

# the Communicator

Baltimore Postal Customer Council

Spring 2008 Volume 8.0

## Baltimore PCC Education Seminar 2008



by Jim Barlow,  
Mail Systems Management Consultants,  
Education Committee Chairperson

The leading Postal Customer Council education event in the region was held at the University of Baltimore Thumel Business Center. This was again the site of our Mailer's Education Seminar for 2008. The date was March 20th, the weather was good, the food was great and it was one of our best with over 160 attending, hope you were there. We were very happy to have Nicholas F. Barranca as the keynote speaker. Nick is the Vice President of Product Development for the U. S. Postal Service. He spoke about the changes under the new Postal Reform Law, new products and services and what it means to the mailer. The BPC Industry Co-Chairman, Charles Howard, Harte-Hanks Direct Marketing provided opening remarks. Our vendor sponsors

Attendees (Opening of Program)

PSI Presort Services and our local Hasler/Neopost dealer, Shannon Business Systems, presented their products and services at the opening session and had a booth in the Atrium to meet with interested attendees. This education-filled day featured exciting education opportunities with the latest critical mail related topics. We had nine great sessions plus a SUPER SESSION to cover Postal Reform updates, new rates and other changes coming May 12th. The highly competent session instructors were provided by the US Postal Service Speakers Bureau and one session, Selecting for Success, was presented by our own Executive Board Member, Dana McCormick.

This 2008 Education Seminar included a "Certificate Achievement" award for every participant completing the area's best mailer education event. *continues page 2*

## Executive Mail Center Manager Program at NOVA PCC June 3 - 6

The Northern Virginia Postal Customer Council is again hosting the Executive Mail Center Manager Program (EMCM). This is a unique program that will not only benefit your company but will also enhance your personal skills and recognition as a professional in the mailing industry. EMCM is the first mail management program developed and sponsored by the US Postal Service and was developed in conjunction with mailing industry leaders and *continues page 3*

### **Baltimore District Customer Training - 2008**

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- Jun 19 Postage Statement Wizard
- July 17 Postage Statement Wizard
- Aug 14 Postage Statement Wizard
- Sept 18 1st Class & STD Mail Eligibility
- Oct 16 Periodicals Eligibility
- Nov 13 MDA/Intelligent Mail Barcode
- Dec 18 Postage Statement Wizard



## Events

Executive Mail Center Manager Program  
Northern Virginia Postal Customer Council  
June 3 - 6

Spring General Membership Meeting  
June 6

PCC Day  
September 17, 2008

# Baltimore PCC Education Seminar

*from page 1*

We had many requests to have those exciting information-rich presentations available for our members. The presenters were kind enough to provide their presentations to us and we have posted them on the BPCCC website, [www.baltimorepcc.com](http://www.baltimorepcc.com). We hope you find them useful.

The Education Committee strives to provide education opportunities for the Baltimore PCC members in partnership with the US Postal Service. For the Mailer's Education Seminar we start planning over six months in advance to provide a top quality education event for our PCC members. The BPCCC Education Committee facilitates the exchange of ideas about new and existing Postal Services products, programs, services and regulations that affect all businesses that use the mail. The success of this education event required the team work of many people behind the scenes. Special thanks to the Education Committee members Vanya Burkhalter-USPS Marketing Manager, Dana McCormick-Wells Fargo, Chester Wortham-Johns Hopkins Mail Services and to the supporting USPS staff including Vicky Bazemore – Marketing Staff, Yvette Singh - Customer Relations Coordinator and Adrienne Spruill - Business Network Manager and staff. We couldn't have done it without you all.

Please check our website [www.baltimorepcc.com](http://www.baltimorepcc.com) for future events and look for the next Mailer's Education Seminar in the Spring of 2009. Please let us know if you have any ideas about possible future Education Seminar sessions or events for our planning process. You can reach me at [jamesbarlow@comcast.net](mailto:jamesbarlow@comcast.net) or call 410-321-8821.



*Burt Foster, Jr. & Edward Shultz, Postal Inspection Service, USPS (Workshop on Mail Security & Identity Theft)*



*Nicholas Barranca, Vice-President Product Development, USPS Headquarters (Keynote Speaker)*



*Frederick Brooks, Supervisor Business Mail Entry Unit, USPS (Workshop on Presorted Standard Mail & Flats)*

## Executive Mail Center Manager Program at NOVA PCC June 3 - 6 *from page 1*

nationally recognized training experts. EMCM attendees will receive expert guidance that can help them boost productivity, increase efficiency, maximize leading-edge technology and generally improve mail center operations. This is a nationally recognized certification for mail service professionals and a MUST for anyone responsible for a mail services operation and serious about their career.

The EMCM program will be hosted by the NOVA PCC and will be held at the Merrifield Post Office, Merrifield, VA. The eight, four-hour sessions, 8:00am to 5:00pm, will be arranged into four days starting this June 3, 4, 5 & 6. The EMCM program cost is \$1,160 for NOVA PCC members and \$1,260 for non-members. This includes course materials and two meals per day and can be paid by check, Visa or Master Card. Typically, this is a one-week program offered by the USPS' National Center for Employee Development in Norman, OK for \$1500. All sessions must be completed to obtain certification. Upon certification, you will receive National recognition by being included within the EMCM program web site.

The sessions are: People Management, Quality Management, Sales & Marketing, Mail Center Operations Management, Finances, Safety & Security, Technology, Planning & Policy.

This is a great opportunity for personal improvement and recognition. Space is limited and the deadline for registration is May 26, 2008. Call NOVA PCC Administrator Sandra Latham at 703-698-6575 or send an e-mail to NOVAPCC@usps.gov.



Dana McCormick, Wells Fargo Home Mortgage Delivery Services (Workshop on Selecting for Success)



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## General Commentary – 2008 – The USPS R'08 Price Filing, et.al.

By Charley Howard,  
Postologist

By now the Price Filing for 2008 by the USPS must seem old news and in a way it is. March 17th the Postal Regulatory Committee sanctified the filing by indicating that it met the CPI Cap requirements set out by the new law (PAEA). So, that's it then right? Not so quick. A few days later the PRC challenged the worksharing discount (automation) for Standard Mail letters for Mixed AADC and AADC automation rates as being too much, 538% pass-through! On March 21 the USPS responded with a change to four rate cells – NOT the ones in question. This change in effect alters the pass-through determination. How the USPS did this is by adding 1.1cents to each rate for Regular and Nonprofit presort – Mixed AADC from origin and destination Bulk Mail Center entered mail. By raising the comparison base they effectively lower the pass-through; neat trick.

For what it is worth this has little to no effect on postage estimates as most mailers have less than one percent of their mail in this category.

Just to remind everyone, the new rates go into effect May 12 this year and will likely increase every May for the next nine years.

The Competitive products side of the postal offerings will also get new rates 5/12/2008 but will mark the new treatment. These are the international and expedited services products like Priority Mail and Express Mail. The USPS is offering volume rebates that effectively negate the price increase and frankly are more attractive for use for their relative costs. It will be interesting to see just how creative the USPS becomes with these products in the coming years.

There are other ways to increase rates. And we are currently staring at one method that could be quite devastating to the entire mailing industry, USPS included. We need to face facts here. No matter what we think the USPS needs to do they

are burdened with a production needs-driven mentality and anchor. With nearly 80% of their costs labor and a need to fully automate postal processing so as to get the “carrier” out on the street delivering mail how can they seriously entertain client's needs? Well they better or they will end up in an ever growing spiral of falling mail volumes loss to other developing media.

After last year's huge rate increases for Standard Mail flats combined with similar unabating increases in paper costs many mail owners initiated several methods, or changes to their mail programs, to save costs. These included lighter, cheaper paper, lower page counts, smaller size, and even some did the “shape shift” to letter size. It is the latter issue that has the USPS seriously contemplating changing the rules for what can qualify as an automated letter.

Many letter-size booklets do not run well on postal letter automation equipment. The USPS is performing controlled tests, the “Slim Jim tests”, to determine what works and what doesn't work on their equipment. The initial results, phase I, are not good!

Let's discuss the automation equipment a little bit here. The USPS has over 6,000 of these machines deployed throughout their operations at a cost of three to four billion dollars. Not all of this equipment is equal. Most of it is level/release two through four. The latest version soon to hit the post office is seven. The manufacturer is constantly trying to improve throughput and the range of letter pieces that may be run on the machines. But, as you can tell, the USPS is sort of stuck at the earlier releases of the machines. These machines make more effective use of floor space than the first ones in that they use vertical space. This requires more convoluted handling of the mailpiece and is largely responsible for the constraints coming to light.

The machines can process mail at 30,000 pieces per hour. It takes about 1 ½ minutes to clear a

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jam in the machine. The normal jam rate is 2 ½ per 10,000 pieces.

In the first test by the USPS tabbed booklets 1/16th of an inch thick averaged 4 jams per 1,000 pieces. 1/8th inch thick pieces jammed so much that they never made it through a second pass. Consider that the jam costs the USPS about a thousand pieces of processing and you can begin to understand why this is a great concern to them. Why now? Well because of the increase in volume of these types of letters.

The thing is that it wasn't just the booklet shape that was creating jams. The large single sheet self mailer, called a large post card, when glossy doesn't run on the equipment either. And the list goes on and on.

Hold on, what's wrong with this picture???

We have been employing planet codes for years to track mailings and many of the pieces described as non-processable used to be so. We have very good planet code data showing very high scan rates for these pieces. Then about a year and a half ago those scan rates started to drop. What changed?

At about that time there came from postal headquarters a demand to improve the throughput of letter automation operations. A sort of "just-do-it" command, if you will. Most facilities responded by simply setting the speed of their equipment to "max." This is not a good idea. First, the equipment is not used to that speed and has settled in at a slightly lower more sensible speed. Second, we all know that the max setting rarely increases throughput as it will cause more jams, those costly jams. Hmmm, seems to apply to humans as well.

It has reached a point of where postal clerks will open a tray, see a booklet, and redirect it either to flat sorters or to manual processing. Not a good idea for all concerned as it adds costs and delays delivery; defeats the whole point.

I want to point out that there really are pieces that perform very poorly on the equipment. However, at a recent meeting of the USPS and PostCom, the videos showed all culprits were

pieces not prepared properly; i.e. No tabs or glue spots!

I would suggest to the USPS that they **FIRST** enforce the existing mailpiece design and preparations rules. They hold the large mail service providers feet to the rules very strictly – they should do so to all mailers.

**SECOND**, turn down the speed of their machines to a sensible level. Throughput will automatically improve as will the number of types of pieces be able to be handled.

**THIRD**, the test showed that type of tab is critical. Eliminate all plastic, clear tabs. They do not work. **The best performing tabs are a translucent paper tab with no perforations.** Alter the preparation rules to allow this type of tab to be able to cover an indicia – it will still be readable.

**FOURTH**, gloss is a problem for letter processing. Tone the finish down.

There are too many variables that apply here to make categorical changes. The phase II test will test over 238 types of pieces. Still, paper employed is critical. Saying a certain weight is all that need be met is not good enough. A super calendared paper will be much thinner and flimsier. Paper grain and its direction used in constructing the mailpiece will have a major effect on its behavior in processing equipment.

Rather than make any rash changes to automation requirements I think the USPS should attend to these four items first and see how things go. There is much at risk here.

Mailing is getting to be quite expensive for the mail owner. The other media are growing and maturing to a degree as to offer viable alternative routes for the mail owner. Once lost to these other media the volume is likely lost for ever.

In addition, with existing losses in mail volume it is a time when the USPS really needs to attend to their client's needs, much like the rest of the industry. If you are not flexible you will not grow. If you constrict the environment you will decline.



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# Paper Glossary

By Jack Weber,  
Chairman  
PGAMA

Paper selection is a major part of any successful printing or mailing project. To be effective, a printed piece must reach the end user in a readable form, and paper is an essential element in that process. Since many of the terms used to describe paper are technical and can be difficult to understand, we have developed the following glossary of terminology to help you select the best paper for your job.

**Weight of Stock:** Paper thickness and feel is based on the weight of the paper. Paper weight is determined by the size and type of stock. For example, an 80 lb. text or offset paper is based on a measurement of 500 sheets of 25x38 paper, which weighs 80 pounds. Meanwhile, an 80 lb. cover stock is based upon 500 sheets of 20x26 paper. The weights are the same, but the base size of the paper is different, resulting in a different thickness and feel to the paper. An easy way to remember the difference is to think of the cover of a book, which is heavier than the text sheets inside. So cover weight paper is heavier than text and offset papers.

**Paper Finish:** Paper can come in many finishes. Gloss, dull, felt, laid, vellum, and smooth are just a few of the finishes available. Gloss and dull finishes are coatings applied to the base paper after manufacturing. Think of this process as applying clear paint to the paper. A glossy finish is shiny, while a dull or matte finish is not. Both types of finishes are smooth and work well in full color printing. However, a smooth shiny finish does not feed well on postal equipment, and can cause smearing problems during the ink jetting process for addressing. These issues can be minimized by slowing the speed of feeding the paper into the equipment and drying the ink with heat lamps.

The other finishes (felt, laid, vellum, and smooth), are created by the paper mills using a crushing technique while the paper pulp is wet and pliable. The resulting finish has a visual and tactile impact

that will make your mail piece stand out. (Note that these finishes are only available on uncoated no-shiny paper.)

**Paper Color:** The color of paper can be determined during the papermaking process, or after production by tinting the sheet. Using colored paper is a great way to make your mail piece stand out from others. There are hundreds of colors from which to choose—ask your printer to show you a swatch book. One tip: pastel colors are best when addressing self-mailers, since they allow enough contrast for postal equipment to read the addresses.

**Brightness and Opacity:** The brightness or shade of the paper is manufactured into the paper by the paper mill. Today, most coated papers (shiny) and uncoated papers (not shiny) are manufactured to a blue white standard. This allows for colors to pop off of the sheet and also gives the sheet a greater opacity so you do not see the printing on the opposite side of the sheet.

**Paper size:** Paper size is an element of your project that can really impact pricing. When designing, try to stay within the conventional paper sizes to yield the maximum amount of sheets possible, and to allow for the ganging of several images on the same sheet. This saves time and money. The best sizes to use are 8.5x11, 11x17, 17x22, and 23x35. All of these sizes allow for good paper stock selection and will fold to letter size using a direct folding or inline process for folding. If a larger paper size is selected, consider the weight of the stock. Heavier weights can cause problems during folding with paper bulking up, tearing, and cracking.

**Grain Direction:** The grain direction, or directionality, is the way fibers in the paper line up when the paper is made. The grain direction is very important when the final product is folded. The direction of the fold should follow the direction of the grain to prevent cracking and easy folding, as well as machine processing by the post office and bindery.

If you have additional questions regarding the proper paper selection for print and mail campaigns, contact the (PGAMA) Printing and Graphics Association Mid Atlantic at 410-319-0901 or email [jack@uptownpress.com](mailto:jack@uptownpress.com).



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