

# US Postal Laws & Regulations

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Year: 1887

Transit mail



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no through pouches to be dispatched by mail trains unless specially instructed to do so.

**Sec. 543. Facing Slips to be Used.**—Facing slips, bearing postmark with date and time of close or dispatch, and name of person making up the same, must be placed upon each package of letters or circulars, and in each pouch or canvas sack of newspapers, or on the label holder, if any, attached thereto. For form of facing slip, see section 994.

**Sec. 544. No Hooks on Mail Bags.**—The use of hooks in handling mail bags is forbidden.

**Sec. 545. Delivery of Mail Matter on Mail Cars by Postmasters.**—Postmasters are required to dispatch mail to railway post-offices in the lock pouches provided for that purpose, except in the case of a few late letters or postal cards, which they may deliver in person or by a sworn assistant after the postmark of the mailing office has been impressed thereon and the stamps canceled. Such postmarked and canceled letters and postal cards must not be received by the postal clerk from a mail-messenger nor from the public, as after the mail is once deposited in a post-office it cannot again come into the hands of the public until its final delivery. (See sections 532 and 979.)

#### AT OFFICES IN TRANSIT.

**Sec. 546. Missent or Unmailable Matter Inadvertently Sent and Misdirected Matter.**—Misdirected, destructive, or manifestly obscene matter, which should not have been, but through inadvertence may have been, dispatched from the post-office of mailing, should be detained and withdrawn from the mails by any postmaster into whose hands the same may come in transit. But other matter which should have been detained at the office of mailing as "held for postage," "excess of weight or size," "coin," or "lottery" (see section 379), must not be stopped in transit.

Misdirected matter of the first class, if it bear the card or request of the sender, should be withdrawn and returned to him with the words written or stamped thereon, "RETURNED FOR BETTER DIRECTION." (See section 526.)

Missent matter, or that which is plainly addressed, but sent in the wrong direction, should, when discovered, be placed in the first mail going in the proper direction.

**Sec. 547. Mail Stopping Over Night.**—When the mail stops over night where there is a post-office, it must be kept in the post-office, except at points where transfer clerks are on duty during the night in charge of such mail, or where otherwise ordered by the Department.

For time allowed in opening mail, see section 510.

**Sec. 548. Postage-due Matter not to be Stopped, &c.**—Postage-due matter must not be stopped or rated up at intermediate offices in transit. The duties in respect to it omitted by the mailing postmaster are to be performed by the postmaster at the office of address.

**Sec. 549. Uncanceled Stamps not to be Canceled.**—Matter dispatched from a post-office, on which the stamps were not properly canceled, is not to be stopped in transit nor the stamps thereon canceled at any office but that of destination. The statute makes it the duty of the postmaster at the office of delivery to deface them and report the delinquent postmaster. (See section 516.)

#### AT RECEIVING OFFICES—OPENING OF MAILS.

**Sec. 550. Opening Pouches.**—Upon the arrival of the mail at any post-office, the mail sacks and pouches addressed to that office, and none other, should be opened, first being examined to ascertain if they were properly locked, and are not cut or torn so that mail matter could have been lost or abstracted therefrom. Upon being emptied the pouch or sack should be carefully examined to see that no mail matter is left therein. Printed wooden labels for sacks of newspaper mail and printed slide labels for pouches must be taken off when the sacks or pouches are opened, and returned by first mail to the post-office or line from which they were received, the wooden labels to be classed with newspaper mail, and the slide labels as letter mail. Under no circumstances are any such labels to be defaced or destroyed.

As to procedure when lock or key is defective and pouch cannot be opened, see sections 838 and 839.

As to registered matter, see chapter thirty-five.

**Sec. 551. Errors in Distribution or Making up; Receipt or Dispatch of Mail, how Noted and Reported.**—On opening and ascertaining the mail the postmaster or clerk will examine it for errors in distribution and making up, which will be noted and reported to the division superintendent as follows:

1. All errors found in the distribution of any package of letters or in any sack of newspapers must be noted on the reverse side of the slip covering or inside of the same, giving the name of post-office, county, or State, if included in the superscription, adding thereto the name of the person noting the error, and postmarking with date.
2. If any package or sack arrive without slips, the division superintendent must be promptly notified of the fact, and the mailing office, if known, and the label must be sent to him with report.
3. Any irregularities in the receipt or dispatch or forwarding of any mail will also be promptly reported.
4. Any mail received at his post-office which has not been properly