

CASS[™]

Certification Requirements

A Mailer's Guide



2007-2008

The History of Worksharing Discounts and CASS Certified™ Software

In 1983, the United States Postal Service (USPS) implemented a program that provided mailers a postage discount for sharing the work to prepare the mail for processing. This allowed the USPS to provide more cost-efficient mail processing based on the advance work performed by the mailer in providing high-quality addresses for their mail.

While the program has been modified over the years to keep up with changing technologies, “worksharing discounts” are a mainstay for business mailers in the 21st century. Mailers participate by following USPS regulations to match their address records using USPS-provided data, assign the appropriate postal codes, then presort the mail before entering it into the mailstream.

With the implementation of worksharing discounts, the USPS learned that the quality of commercial address-matching software was inconsistent and often software products were assigning postal codes incorrectly. This created a costly volume of mail that was Undeliverable As Addressed (UAA). UAA mail requires extra handling by the USPS and can result in a loss of sales and customer contact for the mailer. To resolve this issue, the USPS, in cooperation with the mailing industry, developed the CASS™ certification process to test the accuracy of address matching software and equipment.

The CASS certification process began in the late 1980's and includes rigorous software testing on an annual basis. Certification tests include thousands of addressing situations and requirements for matching addresses to the address ranges in the USPS database. Each year, the USPS raises the bar for quality within the CASS certification process by implementing new technologies and requirements in the address matching software industry. By doing this, the USPS can better assure that when CASS Certified software applications are used, they will meet the address matching quality expectations necessary for mailers to be eligible for certain postage discounts.

Using CASS Certified address matching software to standardize addresses and match to the address ranges in the USPS database is the fundamental basis of Address Quality for business mailers. Standardizing addresses leads to improved service and deliverability and reduces UAA mail.

There are three ways mailers can make use of CASS Certified software:

- ❖ Developing address matching software and participating in the USPS® CASS certification process.
- ❖ Purchasing CASS Certified software for use.

- ❖ Submitting their address list to a Service Bureau that utilizes CASS Certified software for processing.

Current Addressing Technologies Available Through CASS Certified Software

All CASS Certified address matching software products are required to support each of the addressing technologies described below. When used by mailers in conjunction with the address standardization process performed by CASS Certified software, these software options can improve the quality and deliverability of an address list even further. Improved quality translates directly into a reduction of UAA mail and its associated costs.

DPV

The DPV™ System is one of the SnappCheck Address Management Technologies® services available through CASS Certified software. DPV helps validate accurate delivery address information and identify inaccurate, incomplete, or erroneous addresses contained in mailer address files. For each address presented, DPV validates one of the following scenarios:

- The address has the correct primary and secondary data
- The address has the correct primary but not secondary data
- The address cannot be validated

DPV is a validation process, *not* a correction process. DPV does NOT append any missing data or correct any address elements.

DPV is a way to assure that each address in your mailing matches one of the 145,000,000+ delivery points (deliverable addresses) on file with the USPS. Mailer use of DPV, along with corrective actions, helps to reduce the amount of UAA mailpieces, which in turn results in more efficient Postal Service™ mail processing and delivery operations.

LACSLink

The LACSLink™ systems provides mailers with an automated method of obtaining a new address for addresses that have been converted by local municipalities, usually when the community has implemented a 911 emergency system. 911 address conversions normally involve changing rural-style addresses to city-style addresses, but in some instances municipal conversions may result in the renaming or renumbering of existing city style addresses.

If the standardized address is an exact match to the old address information in the LACSLink file, the LACSLink system provides the 911 conversion address to the mailer.

LACSLink benefits include the following:

- reduces undeliverable mail by providing the most current address information for matches made to the LACSLink file
- lowers mailer costs by reducing the number of undeliverable and/or duplicate mailpieces by using the most current address information
- provides the opportunity for faster product/service marketing through accurate mail delivery

Early Warning System (EWS)

The Early Warning System file is used to identify possible miscoding situations for new addresses and housing developments not yet reflected in the ZIP + 4® database due to the currency of new information.

EWS provides, on a weekly basis, ZIP Codes where new street addresses have been entered into the AMS database since the last extract. This file can greatly reduce the potential for UAA mail and prevent erroneous match results.

The monthly ZIP + 4 database product is extracted from AMS approximately 30 days prior to the official “release date”. ZIP + 4 databases can be used for 105 days. Addresses that are activated after the extract of monthly ZIP + 4 product release may not be accessible to address matching products for 135 days. The potential for miscoding of valid new addresses increases with the age of the ZIP + 4 database in use. Once a valid new address is updated in the mailer’s database with erroneous match results, the effect is often permanent without manual intervention.

Ask your software provider how using the DPV, LACSLink or EWS enhancements within your CASS Certified software can benefit your mailings.

Additional Addressing Technologies

The following addressing technologies are available in many CASS Certified address matching software products. These technologies provide further opportunities to increase the quality and deliverability of your address list to reduce UAA mail. Check with your service provider to see if these options are available to you.

RDI

The RDI™ system is designed for parcel shippers, their agents or analysts to be used in conjunction with CASS Certified address matching software. The RDI data product helps reduce shipping costs by verifying whether a delivery type is classified as residential or business. By identifying residential deliveries, RDI helps business mailers make informed shipping decisions and allowing them to:

- Avoid residential delivery surcharges from other carriers by verifying delivery type status (residential or business) prior to shipping
- Lower shipping charges by rate-shopping for a service that meets customer's needs based on the delivery address
- Enhance Customer Relationship Management (CRM) by demonstrating efficient and accurate shipping practices
- Identify shipping patterns to improve operational efficiency

eLOT

The eLOT™ product gives mailers the ability to sort Carrier Route mailings in approximate carrier-casing sequence. To aid in mail sortation, the eLOT product contains an eLOT sequence number field and an ascending/descending code. The eLOT sequence number indicates the first occurrence of delivery made to the add-on range within the carrier route, and the ascending/descending code indicates the approximate delivery order within the sequence number. Mailers may use eLOT processing to qualify for enhanced carrier route presort discounts.

DSF²

The DSF²™ system is another SnappCheck Address Management Technologies service available from the Postal Service to help mailers identify inaccurate or incomplete addresses. The DSF² system assists mailers in obtaining accurate delivery address information and facilitates identification of erroneous addresses contained in mailer address files. DSF² also provides type of delivery (e.g. business drop, throwback, seasonal, vacant, educational) and LACS^{Link} information. Mailers' use of DSF² helps to reduce the number of UAA pieces, which in turn will result in more efficient Postal Service mail processing and delivery operations.

Suite^{Link}

Mail that cannot be delivery sequenced to the suite number due to missing or incorrect suite information must rely heavily on manual sortation and carrier knowledge for delivery. The Suite^{Link}™ system is designed to improve business addressing by adding known secondary (suite) numbers to allow delivery sequencing where it would otherwise not be possible. Delivery sequencing mail with correct secondary numbers avoids additional handling. The Suite^{Link} system is built on Secure Data Store technology where the authorizing data will only reveal information for the input name and address and no other.

These addressing technologies are optional processes that serve particular addressing challenges. Talk with your software provider to determine if these solutions are available and appropriate for your mailings.

New CASS Certified Software Requirements Effective August 1, 2007

Mailers taking advantage of the addressing technologies listed above can quickly learn how the value of increasing the deliverability and quality of their address lists improves contact with their customers. In addition, these software enhancements are valuable tools that reduce the costs associated with UAA mail.

Effective August 1, 2007 CASS Certified software is required to use both the DPV and LACS^{Link} technologies when processing address lists. This new requirement ensures that ZIP + 4 codes will be assigned only when the primary number of the address can be validated using DPV, and the address used reflects any applicable municipality conversion or changes.

By requiring the use of these two important addressing technologies, the USPS can be certain that the address on the mailpiece is of the highest quality and can award discounts for automation rate mail with confidence.

Mailers who do not want to update their customer's original address information when LACS^{Link} returns a new address have another option. The Postal Service will allow them to retrieve only the ZIP + 4 code and delivery point for the new address and use it in conjunction with the original address. This allowance is an interim solution and is subject to change in CASS cycles. Mailers are advised that there is a limited period in which the old address is present in the ZIP + 4 data and they should update the old addresses to avoid potential loss of automation discounts.

Note: Refer to the LACS^{Link} License Performance Requirements for additional information.

For additional information or concerns regarding the 2007 CASS™ requirements, please contact us at:

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