* * * * *

Stanley F. Mires,

Chief Counsel, Legislative.

[FR Doc. 98–18433 Filed 7–7–98; 4:36 pm]

BILLING CODE 7710–12–P

POSTAL SERVICE

39 CFR Part 111

Elimination of Mixed BMC/ADC Pallets of Packages of Flats

AGENCY: Postal Service.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: This final rule revises Domestic Mail Manual (DMM) sections M020, M041, and M045 to eliminate the options for mailers to place packages and bundles of Periodicals Mail on mixed ADC pallets and to place packages and bundles of Standard Mail (A) and Standard Mail (B) on mixed BMC pallets. Mailers will continue to have the options to place sacks, trays, or parcels on mixed ADC or mixed BMC pallets, as appropriate for the class of mail.

EFFECTIVE DATE: September 8, 1998.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Cheryl Beller, (202) 268–5166.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On February 18, 1998, the Postal Service published in the **Federal Register** (63 FR 8154–8156) proposed revisions to the DMM to eliminate the options, available since the implementation of Classification Reform in July 1996, to place packages and bundles on mixed ADC pallets (Periodicals) and mixed BMC pallets (Standard Mail). Although these options offer some benefits in mailers' manufacturing and distribution handling processes by reducing sack usage, they have had a negative impact on service and mailpiece integrity.

The deadline for submitting comments on the proposed revisions was April 6, 1998. All comments received or mailed by that date have been considered.

Evaluation of Comments Received

There were only three written responses to the proposed revisions. One commenter noted that, as a printer, it prefers to place as much mail as possible on pallets because sacking is more labor intensive, but it also recognizes that mixed pallets may be more costly for the Postal Service to process. However, it was not in favor of implementation of the revisions at this time due to problems it has been experiencing in obtaining a sufficient supply of brown sacks for Periodicals. When the revised standards are implemented, the Periodicals that this company currently places on mixed ADC pallets will have to be placed in sacks. The mailer was concerned that the brown sack shortage would affect service.

The Postal Service has completed its largest purchase ever of brown sacks and is confident that a sufficient quantity will be available on a regular basis to handle the volume shifts. In addition, the Chicago Mail Transport Equipment Service Center (MTESC) has recently opened. This is the first of 22 MTESCs that will open during the next year to ensure the availability of sacks.

The second commenter is primarily concerned that the potential increase in sack usage will result in a slowdown and higher costs in its manufacturing process, which relies heavily on automation and robotics. These processes are not compatible with sacking. The commenter urged the Postal Service to continue to work with mailers on alternative preparation options that will help to eliminate sack usage. During the past several years, the Postal Service has been working with the mailing industry to understand how mailers sort mail to pallets and to identify opportunities for improvement. The joint industry/Postal Service Mailers Technical Advisory Committee (MTAC) Presort Optimization Work Group is currently discussing mail reallocation rules related to presort that would provide a means for mailers to optimize palletization. Although protecting the SCF pallet is the initial priority of the group, this effort could prevent some mail from falling to the mixed level. The Postal Service intends to publish draft rules this summer for mailer comment.

In addition to using presort optimization to enhance palletization, mailers who prepare palletized plant verified drop shipments (PVDS) may be able, under the provisions of DMM M041.5.3, to reduce the volume of mail that may have to be sacked as a result of these revisions. DMM M041.5.3 states that in a mailing or mailing job presented for acceptance at a single postal facility, one overflow pallet may be prepared containing less than 250 pounds or three tiers/layers of letter trays if the mail is for the service area of the entry facility and the pallet is properly labeled under M045, based on its contents. No special authorization is needed. For example, if a PVDS mailer is entering mail at the Springfield, MA, BMC and has prepared one or more Springfield, MA, destination BMC pallets, the mailer may currently be placing overflow of less than 250 pounds from these pallets on a mixed BMC pallet. However, the mailer does have the option to place this overflow mail on a Springfield, MA, pallet instead of sacking the mail or placing it on a mixed ADC/BMC pallet under current standards, provided the less-than-minimum-volume pallet is deposited at the Springfield BMC. This addresses some of the service and cost issues that the revised standards are intended to address while providing mailers with an alternative to sacking under the conditions noted.

The third commenter does not prepare many mixed pallets but is interested in any changes that could improve mail delivery times. Although not convinced that mixed pallets contribute to slower delivery, this mailer stated it would support the change, but suggested a longer implementation period than the 45 days suggested in the proposed rule. It needs additional lead time to implement the changes for mailings that are prepared on a 6-week select lead time. For over a year, the Postal Service has been communicating with the mailing industry on plans to eliminate the mixed pallet preparation option for packages and bundles as soon as a sufficient supply of sacks was available on a regular basis to handle the shift in volume. Now that this precondition is satisfied, the Postal Service believes it is reasonable to implement the changes as quickly as possible without causing a severe negative impact on our customers. Therefore, to address the concerns of this commenter and other mailers with similar production issues, the Postal Service has postponed the required implementation for 60 days.

The *Domestic Mail Manual* is revised as follows. These changes are incorporated by reference in the Code of Federal Regulations. See 39 CFR part 111.

List of Subjects in 39 CFR Part 111

Postal Service.

PART 111—[AMENDED]

1. The authority citation for 39 CFR part 111 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 5 U.S.C. 552 (a); 39 U.S.C. 101, 401, 403, 404, 3001–3011, 3201–3219, 3403–3406, 3621, 5001.

2. Revise the following section of the *Domestic Mail Manual* as follows:

M Mail Preparation And Sortation

M000 General Preparation Standards

* * * * *

M020 Packages and Bundles

1.0 BASIC STANDARDS

* * * * *

1.4 Palletization

[Amend the third sentence in 1.4 by deleting the reference to mixed BMC pallets to read as follows:]

* * * Packages and bundles on BMC pallets must be shrinkwrapped and machinable on BMC parcel sorters; machinability is determined by the USPS.* * *

* * * * *

M040 Pallets

M041 General Standards

* * * * *

5.0 PREPARATION

5.1 Presort

[Amend 5.1 by revising the last sentence and adding new sentences to read as follows:]

* * * For sacks, trays, or machinable parcels on pallets, the mailer must prepare all required pallet levels before any mixed ADC or mixed BMC pallets are prepared for a mailing or job. Packages and bundles prepared under M045 must not be placed on mixed ADC or mixed BMC pallets. Packages and bundles that cannot be placed on pallets must be prepared in sacks under the standards for the rate claimed.

5.2 Required Preparation

[Amend 5.2 by deleting the second and third sentences and revising the fourth sentence to read as follows:]

* * * Mixed pallets of sacks, trays, or machinable parcels must be labeled to the BMC or ADC (as appropriate) serving the post office where mailings are entered into the mailstream. * * *

* * * * *

5.6 Sacked Mail

[Amend 5.6 by revising the first sentence to read as follows:]

Mail that is not palletized (e.g., the mailer chooses not to prepare BMC pallets, or the packages do not meet the machinability standards in M020) must be prepared under the standards for the rate claimed. * * *

* * * * *

M045 Palletized Mailings

* * * * *

[Revise the heading of 2.0 to read as follows:]

2.0 PACKAGES OF FLATS

2.1 Standards

[Amend 2.1 by revising the second sentence to read as follows:]

* * * The palletized portion of a mailing may not include packages sorted to mixed ADCs, mixed BMCs, or to foreign destinations.

* * * * *

2.4 Size—Standard Mail (B)

* * * * *

[Amend 2.4c by revising the second sentence to read as follows:]

* * * Packages at other rates must be sorted to 5-digit, 3-digit, optional SCF, and ADC destinations, as appropriate.

* * * * *

3.0 OPTIONAL BUNDLES—PERIODICALS AND STANDARD MAIL (A)

3.1 Standards

[Amend 3.1 by revising the second sentence to read as follows:]

* * * The palletized portion of a mailing may not include bundles sorted to mixed ADCs, mixed BMCs, or to foreign destinations.

* * * * *

4.0 PALLET PRESORT AND LABELING

[Amend the heading to read as follows:]

4.1 Packages, Bundles, and Sacks

* * * * *

e. As appropriate:

[Amend the beginning of (1) by adding ''(sacks and trays only)'' to read as follows:]

(1) Periodicals (sacks and trays only): mixed ADC: optional; * * *

[Amend the beginning of (2) by adding ''(sacks and trays only)'' to read as follows:]

(2) Standard Mail (sacks and trays only): mixed BMC: optional; * * *

* * * * *

5.0 PALLETS OF PACKAGES, BUNDLES, AND TRAYS OF LETTER-SIZE MAIL

* * * * *

[Amend 5.3 to eliminate references to mixed BMC pallets and to insert ''(trays only)'' to read as follows:]

5.3 BMC and Mixed BMC Pallets

Packages and bundles placed on BMC pallets must be machinable on BMC parcel sorting equipment. Line 2 on pallet labels must reflect the processing category of the pieces. A BMC or mixed BMC (trays only) pallet may include pieces that are eligible for the DBMC rate and others that are ineligible if the mailer provides documentation showing the pieces that qualify for the DBMC rate.

* * * * *

Stanley F. Mires,

Chief Counsel, Legislative.

[FR Doc. 98–18434 Filed 7–9–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 7710–12–P

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

40 CFR Part 52

[OH 114–1a; FRL–6123–1]

Approval and Promulgation of Maintenance Plan Revisions; Ohio

AGENCY: Environmental Protection Agency.

ACTION: Direct final rule.

SUMMARY: The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is approving through ''direct final'' procedure, a March 13, 1998, request from Ohio, for a State Implementation Plan (SIP) maintenance plan revision for the Columbus ozone maintenance area (Franklin, Delaware and Licking Counties). The maintenance plan revision establishes a new maintenance year of 2010 for the area and a new transportation conformity mobile source emissions budget for the year 2010. The 2010 emissions budget projections incorporate future emission reductions from area and point sources. The newly established 2010 emissions projections determine the area's safety margins for Oxides of Nitrogen (NO_X) and Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs). Also being approved is the State's request that a portion of the safety margins be allocated to the area's 2010 mobile source emissions budget for transportation conformity purposes. The area's safety margin is defined as the difference between the attainment inventory level (the Columbus area's attainment inventory year is 1990) of the total emissions and the projected levels of the total emissions in the final year of the maintenance plan (as established for Columbus in this rule to be 2010).

DATES: This direct final rule is effective on September 8, 1998, unless EPA receives relevant adverse or critical written comments by August 10, 1998. If adverse comment is received, the EPA will publish a timely withdrawal of the direct final rule in the **Federal Register** and inform the public that the rule will not take effect. Any parties interested in commenting on this action should do so at this time. If no such comments are received, the public is informed that