

SHIP RIGHT

with **Elizabeth Lombard**



Mind Your Ps and Cs: Postage and Carrier Tips for Small to Mid-size Shippers

Building the right strategy and mix of postage and carrier initiatives is critical for effectively managing shipping costs, boosting efficiency and contributing to an organization's bottom line. As shippers work towards these goals, they should consider some of the lesser known benefits of USPS Express Mail service.

What You See Is What You Pay

There are no net minimums when you ship via Express Mail. A net minimum charge is the lowest base price a shipper will pay per package to the carrier, regardless of the discounted rate. Also, there are no additional fees such as residential surcharges, fuel surcharges or address error charges. When you consider the potential of those accessorial fees along with net minimum charges, Express Mail service may be a cost-effective alternative for reducing shipping spend. In addition, understanding what the actual shipping costs are on the front end can enhance accuracy with invoicing and charge-back processes.

You Have Choices

There are three pricing structures for Express Mail service: Retail, Commercial and Commercial Plus. Based on the method you use to evidence postage, you may qualify for Commercial pricing, which is five percent below retail prices.

If you ship more than 6,000 pieces per year, which is only about 25 items per day, you may qualify for Commercial Plus prices, which are 14.5% below retail prices.

Qualifying Methods for Commercial Pricing Include:

- ▶ Express Mail Corporate Account (EMCA), including Federal Agency Accounts;
- ▶ USPS Click-N-Ship;
- ▶ USPS-approved PC Postage services when using a qualifying shipping label; and
- ▶ Information Base Indicia (IBI) postage when certain criteria has been met.

Tracking And Obtaining Delivery Information Is Easy

- ▶ Express Mail shippers can access delivery information at www.usps.com or 1-800-222-1811. Express Mail is considered accountable mail, and therefore the USPS carrier obtains a signature from the recipient using Form 3849. The information and signature is scanned and a delivery record, including the recipient's signature, can be faxed or mailed upon request.

The Half-Pound Price May Cost Less than the Flat-Rate Envelope

Many shippers use Express Mail flat-rate envelopes, which have a retail postage price of \$17.50 each. This price is not subject to weight or zone and can be a great deal when shipping heavier documents to far away destinations. However, for light-weight packages that are eight ounces or less and destined to local addresses through Zone 3, rating your package at the half-pound weight will save money. The retail price for an eight-ounce or less Express Mail package to Local and Zones 1 and 2 is only \$13.50 and only \$15.20 to Zone 3. That's a savings of more than \$2.00 per package.

You Can Get Your Money Back

The USPS will refund postage for an Express Mail package that was not available for recipient pickup or delivery to the addressee was not attempted. However, there are certain exceptions that include situations such as strikes or work stoppages, incorrect addresses or flight delays and cancellations.

Remember, there is a lot to gain when you fully understand service offerings, pricing, benefits and potential drawbacks of your carrier options. ■

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