

Firm Package

Overview

Firm Packaging is an option that may be used during mail presorting. The Post Office offers a discount for packaging multiple copies going to the same address (firm). The discount is that you only pay the piece rate for the top piece in the package.

In the old system of making firm packages (bundles), they were only created for records having a copies count greater than one. Mail Manager did not have a firm package option, so SMS handled the processing. In the new system, firm packages can be created by Mail Manager, so all creation of firm packages and related documentation is controlled by Mail Manager, not SMS.

SMS has some firm package options that Mail Manager does not offer. These are:

1. You can control which records are allowed to be firm packaged.
2. Separator labels can be inserted before or after each firm package to aid in visual identification and to display the piece count in the package.
3. Firm package labels can be printed where they were presorted or printed first, before the rest of the labels are printed.

Getting started with firm packaging

Firm packaging is an option that can be purchased and installed. An option must be purchased from BCC Software for Mail Manager 2010, and an option must be purchased from Sonova Systems for SMS. Once the options are installed and the applications are configured, you are ready to begin setting up firm packaging for mail processing.

Setting up firm packaging for mail processing

SMS contains several options that must be set to automate firm packaging and get the results you want. Mail Manager is configured to automatically receive setup information from SMS, perform postal processing, and return information back to SMS for final processing. Below is a detailed list of the features and options relating to firm packaging in SMS.

1. Where are the options located?

All firm packaging options are located in the Postal Data file. This allows you to have as many different combinations of settings as necessary.

2. Make firm packages

This option controls access to the other firm package options and signifies that firm packaging should be allowed during postal processing. Check the check box to activate firm packaging, and uncheck the check box to deactivate it.

3. Print first

This option gives you the ability to print firm package labels first, before the rest of the labels print. Check the check box to print the labels first, and uncheck the check box to print them where they were presorted.

4. Include

This option allows you to control which addresses qualify for firm packaging. Mail Manager does not compare address lines 1 or 2 to determine if addresses are

the same. Because of this, you may have three people in an apartment building, all having apartment numbers in their addresses which may be ignored during address comparison. A firm package may be created which would send all three copies to a single person. This option gives you control this type of problem. Select *All possible* to let Mail Manager try to create firm packages from any of your addresses. Select *Only addresses that match exactly* to let Mail Manager try to create firm packages only for addresses where two or more have address lines 1 and 2 matching exactly. Select *Only if Copies is greater than 1* to let Mail Manager try to create firm packages only for addresses where the SMS copies field is greater than 1.

5. Separator labels

This option allows control over the insertion of separator labels before or after firm packages. Separator labels are extra visual identifiers for firm package labels. They contain three important pieces of information: the file code, the firm package's sack and pack numbers, and the total number of mail pieces in the package. Select *Before first piece* to insert a separator label before the first piece in a firm package. Select *After last piece* to insert a separator label after the last piece in a firm package. Select *None* to not insert separator labels. If you select the *print first* option and include separator labels, the separator labels will be printed with the firm package labels at the beginning of the list, and a copy of the separator labels will print where the firm package labels were originally presorted. This allows you to easily insert completed firm packages back into the list where they were.

How does firm packaging affect the Current Issue Label Count Report?

The Current Issue Label Count Report is a summary of the mail processing. It includes the number of labels, copies, and bundles for each set of labels. When SMS prepares data for Mail Manager to presort, the exact firm package information is not known. The numbers listed are based on the copies information for each address. After Mail Manager completes the presorting, SMS recalculates the numbers to give you accurate information based on actual firm packages created. Therefore, the final report should be printed after mail processing is complete.

How does firm packaging affect the postal processing output?

There are several differences in the postal processing output when firm packages are created. They are:

1. Labels

The endorsement line will contain the word FIRM on every label in a firm package.

2. Presort qualification report

The letter F will be displayed immediately after the package destination zip code. Also, the copies number displayed in the Copies column will be the total copies in the package, while the copies number displayed in the other columns will be only 1, for the billable copy of the package.

3. Postage statement (3541)

The Address Pieces column in the Piece Rate section will be reduced by the non-billable copies in the firm package.