



360 South Street, Marlborough, MA 01752 | Phone (508) 485-3334

Mailbox Guidelines

So what makes a good mailbox?

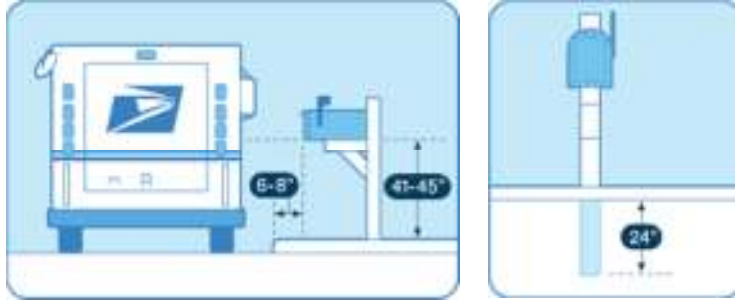
From the wear and tear of daily use to constant assault from the elements, these guidelines will help you set up a mailbox that stands up to it all. If you're buying a new mailbox, look for the Postmaster General's seal of approval; every new mailbox design should be reviewed and approved before it goes to market. If you opt to construct your own mailbox, you should run your plans by your local postmaster. Overall, the mailbox you build will need to meet the same size, strength, and quality standards as manufactured boxes. The house or apartment number should be clearly displayed on your mailbox. And, if your mailbox is on a different street than your house, the street name should appear on it, too.

Your local postmaster must approve the location of your mailbox. Put a roadside mailbox where a carrier can reach inside without leaving the truck. That means positioning it about 41" to 45" off the ground and back about 6" to 8" from the curb. If you live in the city and are attaching the box to your house, just make sure it can be accessed easily from your sidewalk, steps, or porch. Because city carriers often shoulder heavy bags, put your mailbox about 4' from the ground. That way, your carrier won't have to stretch or bend to reach it. And remember to keep the path to your mailbox clear in inclement weather.

If you're mounting a curbside mailbox on a post near the street, the support should be secure and safe. The best supports are designed to bend or fall away if a car hits them. The Federal Highway Administration recommends

- Wooden mailbox support no bigger than 4" x 4"
- 2"-diameter standard steel or aluminum pipe.
- Bury your post no more than 24" deep, so it can give way in an accident.

In areas with lots of snow, we suggest a semi-arch or extended arm-type support. That way, snowplows will be able to sweep under without knocking it down.



Your mailbox takes a serious beating from the weather, especially in the winter. We suggest a routine mailbox check-up every spring.

You might just need to...

- Replace loose hinges on the door.
- Repaint rusty or peeling parts.
- Remount the post, if it's loose.
- Replace missing or faded house numbers.

And year-round keep obstructions away from your mailbox. Your carrier may not deliver your mail if there's a car, shrub, snowdrift, or unfriendly dog in front of it.

D041 Customer Mail Receptacles

Summary

D041 describes the standards for letterboxes or other receptacles for the deposit or receipt of mail. It also contains the standards for curbside mailboxes.

1.0 Basic Standards

1.1 Authorized Depository

Except as excluded by [1.2](#), every letterbox or other receptacle intended or used for the receipt or delivery of mail on any city delivery route, rural delivery route, highway contract route, or other mail route is designated an authorized depository for mail within the meaning of 18 USC 1702, 1705, 1708, and 1725.

1.2 Exclusions

Door slots and nonlockable bins or troughs used with apartment house mailboxes are *not* letterboxes within the meaning of 18 USC 1725 and are *not* private mail receptacles for the standards for mailable matter not bearing postage found in or on private mail receptacles. The post or other support is *not* part of the receptacle.

1.3 Use for Mail

Except under [2.11](#), the receptacles described in [1.1](#) may be used only for matter bearing postage. Other than as permitted by [2.10](#) or [2.11](#), no part of a mail receptacle may be used to deliver any matter not bearing postage, including items or matter placed upon, supported by, attached to, hung from, or inserted into a mail receptacle. Any mailable matter not bearing postage and found as described above is subject to the same postage as would be paid if it were carried by mail.

1.4 Clear Approach

Customers must keep the approach to their mailboxes clear of obstructions to allow safe access for delivery. If USPS employees are impeded in reaching a mail receptacle, the postmaster may withdraw delivery service.

2.0 Curbside Mailboxes

2.1 Manufacturer Specifications

Manufacturers of all mailboxes designed and made to be erected at the edge of a roadway or curbside of a street and to be served by a carrier from a vehicle on any city route, rural route, or highway contract route must obtain approval of their products under USPS Standard 7, *Mailboxes, City and Rural Curbside*. To receive these construction standards and drawings or other information about the manufacture of curbside mailboxes, write to USPS Engineering (see [G043](#) for address).

2.2 Custom-Built Mailbox

The local postmaster may approve a curbside mailbox constructed by a customer who, for aesthetic or other reasons, does not want to use an approved manufactured box. The custom-built box must generally meet the same standards as approved manufactured boxes for flag, size, strength, and quality of construction.

2.3 Address Identification

Every curbside mailbox must bear the following address information:

- a. A box number, if used, inscribed in contrasting color in neat letters and numerals at least 1 inch high on the side of the box visible to the carrier's regular approach, or on the door if boxes are grouped.
- b. A house number if street names and house numbers have been assigned by local authorities, and the postmaster authorizes their use as a postal address. If the box is on a different street from the customer's residence, the street name and house number must be inscribed on the box.

2.4 Owner's Name

The mailbox may bear the owner's name.

2.5 Advertising

Any advertising on a mailbox or its support is prohibited.

2.6 Mailbox Post

The post or other support for a curbside mailbox must be neat and of adequate strength and size. The post may not represent effigies or caricatures that tend to disparage or ridicule any person. The box may be attached to a fixed or movable arm.

2.7 Location

Subject to state laws and regulations, a curbside mailbox must be placed to allow safe and convenient delivery by carriers without leaving their vehicles. The box must be on the right-hand side of the road in the direction of travel of the carriers on any new rural route or highway contract route, in all cases where traffic conditions are dangerous for the carriers to drive to the left to reach the box, or where their doing so would violate traffic laws and regulations.

2.8 More Than One Family

If more than one family wishes to share a mail receptacle, the following standards apply:

- a. Route and Box Number Addressing. On rural and highway contract routes authorized to use a route and box numbering system (e.g., RR 1 BOX 155), up to five families may share a single mail receptacle and use a common route and box designation. A written notice of agreement, signed by the heads of the families or individuals who want to join in the use of such box, must be filed with the postmaster at the delivery office.
- b. Conversion to Street Name and Number Addressing. When street name and numbering systems are adopted, those addresses reflect distinct customer locations and sequences. Rural and highway contract route customers who are assigned different primary addresses (e.g., 123 APPLE WAY vs. 136 APPLE WAY) should erect individual mail receptacles in locations recommended by their postmasters and begin using their new addresses. Customers having different primary addresses who wish to continue sharing a common receptacle must use the address of the receptacle's owner and the "care of" address format:

JOHN DOE
C/O ROBERT SMITH
123 APPLE WAY

Customers having a common primary address (e.g., 800 MAIN ST) but different secondary addresses (e.g., APT 101, APT 102, etc.) may continue to share a common

receptacle if single-point delivery is authorized for the primary address. Secondary addresses should still be included in all correspondence.

2.9 Locked Box

A mailbox with a lock must have a slot that is large enough to accommodate the customer's normal daily mail volume. The USPS neither opens a locked box nor accepts a key for this purpose.

2.10 Delivery of Unstamped Newspapers

Generally, curbside mailboxes are to be used for mail only. However, publishers of newspapers regularly mailed as Periodicals may, on Sundays and national holidays only, place copies of the Sunday or holiday issues in the rural route and highway contract route boxes of subscribers if those copies are removed from the boxes before the next scheduled day of mail delivery.

2.11 Newspaper Receptacle

A receptacle for newspaper delivery by private carriers may be attached to the post of a curbside mailbox used by the USPS if the receptacle:

- a. Does not touch the mailbox or use any part of the mailbox for support.
- b. Does not interfere with the delivery of mail, obstruct the view of the mailbox flag, or present a hazard to carrier or vehicle.
- c. Does not extend beyond the front of the mailbox when the box door is closed.
- d. Does not display advertising, except the publication title.

3.0 [10-4-04] Wall-Mounted Centralized Mail Receptacles

3.1 Manufacturer Requirements

Manufacturers of wall-mounted centralized mail receptacles used for mail delivery must receive approval under the specifications and procedures in USPS Standard 4. The specifications and other information can be obtained by writing to USPS Engineering (see [G043](#) for address).

3.2 Customer Requirements

The installation of proper equipment is required for delivery service. The type of equipment must be approved by the USPS under [3.1](#) and must be appropriate for the structure. Customers should discuss the types of approved equipment permitted for their structures with their postmaster before purchasing and installing delivery equipment.

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