontal to the plane of the base pallet, either by stretchwrap or by at least two crossed straps or bands, so that the cap stays in place to protect the mail and maintain the integrity of the pallet load.

#### 2.4 Required Use by Nonconforming Mailers

Nonconforming mailers (see 1.4) must use top caps on all pallets of sacks, letter mail trays, parcels, or packages or bundles of mail, regardless of weight, or on pallets containing pallet boxes 60 inches or less in height. Top caps must be approximately 48 by 40 inches and meet one of these construction standards:

a. Five-wood boards, with uniform edges and nine-leg pallet contact for stacking.

b. Fiberboard box end style, with a minimum 3-inch side and wall material of at least double-wall corrugated fiberboard C and/or B flute.

c. Fiberboard honeycomb covered on both sides with heavy linerboard at least 1/2 inch thick.

d. Corrugated fiberboard C flute sheet covering the entire top of the load with standard pallet solid fiberboard corner edge protectors.

### 3.0 STACKING PALLETS

#### 3.1 Double- or Triple-Stacking

Pallets may be double- or triple-stacked if:

a. The combined gross weight of the stacked pallets (pallets, caps, and mail) does not exceed 2,200 pounds.

b. The heaviest pallet is on the bottom and the lightest on top.

c. The pallets are secured together with at least two straps or bands of appropriate material to maintain their integrity during transportation and handling (pallets must not be secured together with stretchable or shrinkable plastic).

d. Each pallet is top-capped under 2.0.

e. The combined height of the stacked pallets and their loads does not exceed 84 inches.

### 3.2 Nonconforming Mailers

Nonconforming mailers (see 1.4) who stack pallets are subject to the conditions in 3.1, except that triple-stacking is allowed only for pallets of parcels and the combined height of any stacked pallets may not exceed 77 inches.

### 4.0 PALLET BOXES

#### 4.1 Use

Mailers may use pallet boxes constructed of single-, double-, or triple-wall corrugated fiberboard placed on pallets to hold sacks or parcels prepared under M045. Single-wall corrugated fiberboard may be used only for light loads (such as light-weight parcels) that do not require transportation by the USPS beyond the entry office. The boxes must protect the mail and maintain the integrity of the pallet loads throughout transportation, handling, and processing. The base of the boxes must measure approximately 40 by 48 inches.

#### 4.2 Maximum Height

The combined height of the pallet, pallet box, and mail may not exceed 77 inches, except that until July 1, 1996, the combined height may not exceed 84 inches. The contents of the box may not extend above the top rim of the box.

#### 4.3 Securing

Pallet boxes must be secured to pallets with strapping, banding, stretchable plastic, shrinkwrap, or other material that ensures that the pallet can be safely unloaded from vehicles, transported, and processed as a single unit to the point where the contents are distributed with the load intact if:

a. The pallet and its contents are transported by the USPS from the office where the mail is accepted to another postal facility where the contents will be distributed.

b. The weight of the mail in the box is not sufficient to hold the box in place on the pallet during transportation and processing, a pallet box must be secured to the pallet base.