Contents

Exhibits

1 Overview

1-1 Introduction

Handbook PO-413, *Platform Operations*, is one in a series of handbooks about mail processing operations that provides a logical pattern for reviewing and improving performance in Postal Service® operations. The handbooks were developed for supervisors responsible for the following Management Operating Data System (MODs) operations:

a. 210-229, Loading and Unloading Platform Operations.

b. 230-234, Platform Operations-Miscellaneous.

c. 235-237, Manual Sack and Outside Sorting.

d. 238-239, Mechanized Sack and Outside Sorting.

These handbooks are designed to help supervisors audit, monitor, and analyze the mail processing activities in their facilities. The handbooks emphasize work methods of craft employees and supervisors. Handbook PO-413 provides first-line supervisors with standard guidelines for their platform operations.

1-2 Scope

This handbook covers platform operations for all activities related to the input and dispatch of mail from the distribution process. The handbook also covers inbound and outbound traffic of related mail-handling equipment. The activities covered in this handbook are the following:

a. Loading and unloading of sacks, outsides, and containers of mail on or off trucks at the platform and the handling of related empty equipment.

b. Distribution of sacks on machines, sawtooths, platforms, slides, chutes, conveyors, multislides, and sacks in bullpen operations.

c. Distribution of outside parcels when done on the platform.

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2 Management of Platform Operations

2-1 Management Awareness

2-1.1 Assessment of Potential Savings

Indirect operations that have Labor Distribution Code (LDC) 17, such as platform activities, opening units, and mail preparation, account for approximately 37 percent of total mail processing work hours. Several Area and national initiatives, such as the Work Credit System, have been initiated to help plan, measure, and control these operations.

The best way to ensure that these workhours are productively spent is for line supervisors to fully understand the operation and have managerial control over the workload, personnel, and equipment needed for a well-run operation. This handbook will help supervisors to operate efficiently and safely by providing reminders and asking basic questions about the operations. “Self-audits” highlight the areas where improvements can readily be made. These areas include safety, work methods, control of mail and workhours, and equipment efficiency.

2-1.2 Measurement of Productivity

The concept of measuring productivity on the platform is still foreign. Historically, the Postal Service has not measured the workload and therefore has not developed a system to measure platform productivity (workload/workhours).

With the installation of the Work Credit System in all MOD 1 offices, the Postal Service has a means of measuring performance in the major indirect operations. By measuring productivity, establishing goals, and tracking performance trends, the Postal Service can reduce workhours and capture potential savings.

2-1.3 Control of Non-Productive Time

Identifying and controlling all unnecessary and non-productive workhours are critical. Line supervisors and floor managers can accomplish this by doing the following:

a. Do not allow employees from another operation to be charged to your operation if you do not need these employees.

b. Assign employees through your manager to another work location as needed.

c. Make full use of MODs Operation 340, Stand-by Time, when you have exhausted the other means of reducing workhours (liberal leave policy and assignments to available work).

By taking these actions, you and your operation have the ability to increase productivity and to identify unnecessary workhours. In the past, the belief had been that the use of Stand-by Time indicates poor management, but this is not the case. Similar to using overtime when the workload exceeds the normal staffing level, using Stand-by Time is an effective way of compensating on days with a lower-than-normal workload. Stand-by Time, when used correctly, is a valuable management tool. However, monitor the use of these hours regularly to track any trends.

2-2 Management Action

2-2.1 Overview of Management Action

Management of indirect operations is not as structured as management of direct operations, such as using letter-sorting machines [e.g., Delivery Bar Code System (DBCS), DBCS with Input-Output Subsystem (DIOSS), and DBCS with Combined Input-Output Subsystem (CIOSS)]. Management of well-functioning platform operations, however, typically is highly structured.

2-2.2 Platform Operating Plan

2-2.2.1 Development of Plan

A well-structured platform operation must include a formal platform operating plan. This plan is the basis for the direction of platform operations at your facility. To develop this platform operating plan, you must consider the critical entry and dispatch requirements, with special attention to the following:

a. Incoming mail.

b. Outgoing mail.

c. Staffing

d. Space management.

2-2.2.2 Incoming Mail

Provide an overall profile of inbound mail in the operating plan. This profile must include the following:

a. An arrival profile for scheduled vehicular traffic, including an expectation of percentage of load.

b. A definition of usual trip contents (e.g., container types and sacks).

c. A less-precise arrival profile for random traffic.

(1) How many vehicles?

(2) When are the vehicles expected?

d. An estimate of how many cubic feet of mail are expected.

2-2.2.3 Outgoing Mail

The operating plan must contain information about regular mail dispatch by time and volume. This part of the plan answers the following questions:

a. How many trips? When?

b. What container types?

c. How many cubic feet of mail?

2-2.2.4 Staffing

The staffing portion of the operating plan contains information about the number of cubic feet of mail expected and when. A planning guideline in workhours per cubic foot may be used to rough out a staffing plan that provides answers to the following questions:

a. How many people are needed?

b. When are the people needed?

c. Where are more people obtained when urgently needed?

d. How are unneeded people handled? Are they reassigned elsewhere? Are they put on stand-by (Operation 340)? Or is liberal leave policy applied?

2-2.2.5 Space Management

Space planning and management are critical to a well-run platform operation. Casual control of dock space is a sign of less-effective and less-efficient operations. Do not use docks for storage or other operational activities that interfere with loading and unloading of trucks. Have a plan for where inbound and outbound mail should go. The space portion of the operating plan should answer the following questions:

a. Where does inbound mail go after unloading?

b. Where does outbound mail await dispatch?

c. In what containers should the mail be placed?

d. What steps should be taken if the mail is in the wrong type of container all the time?

2-3 Management Control

2-3.1 Plan Deviations

Monitoring and controlling the operating plan outlined in 2-2.2 is essential. You must note deviations from the plan and apply timely corrective actions. It is imperative to assess changes in planned traffic (inbound or outbound) in terms of their effects on service, volume, space, and workforce and to develop and take suitable action promptly. For example, you might rearrange space allocations and obtain more or reduce required employees. Timely receipt and dispatch of mail are the keys to success in achieving the standards of service. The late arrival of mail (incoming and outgoing) at the dock requires immediate attention. When mail arrives late consistently, contact the appropriate transportation management and/or distribution process managers and expediters and act to make sure the plan is followed.

2-3.2 Employee Performance

Effective control also includes periodically assessing individual employee performance and, when necessary, taking immediate corrective action. Sound group performance is the sum of the performance of individuals. Individual performance is best when the following occurs:

a. Time spent with the work task is maximized and time away from the workplace is minimized.

b. Employees know what is expected of them in terms of performance goals (i.e., cubic feet/hour and containers/hour).

2-4 Operations Checklists

2-4.1 Planning Checklist

Use the following checklist when planning dock operations:

a. Do the dock operations and duties assigned to particular personnel suit the mail loading/unloading task of the installation?

b. Are schedules of all inbound and outbound transportation up to date, posted, and visible to all platform employees? Are employees aware of the posted schedules and their location?

c. Do the outbound trip schedules correspond with the availability of mail?

d. Are departing trucks loaded with less than 50 percent of their capacity? Are trucks consistently overloaded? If so, is Transportation Management action obtained?

e. Are all highway contract vehicles closed with numbered seals and PS Forms 5398-A, *Contract Route Vehicle Record*, completed?

2-4.2 Staffing Checklist

Use the following checklist to gauge how well you manage your employees:

a. Do you control employees' arrival and prompt start of work? Do you meet personnel at the clock-in point? Control employees' clock-in? Promptly assign personnel?

b. Are personnel gainfully employed at all times?

c. Do you assign employees to alternate work locations during reduced workload periods?

d. Do you check for personnel's prompt movement to the work locations to which they have been reassigned?

e. Is there appropriate control of smoking, drinking, and eating at the workplace? Does official policy in these matters exist? Is the policy posted? Is the policy communicated clearly?

f. Are there people other than Operation 210 staff on the dock? Who else is on the dock? Are they likely to create a disruption? Do they present a security risk?

2-4.3 Space Management Checklist

Use the following checklist to determine the platform's space requirements:

a. Are there enough dock spaces to handle transportation requirements?

b. Are unloading dock locations close to staging areas and next to subsequent operations?

c. Do dock assignments suit cross-docking requirements?

d. Do mail acceptance units compete for space with dock operations?

e. Is there sufficient coordination among mail acceptance personnel to ensure necessary segregation of mail?

f. Are staging areas adequate and clearly identified?

g. Is empty equipment stored in an orderly manner? Such equipment must not interfere with dock operations.

h. Are dock areas clean and uncluttered? Are there open areas to allow the unobstructed movement of equipment and mail?

i. Are schedules posted for arriving transportation? Are there adequate instructions for breakup and movement of mail to the proper next handling operations?

j. Are visual aids posted showing the dock locations for each trip and the separations/ZIP Codes™ that are expected to be loaded?

k. Are outbound loading schedules posted for mail being dispatched?

l. Does the mail for outbound loading arrive on the platform at the right time? Too early? Too late?

m. Do inbound/outbound dock operations back up at certain times of day? Why? Is corrective action taken?

n. Does equipment for platform storage back up at certain times of day? Why? Is corrective action taken?

2-4.4 Mail Management Checklist

Use the following checklist to gauge how well you currently manage mail flow:

a. Does mail arrive at the platform from distribution areas in the appropriate equipment?

b. Is preferential mail expedited during dock transfers?

c. Are all scheduled arrivals and departures monitored and are reports on late arrivals and departures properly made [see the *Postal Operations Manual* (POM) 477–478]?

d. Is mail being processed on a first-in, first-out basis and in compliance with service commitments?

e. Are PS Forms 5500, *Contract Route Irregularity Report*, being properly completed and followed up?

f. Are all required surface visibility scans completed timely?

g. Is there appropriate control of perishables? Bees, chickens, insects, and similar items require special care.

h. Are Priority Mail Express™ pouches handled properly?

i. Are Registered Mail® dispatches handled properly?

j. Are customers allowed to use the same dock areas as Postal Service vehicles? If so, does this create a security problem?

k. Are ZIP Code checks made at slides, runouts, and sawtooth positions to ensure that the right mail gets to the right dispatch container?

l. Is the flow of mail from the dispatching unit to the platform smooth and timely? Can the platform support a working staging system for outgoing mail?

m. Are dispatch areas audited to make sure that only the proper mail is staged in each area?

n. Are checks made at loading to ensure that the right mail gets to the right out-bound transportation?

2-4.5 Methods Management Checklist

Use the following checklist to determine if current management methods are effective:

a. Can any manual transport operations be mechanized?

b. Are enough separations being made when unloading a vehicle to reduce significant subsequent handlings? Are too many separations being made? Too few?

c. Are startups/shutdowns of the mechanized sorters, multislide, sawtooth, or bullpen operations affected to minimize idle time? These are usually crew activities. At mechanized sorters are sack strings loose on transport trays? Loose strings often cause jams, pull-offs, and more; they should be tucked in.

d. Is prompt action taken to clear backed-up runouts on mechanized sorters? This must be done promptly at the appearance of full-run out indicator lights.

e. Is there sufficient watch for overflow on mechanized sorters?

2-4.6 Auxiliary Equipment Management Checklist

Use the following checklist to determine how well you manage auxiliary equipment:

a. Is there proper dock lighting to permit the accurate handling of mail?

b. Is proper equipment available (e.g., dock levelers, dock boards, forklifts, and powered industrial vehicle) to load and unload mail?

c. Is equipment in good repair? Is it fully functional? Is it safe?

2-4.7 Safety Management Checklist

Use the following checklist to determine if you are running a safe operation:

a. Are bumper stops installed?

b. Are stairways to and from the dock well marked and in the right location? Are they used? Jumping on or off the dock is prohibited.

c. Are vehicle wheels properly chocked?

d. Are dock plates, lifts, or ramps available? Are they being used?

e. Do employees consistently lift and handle heavy sacks and parcels properly? (See Chapter 3.)

f. Do employees consistently seek help when loading or unloading heavy mail into or out of containers and vans?

g. Do employees always check dock boards and levelers to determine if they are in working condition and securely in place?

h. Is the load capacity of dock boards being exceeded?

i. Is the dock area free of unwanted materials, such as pieces of broken wood, empty pallets, and cardboard?

j. Is the platform mail-handling equipment in good working condition?

k. Has damaged equipment been "red tagged" using PS Forms 4707, *Out of Order*, and removed from the dock area?

l. Is horseplay prohibited in and around the dock area?

m. Is the dock floor in good condition (e.g., free of holes, high spots, and low spots)?

n. Do employees push, not pull, containers except during unloading? Do they handle one container at a time?

o. Is mechanical equipment guarded at end points, at corners, and around belts?

p. Do employees consistently comply with safety regulations about clothing and jewelry? Employees must not be allowed to wear jewelry and loose clothing while working at or around machinery.

q. Are unsafe acts and conditions promptly addressed and reported?

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3 Personnel Safety Guidelines

3-1 Proper Lifting

3-1.1 Instruction and Follow-Up

Incorrect manual lifting can cause hernias and serious lower back injuries. Employees who have not been told otherwise may not know there is a correct safe and efficient way to lift. Employees must not only be told how to lift properly; they should be shown the proper methods. Supervisors should follow up on initial instructions to make certain that employees always use correct lifting techniques.

3-1.2 Correct Body Position

3-1.2.1 Mechanics of Lifting

The mechanics of lifting are fairly simple. When someone lifts a weight held out from the body, the back acts like a lever. You can think of a lever as a bar or rod that pivots on a fixed point used to apply forces for lifting objects. When the lever principle is applied to a person's lifting, a weight a short distance from the pivot point will require less effort to lift than the same weight a farther distance away. Therefore, as weights are held farther from the body, the level of force on the lower back can increase substantially (see Exhibit 3-1.2.1a).

If the weight is lifted correctly, using good posture to hold loads close to the body with the back in an upright position, less force is exerted on the back. Correct posture also allows increased use of leg muscles which are much larger and stronger than those of the lower back (see Exhibit 3-1.2.1b).

Exhibit 3-1.2.1a
Wrong Position for Lifting

Exhibit 3-1.2.1b
Correct Position for Lifting

3-1.2.2 Examples

You can easily demonstrate the effects of the lever principle with any object weighing several pounds. Have an employee hold a hand under the object, holding it close to the chest. Holding the object close to the body shortens the distance to the lever pivot point, and the object can therefore be held that way without undue strain (see Exhibit 3-1.2.2a).

Next have the employee hold the same object at arm's length for a while (see Exhibit 3-1.2.2b). Moving the object away from the body results in the lever acting less efficiently, and the level of strain is increased. Lifting incorrectly, as shown in Exhibit 3-1.2.1a, places extra strain on the back.

Exhibit 3-1.2.2c and 3-1.2.2d contrast the amount of effort used to lift a 4-pound weight in both the correct (Exhibit 3-1.2.2c) and incorrect (Exhibit 3-1.2.2d) positions. In the correct position, significantly less force is exerted on the back. In the incorrect position, the lower back must support the weight of the bent trunk in addition to the increased forces resulting from

handling the load farther away from the body. Even though in both cases the weigh the weight being handled is the same (4 pounds), the forces on the lower back can easily be more than 100 pounds higher when lifting with incorrect posture. Therefore, one of the basic rules in correct lifting is to keep the object being lifted close to the body, to bend the knees and keep the back nearly vertical.

Exhibit 3-1.2.2a
Hold a parcel close to the body.

Exhibit 3-1.2.2b
Do not hold a parcel away from the body.

Exhibit 3-1.2.2c
Correct way to lift.

Exhibit 3-1.2.2d
Wrong way to lift.

3-1.2.3 Awkward Positions

Never allow employees to lift anything or otherwise exert a strong force on the body while in an awkward position. Employees are much more vulnerable to injury from strain, even in lifting a relatively light load, when the body is twisted or off balance. Using a pinch bar and similar activities can all result in serious strain and injury when done while the lifter's body is twisted. Where lifting must be done in crowded quarters, clear the area sufficiently to lift correctly.

3-1.3 Use of 1046 and 1033 Canvas Hampers

The risk of injury is great when improperly loading or unloading hampers (see Exhibit 3-1.3a). Do not place heavy objects in hampers since they cannot be properly lifted out. Instead, place heavy objects on flatbed trucks.

To increase personnel safety, when possible, use a tilter or mechanized hamper dumpers when regularly working from the bottom of canvas hampers as well as orange hampers. For small stations and small delivery units where this is not feasible, use inserts, false bottoms and bungee-equipped hampers. When it is necessary to unload a fully-loaded hamper, extend one leg out and support body weight with one hand (see Exhibit 3-1.3b).

Parcels, with shifting weights, present special problems since they must be turned over or on end to get a firm grip. See 3-1.4 for guidelines on controlling such loads. Employees who question their ability to remove an object from a hamper should get help. Personnel who work with hampers often should check the hampers and identify and remove damaged hampers from service. Reference Handbook EL-801, *Supervisor's Safety Handbook,* for other authorized and unauthorized uses of hampers.

Exhibit 3-1.3a
Wrong way to remove packages from a 1046 and 1033 canvas hamper.

Exhibit 3-1.3b
Correct way to remove packages from a 1046 and 1033 canvas hamper.

3-1.4 Control of Loads

Losing control of a load through losing one's grip or experiencing an unexpected shift of the contents, can be a dangerous situation. Instruct staff in such circumstances to jump clear of the load and, if possible, let the load go or ride it to the floor using their weight, keeping hands and feet clear. Employees in this situation must strive first to avoid injury; concern for dropping the object must be secondary.

3-1.5 Summary of Correct Lifting

A summary of rules for correct lifting techniques follows:

a. Keep the load close to the body.

b. Bend the knees and keep the back straight.

c. Keep evenly balanced: do not lift in an awkward position. To change directions, lift the object to a carrying position, then turn the body while repositioning the feet. Always make sure that the path of travel is unobstructed and that you have a clear view over the load.

d. Be sure of good footing. Place your feet one slightly ahead of the other and far enough apart to provide good balance and stability. Do not make lifts on slippery, sloping, or cluttered floors. When it is necessary to make high lifts, spot in advance the exact place where the load is to be placed.

e. Lift steadily and smoothly. Making sudden movements with even a light weight can strain the body.

f. Get help in lifting heavy objects.

g. Pick up loads by holding them at opposite corners.

h. Do not fight to recover a dropping object.

3-2 Handling Standard Post

Pick up wooden crates and heavy cartons by holding them at diagonally opposite corners. Avoid placing both hands on the bottom of the carton, since the burden cannot then be set down without either shifting the load or mashing your fingers. Get help when lifting heavy objects. No exact weight can be listed as the maximum for all employees because of differences in people's size, strength, and build. Most people, however, have a pretty good idea from how a load "feels" of whether or not it will be a strain for them to handle the object alone. Instruct employees to ask for assistance when they feel an object is too heavy. Give such instruction considerately so that employees will not feel they are being ridiculed for seeking help.

3-3 Jewelry and Clothing Guidelines

3-3.1 Jewelry Dangers

Employees working around moving machinery parts must never wear jewelry, including necklaces, neck chains, earrings, bracelets, watches, and rings. (See Handbook EL-801, *Supervisor's Safety Handbook*.)

3-3.2 Safe Clothing

Supervisors must ensure that personnel working around moving machinery parts wear snugly fitting clothing, but do not wear neckties, scarves, or jewelry. All employees must wear comfortable, safe, and sensible footwear that is in good condition and appropriate for the job. Widely flared pants, full dresses or skirts, and loose, full, or flared sleeves on shirts and blouses can be hazardous since the clothing may come in contact with machinery, vehicles, or moving equipment, and get caught. Consequently, permit such clothing only when these hazards do not exist. (See Handbook EL-801.)

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4 Common Causes of Low Productivity

In general, insufficient planning by supervisors causes low productivity by failing to keep ahead of all operations by hour or by day, or by overstaffing. Specifically, supervisors may cause low productivity by doing the following:

a. Failing to know what is expected of employees and failing to let each of them know.

b. Failing to take appropriate action when employees do not produce at the expected rate.

c. Delaying shifting employees to other duties when the volume of work load declines or ends.

d. Assigning employees before the volume of work warrants their use.

e. Permitting excessive talking that distracts other workers.

f. Failing to give all required instructions to employees and to take the action necessary to see that the instructions are followed at all times.

g. Failing to see that cases, racks, etc., are properly and legibly labeled.

h. Failing to assign employees to duties for which they are qualified. (Supervisors must not use this as an excuse for failure to train employees.)

i. Failing to make sure that shifting employees is restricted to an absolute minimum.

j. Failing to see that mail is brought into the work center in the correct container.

k. Failing to forecast workloads and workforce needs accurately.

l. Failing to see that employees take up their work promptly upon reporting to work and returning from lunch or breaks.

m. Permitting excessive or unnecessary “wash-up” time prior to the lunch period and at the end of the tour.

n. Failing to keep sufficient, proper equipment in ideal working order prior to assignment of a crew or the arrival of mail.

o. Permitting excessive absences from the assignment for personal reasons.

p. Using workers excessively on indirect operations.

q. Unnecessarily assigning employees charged into production operations to nonproductive duties (e.g., record keeping, window services, housekeeping, and moving supplies).

r. Failing to maintain the working area in a safe and orderly condition. (Supervisors should ensure that empty and surplus equipment is kept off the workroom floor, that a storage area is established, and empty equipment is properly stacked.)

s. Failing to take immediate corrective action upon receiving improperly prepared mail from intermediate processing operations. (This invites recurrence and unplanned use of workhours.)

5 Monitoring Mail Transport Equipment at Terminal Operations

5-1 General Vehicle Inspection

Dock clerks and mailhandlers must inspect all vehicles to make sure they meet the following conditions:

The cargo compartment is waterproof except for proper ventilation.

The compartment is clean and devoid of anything that might injure the mail.

Doors are equipped with locking devices and acceptable locks.

a. The cargo compartment meets the contract-stated cubic foot capacity or is able to carry all available mail.

b. Each vehicle to be operated is licensed to carry the maximum weight allowed by law for its type.

c. Vehicles have sufficient motive power to maintain the legal speed limit with a maximum load.

d. Load dividers and interior lighting are available when required by contract provisions.

e. Vehicles are spotted at the proper bay.

f. Vehicles comply with motor vehicle regulations.

g. Container-carrying vehicles are equipped with “E track” and shoring bars or straps.

5-2 Outbound Vehicle Inspection

Dock clerks and mailhandlers must inspect vehicles before they leave the terminal. Follow these steps when performing outbound vehicle inspections:

a. Inspect each vehicle completely before loading.

b. Present available mail to contractor for loading and arrange loading assistance when required.

c. Schedule loading for maximum efficiency when vehicles are preloaded by Postal Service employees.

d. Monitor all loading, including contractor loading, to ensure good loading habits for maximum space utilization.

e. Periodically check loading for proper routing and separation.

f. Determine that all connections are loaded prior to departure.

g. Determine the load factor visually with due regard for poor piling, low loading, or honeycombing.

h. Determine that container loads are securely restrained by shoring bars or straps in the proper positions.

i. See that vehicles are properly locked on departure. Vehicles in the security seal program must be properly sealed and recorded.

j. Record all data on PS Form 5398, *Transportation Performance Record*, or PS Form 5398-A, *Contract Route Vehicle Record*, when irregularities occur.

5-3 Inbound Vehicle Inspection

Dock clerks and mailhandlers must inspect vehicles upon arrival at the terminal. The steps of inbound vehicle inspection follow:

a. Observe arrival to determine that vehicles are locked. Vehicles in the security seal program must be properly sealed and recorded.

b. Record actual arrival time and consult with contractor for a report on the cause of any delays.

c. Make a visual check to see that container loads are properly restrained by shoring bars or straps and report all noncomplying offices.

d. Make a visual check of the load factor.

e. Make sure that all close connections are promptly unloaded and forwarded for dispatch.

f. Spot-check mail for delays or errors, and prepare reports on irregularities noted.

g. Spot-check vehicles after they have been unloaded for any deficiencies that need correction before the next trip.

5-4 Platform Operations

When irregularities occur, record all inbound data on PS Form 5398 and PS Form 5500, *Contract Route Irregularity Report*.

6 Surface Visibility

6-1 Surface Visibility

Surface Visibility (SV) is a mobile-scanning application that enables Postal Service personnel at SV-equipped sites to scan trays, tubs, and sacks of mail into containers and onto trailers and to track the mail across the surface network. The application uses a handheld Intelligent Mail Device (IMD) that has a touch screen and an integral barcode scanner/2D imager.

With this IMD, USPS™ employees scan trays, tubs, and sacks of mail into containers and onto the trailers that will carry the mail across the USPS surface network. Employees can view scheduled arrivals and departures from their facility, enter information about the trips, and view information entered by upstream facilities. This provides greater visibility into the mail that has been processed in their own facility and is ready for dispatch and transport to other facilities, as well as the mail volumes coming into their facility.

The SV program aims to achieve greater efficiency in the transportation network by increasing trailer utilization and eliminating unnecessary trips, as well as by reducing manual data entry and providing a stepping stone to piece-level tracking.

SV collects end-to-end data by linking multiple scans of a single asset to create visibility data to support planning, management, and optimization of the surface transportation network.

6-2 Surface Visibility Components

The SV Program includes the following components:

a. Uniquely identifying assets (e.g., sacks, trays, mail transport equipment, and trailers).

b. Tracking assets at key handoff points (e.g., arrival, departure, and interim points).

c. Quality checks, preventing mis-loads and mis-routings in real time.

d. Electronic forms to automate data collection.

e. Decision support for improved dock management and advance notifications.

The SV application allows for the following:

a. Unique Identification of Assets — Assets are uniquely identified using a combination of barcode-based enhanced distribution labels (EDLs) and mail transport equipment labeler (MTEL) placards.

b. Asset Tracking — Assets are tracked at a handling unit (e.g., trays, tubs, and sacks), container, and trailer level.

6-3 Barcodes

The different types of barcoded labels used within the system are as follows:

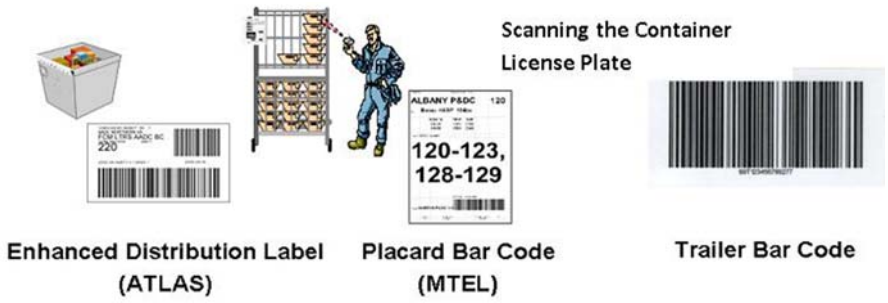
a. An EDL (see Exhibit 6-3) contains a 24-digit unique identifier for handling units.

b. A container license plate is a permanent unique identifier for mail transport equipment.

c. An MTEL placard is attached to containers and contains route, trip, and destination information (see Exhibit 6-3).

d. A trailer barcode is a permanent “license plate” bar codes for all postal-owned and postal-leased trailers/cargo vans (see Exhibit 6-3).

Exhibit 6-3
Enhanced Distribution Label, MTEL Pacard Bar Label, and Trailer Bar Code

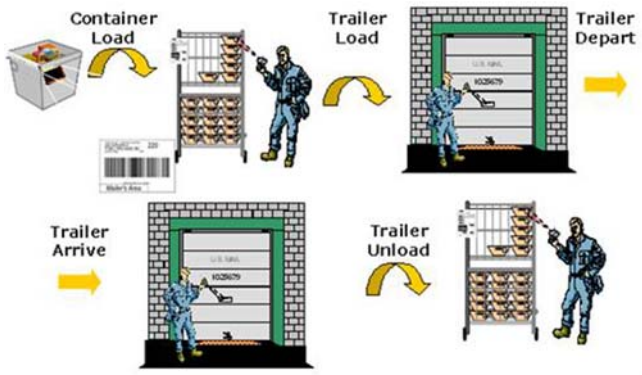


6-4 How Surface Visibility Works

The SV system tracks the movement of mail from end-to-end in the dispatch and transportation process. Trays, sacks, tubs, containers, and trailers are all tracked within the system. Visibility information for uniquely identified assets is captured, filtered, aggregated, and transmitted to the SV application for further processing. This information is used to streamline outbound container operations, enhancing dispatch quality, and increasing efficiency in the use of transportation containers and trailers.

Handling Unit Tracking — The SV application provides visibility into the tracking of handling units. The tracking begins with the building of a container in the bullpen and concludes when the handling units are unloaded from the trailer at the downstream facility (see Exhibit 6-4a).

Exhibit 6-4a
Handling Unit Tracking



Benefits

- Unique Identification of handling units on surface routes
- Handling unit nesting
- Service diagnostics
- Reduces missent volume

Container Tracking — The Surface Visibility application also provides visibility into the tracking of containers (see Exhibit 6-4b).

Exhibit 6-4b
Container Tracking

Bar Code scanning tracks container assignment, close, stage, load and unload times.

Benefits

- Reduced Missent Volume: Quality checks warn the employee if a container is loaded onto the wrong trailer
- Operational Efficiency: Analysis of container staging times identifies available containers that missed an available dispatch
- Trailer Utilization Measurement: Trailer utilization is calculated based on container load scans
- Data Collection: Provides details about specific containers loaded into a trailer

Trailer Tracking — The SV application also provides visibility into the tracking of trailers (see Exhibit 6-4c).

Exhibit 6-4c
Trailer Tracking

Manual bar code scanning captures trailer arrival, open, close and departure times. The Dock Management Tool is used to assign trailers to specific routes.

Benefits

- Enables IMD functionality of real-time shipment notification and dock management
- Provides accurate departure information for downstream facilities
- Provides information to target improved service and facility cycle times
- Automatically updates SV/TIMES

6-5 Intelligent Mail Device

The Intelligent Mail Device (IMD) is a hand-held computer with an integrated bar code scanner for scanning mail (see Exhibit 6-5). The IMD supports two different SV scanning modes: the Dock Management Tool (DMT) mode and the Data Capture Tool (DCT) mode.

The DMT mode supports the electronic collection of transportation information. The DMT provides a mobile platform for hosting TIMES functions.

The IMD is portable and can be configured for use with a ring scanner for hands-free scanning.

Exhibit 6-5
Intelligent Mail Device

6-6 Benefits and Features of Surface Visibility

6-6.1 Benefits

The SV application provides unique identification and tracking of assets, timely capture of information, and visibility/data collection ability. The benefits of the system include the following:

a. Is used for start-the-clock for commercial mail.
b. Has the ability to locate transportation access across the enterprise.
c. Reduces trailer and container waste.
d. Helps prevent container loss
e. Provides end-to-end handling unit tracking.
f. Provides visibility into container density.
g. Has capability to identify process bottlenecks.
h. Improves service.
i. Enhances dispatch quality.
j. Makes the Transportation Information Management Evaluation System (TIMES) process more automated.
k. Reduces paperwork.
l. Improves accuracy.

The SV application captures data in the IMD that is currently entered into TIMES and provides additional features over TIMES. These features include automatically capturing arrival and departure times via barcode scans and capturing data more accurately through the use of electronic forms. The SV application also provides more detailed information about containers and handling units than TIMES provides.

6-6.2 Features

6-6.2.1 Usability

Data can be entered into the IMD in real time on the dock, so that it is not necessary for users to enter data later at a workstation. The IMD in the DMT mode can be connected to a wireless printer worn on the belt so that printed forms are quickly in hand.

6-6.2.2 Dock Management

The DMT mode uses graphical representations to identify trailers available for loading or unloading, and colored icons to identify containers to be dispatched. DMT users can drill down into a trailer to identify its content and view the detailed container-level information and handling units count. DMT users at downstream facilities can view real-time advance notification of incoming shipments and have easy access to volumes of mail and late departure information. The DMT mode displays Drop Shipment schedules.

6-6.2.3 Form Capture

The DMT mode enables electronic capture of PS Form 5398A, *Contract Route Vehicle Record,* information. DMT users can use a simple point-and-click interface to capture route/trip, driver information, and standard comments. The downstream facility should validate the contents of the trailer to ensure that it matches the information on the PS Form 5398A.

Additionally, PS Form 5397, *Extra Trip Slip*, can be printed when extra trips are created. Other forms that can be printed are PS Form 5500, *Contract Route Irregularity*, and the PS Form 5466, *Late Slip.* Duplicate copies of forms can be printed with routing information whenever required.

The DMT mode provides a wealth of data, which aids in real-time decision-making and automates processes that previously would have to be performed manually.

The IMD in the Data Capture Tool (DCT) mode tracks assets within the bullpen processing operations. The DCT mode is used to track handling units and mail transport equipment.

Platform supervisors must ensure all proper SV scans are completed correctly and timely.

7 Drop Shipments and Facility Access and Shipment Tracking System

7-1 Drop Shipments

Plant-verified drop shipment (PVDS) allows for origin verification and postage payment of shipments transported by the mailer (or third party) to destination offices where it is received as mail. PVDS allows for destination entry of Standard Mail®, Periodicals, and Package Services. Each mailing claimed at a destination rate must be deposited at the time and location specified by the Postal Service. Publication 804, *Drop Shipment Procedures for Destination Entry,* provides instruction to destination entry offices on the receipt of drop shipments.

7-2 Facility Access and Shipment Tracking

The Facility Access and Shipment Tracking (FAST) System is used by customers to schedule appointments for drop shipments. Platform supervisors must ensure that the Facility Schedule Report from FAST is available to dock personnel on a daily basis. This report displays appointment summary information for all appointments that are to occur for a given facility and day. Customers may schedule appointments up to one hour before the appointment time, so this report should be printed multiple times daily. Access to FAST may be obtained through an eAccess request. Supervisors must ensure that all drop shipment arrival, unload start and unload end times are recorded on the SV hand-held device, or in TIMES or VTAPS. Any discrepancies between the actual contents of the drop shipment and the planned contents scheduled for the appointment should be noted in the comments section of PS Form 8125, *PVDS Verification and Clearance.*

7-3 PS Form 8125, PVDS Verification and Clearance

PS Form 8125 was originally developed to provide evidence that postage on mailings drop shipped to destination offices was verified and paid for at the origin Post Office. The form's function has since expanded to allow the form to start the clock for service measurement performance with a scan of a USPS barcode printed on PS Form 8125. The application of the USPS barcode by the mailer is only required with certain Postal Service products, such as Confirm® or Delivery Confirmation™.

In addition to PS Form 8125, other variations of the clearance documents include PS Form 8125-C, *Plant-Verified Drop Shipment Consolidated Verification and Clearance,* and PS Form 8125-CD. When a drop shipment arrives at the platform, the driver must present PS Forms 8125, 8125-C or 8125-CD, unless the shipment contains parcels identified with electronic verification system (e-VS) barcodes.

Platform supervisors must assure proper acceptance of drop shipments in accordance with Publication 804, *Drop Shipment Procedures for Destination Entry,* and that all personnel adhere to proper acceptance policy.

8 Mail Transport Equipment Return Handling Procedures

8-1 Purpose

With the creation of the Mail Transport Equipment Service Center (MTESC) network, the Postal Service realized significant cost reductions in processing empty Mail Transport Equipment (MTE) and improved both the availability and condition of this equipment. However, the needless cost of processing MTE that should have remained at a local facility for internal use is preventing the Postal Service from realizing the full benefits of this program.

The procedures outlined here are intended to ensure facilities only return MTE to the MTESC that is damaged or excess to the weekly needs of the mail processing facility, its customers, and other supported postal facilities. The platform supervisor must ensure that MTE is properly managed to provide a smooth flow of equipment for plant use, maintain a clean platform area, and load and dispatch properly prepared excess MTE to the MTESC on scheduled trips. Platform supervisors must review MTE received from feeder offices to ensure proper makeup per current MTE standard operating procedures preparation procedures listed in this handbook and take immediate action to notify feeder offices of any irregularities for corrections for future shipments.

8-2 Responsibility

Facility managers must manage, administrate, and determine the application and control of MTE within their jurisdictional area. They must meet, on a daily basis, the equipment needs of mail processing, associate offices, stations, branches, and mailers located in the facility's area. Managers must ensure that every employee is accountable to process each piece of MTE the first time the employee empties or handles the piece. This practice will greatly minimize the need to rework any mixed containers of MTE. Inventories of containerized MTE must not be returned to the MTESC solely for the purpose of creating floor space if it is anticipated a need will exist for that equipment within the following seven days.

8-3 General Handling

The proper handling of MTE is an integral part of processing, delivery, and customer service operations. As MTE is emptied of its contents, the MTE should be neatly stacked for efficient consolidation and containerization.

All trash must be removed from MTE before returning to the MTESCs. All labels, placards, and residual signage (e.g., HAZMAT and Code Red) must be removed from all MTE when emptied.

All MTE must be properly containerized prior to being returned to a MTESC. All containerized MTE must have a Mail Transport Equipment Labeler (MTEL) placard affixed prior to dispatch to the MTESC. All appropriate SV scans must be executed on these placards.

Delivery units will return MTE to their processing facility using handling procedures similar to processing facilities. It is important that processing facilities capture MTE prepared by delivery units and re-use the MTE in their internal processing operations or dispatch it to local mailers to the maximum extent possible.

8-4 Letter Trays

This section addresses:

a. MM plastic and cardboard letter trays (EIRS 74P/74C) see Exhibit 8-4a).

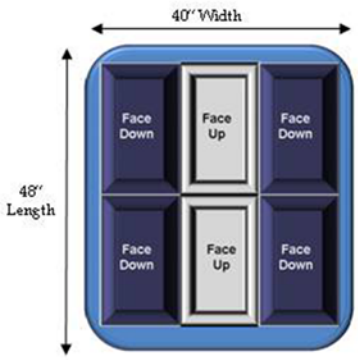
b. Half-plastic and cardboard letter trays (EIRS74HP/74H).

c. MM extended letter trays (EIRS74E/74EC).

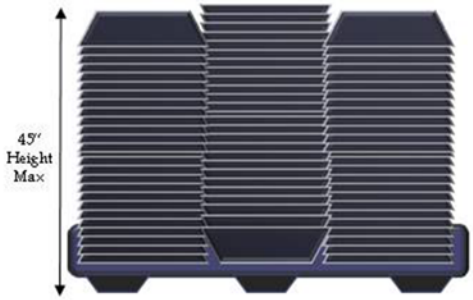
Processing facilities receive various types of letter trays both empty and containing mail. All tray labels must be removed as the tray is emptied of its contents. Replace the label holder with a new one if it has been damaged, torn, or has been rendered unusable in any manner. Once emptied, separate the trays and stack them on pallets by type using the stacking standards outlined in this chapter. Letter trays must not be returned to the MTESC unless the trays are excess to the needs of the facility and its customers or other supported postal facilities. Excess letter trays may only be returned to the MTESC if stacked on a pallet.

Exhibit 8-4a
Plastic Letter Tray, Orientation of Trays: Top View and Side View of Pallet

Plastic Letter Tray



Orientation of Trays – Top View on Pallet



Orientation of Trays – Side View of Pallet

The stacking configuration for MM plastic and cardboard letter trays (EIRS 74P/74C) is as follows (see Exhibit 8-4a):

a. An average of 180 letter trays per pallet in six stacks with approximately 30 letter trays per stack. Letter trays on the pallet should be stacked 45 inches high from the floor.

b. The four end stacks are stacked upside down on the pallet. The two middle stacks are stacked right-side up. Stabilize the corner stacks by applying hand pressure to ensure they are even.

c. Plastic and cardboard letter trays should be commingled on the same pallet.

The stacking configuration for extended MM letter trays (EIRS 74E/74EC) is as follows:

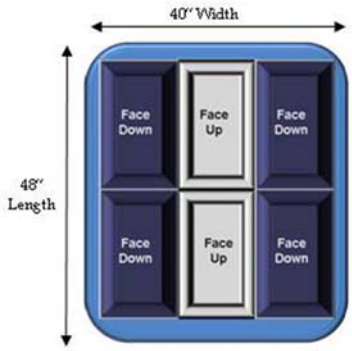
a. An average of 120 letter trays per pallet in six stacks with approximately 20 letter trays per stack. Letter trays on the pallet should be stacked 45 inches high from the floor.

b. The four end stacks are stacked upside down on the pallet. The two middle stacks are stacked right-side up (see Exhibit 8-4b). Stabilize the corner stacks by applying hand pressure to ensure they are even.

c. Plastic and cardboard letter trays should be commingled on the same pallet.

Exhibit 8-4b
Extended Letter Tray and Orientation of Trays: Top View and Side View of Pallet

Extended Letter Tray



Orientation of Trays – Top View on Pallet

Orientation of Trays – Side View of Pallet

The stacking configuration for half plastic and cardboard letter trays 9 (see Exhibit 8-4c) (EIRS 74HP/74H) is as follows:

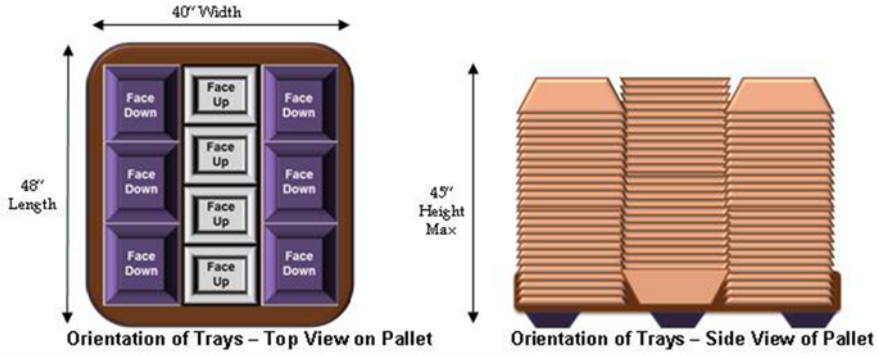
a. An average of 300 letter trays per pallet in ten stacks with approximately 30 letter trays per stack. Stack letter trays on the pallet 45 inches high from the floor.

b. Stack three stacks on each side of the pallet upside down on the pallet. Four stacks in the middle of the pallet are stacked right-side up. Stabilize the corner stacks by applying hand pressure to ensure they are even.

c. Plastic and cardboard half letter trays should be commingled on the same pallet.

Exhibit 8-4c
Half-Letter Tray and Orientation of Trays Top View and Side View of Pallet

Half Letter Tray



Orientation of Trays – Top View on Pallet

Orientation of Trays – Side View of Pallet

Remove all letter tray labels before stacking them on the pallet. The label holder must be replaced with a new one if it has been damaged, torn, or has been rendered unusable in any manner.

Exhibit 8-4d shows examples of the proper stacking configurations for MM plastic letter trays (EIRS Items 74P) and extended letter trays (EIRS Item 74E).

Exhibit 8-4d
Proper Stacking Configuration for MM Plastic Letter Trays and Extended Letter Trays

Exhibit 8-4e is an example of the proper stacking configuration for half plastic letter trays (EIRS Item 74HP). An employee at a postal plant is shown re-using Extended Letter Trays (EIRS Item 74E) from a pallet while working on automated processing equipment.

Exhibit 8-4e
Proper Stacking Configuration for Half Plastic Letter Trays and Employee Re-Using Extended Letter Trays


8-5 Plastic Flat Tubs (EIRS 78P)

Processing facilities receive flat tubs (see Exhibit 8-5a) both empty and containing mail. All tub labels must be removed as the tub is emptied of its contents. The label holder must be replaced with a new one if the label has been damaged, torn, or has been rendered unusable in any manner. After tubs are empty, they must be stacked on pallets using the following stacking standards (see Exhibit 8-5a):

a. Use 84 flat tubs per pallet in seven stacks; 12 flat tubs per stack.

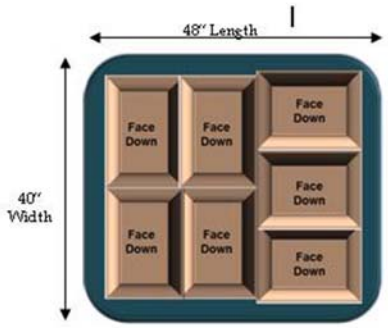
b. Stack all flat tubs upside down on the pallet.

c. Flat tub label holders must face the same direction in the stack, facing to the outside of the pallet.

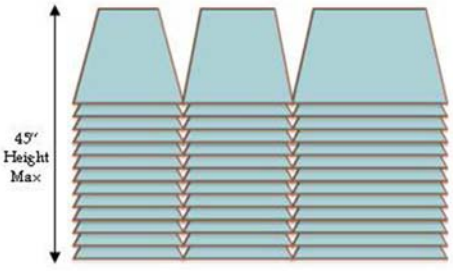
d. Remove all flat tub labels before stacking them on the pallet. The label holder must be replaced with a new one if it has been damaged, torn, or has been rendered unusable in any manner.

Exhibit 8-5a
Plastic Flat Tub and Orientation of Trays: Top View and Side View of Pallet

Plastic Flat Tub



Orientation of Trays – Top View on Pallet



Orientation of Trays – Side View of Pallet

Exhibit 8-5b shows an example of flat tubs plastic (EIRS 78P) in the proper stacking configuration and shows an employee at a plant hand-stretch wrapping a completed pallet of plastic flat tubs. Stretch wrap is applied to maintain the integrity of the MTE load on the pallet if the pallet is moved between operations, another USPS facility, or to a postal mailer.

Exhibit 8-5b
Flat Tubs Plastic Proper Stacking Configuration and Employee Hand-Stretch Wrapping a Completed Pallet

8-6 Handling of Sleeves and Lids

Processing facilities must re-use letter tray sleeves and flat tub lids. It is recommended that sleeves and lids intended for re-use be collected at processing operations in Gaylord boxes or in GPMC equipment rather than on pallets. Quantities in excess of the processing facility's needs must be returned to the MTESC in Gaylord boxes for processing and redistribution.

When an employee is removing sleeves from letter trays a cursory visual check should be made to ensure that no letter mail is trapped in the sleeve.

8-7 Disabling D&R Tags Before Re-Use

D&R tags on sleeves and lids must be rendered unreadable prior to re-use. If any part of the vertical bar field on the D&R tag is completely covered from top to bottom, USPS scanning equipment will not work on the D&R Tag. Three recommended methods for disabling the D&R Tag are as follows:

a. Cover the D&R Tag with an opaque label. The opaque labels can be ordered through the Topeka Material Distribution Center using NSN # 7690-04-000-4550.

b. Use a wide black magic marker to make a vertical line from the top to the bottom of the barcode field on the D&R tag.

c. Some processing facilities have tag blaster equipment. Ensure that D&R tags on MTE are rendered unreadable using tag blaster equipment.

8-8 Stretch Wrap

Processing facilities must use stretch wrap on palletized MTE to maintain the integrity of the load if the MTE is to be moved to another processing facility, postal mailer, or the MTESC. After MTE is correctly stacked on the pallet, stretch wrap is applied as follows:

a. Begin stretch-wrapping trays and tubs on the pallet from the bottom of the pallet and work to the top of the pallet.

b. Starting at a corner, wrap the stretch film around the pallet twice at the bottom ensuring tight contact with the MTE and pallet itself.

c. Continue wrapping up the pallet overlapping the 16-inch-wide stretch film by eight inches on each pass around the pallet.

d. Make one pass at the top of the pallet to insure stretch film at the top of the pallet is secure.

8-9 Sacks

Mail processing facilities receive several types of sacks, both empty and containing mail. Separate and containerize sacks by type. Mail processing facilities must not return sacks to the MTESC unless they are excess to the needs of the facility and its customers or other supported postal facilities.

A pallet and pallet box should be staged in the operation for MTE sack volumes. At the time a sack is dumped, employees must examine the sack for serviceability and loose mail contents using the “elbow” method. All serviceable sacks to be returned to the MTESC must be individually laid flat in a pallet box, and the height of the contents must not exceed the top of the cardboard box. These sacks must be separated and containerized by type. Sacks must not be returned to the MTESC in any container other than a pallet box and they should never be returned to the MTESC “inside out.”

8-10 Pallets

Mail processing facilities receive several types of pallets, both empty and containing mail. Facilities must return stacked pallets to the MTESC which are excess to the needs of the facility and its customers or other supported postal facilities.

All pallets to be returned to the MTESC must be stacked and must not be dispatched in any other container such as a wire container or BMC/OTR. Plastic and pressboard pallets must not be stacked in quantities greater than 45. Slotted wood pallets must not be stacked in quantities greater than 20.

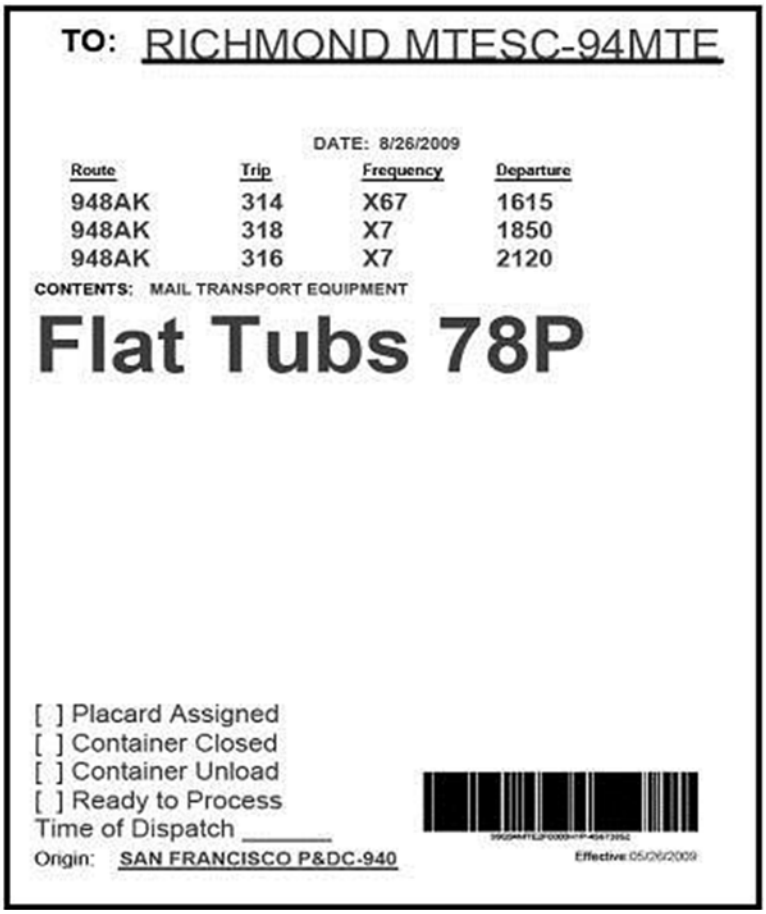
8-11 MTEL Placards

Currently, MTEL supports Empty Equipment placards in AO/DU Placard Prep process for MTE being returned to the MTESC for processing. The MTEL user denotes Empty Equipment placards by assigning the 'EQ' mail class to the placard. MTEL Placards are to be affixed to each container or pallet of MTE depending on the overall make up of the MTE in the container or on the pallet. MTE arriving from a delivery unit or generated at the USPS plant that is considered excess to the needs of the USPS plant must be placarded before return to the MTESC. The list below indicates the basic MTE items that can be displayed on the MTEL placard:

Extended MM Trays	All Sleeves and Lids
Trays	Flat Tubs
Sacks	Pallets

Plants should consolidate similar MTE into containers or on pallets based on these basic MTE types and affix the appropriate MTEL Placard. Stacks of pallets returned to the MTESC must have a "Pallets" MTEL Placard affixed. A sample MTEL placard for mail transport equipment is shown as Exhibit 8-11.

Exhibit 8-11
Sample MTEL Placard For Mail Transport Equipment



MTE in excess of the processing facility/local mailer's needs must be handled in accordance with the following procedures:

a. Sort and stack excess MTE, preferably on pallets by like item (example: all EMM Trays on one pallet).

b. If any mail is discovered while preparing excess MTE, take it to the appropriate mail processing operation.

c. After the MTE is separated by like item, hand-shrink wrap the MTE to the pallet so the stacking integrity is maintained during transporting to subsequent processing operations within the plant or to USPS mailers.

d. Return any excess MTE items that are not needed by local mailers or USPS plants to the MTESC.

e. Excess MTE transported to the MTESC, a mailer, or another USPS plant must have an MTEL placard attached (see 6-3 referencing MTEL placards).