

**Fort Bend County
MAIL CENTER**

POLICY & PROCEDURES

The Mail Center is authorized to receive and process the County's mail through its agreement with licensed agencies and the U.S. Postal Service. The Mail Center located at 301 Jackson Street in Richmond, Texas is a secured area that requires an employee badge for entry.

MISSION STATEMENT:

To provide client offices and departments with a centralized mail process. The Mail Center will process outgoing U.S. and privately handled letters and parcels displaying the statement "***Official Business – Penalty for Private Use.***" The Mail Center will route incoming U.S. mail as well as in-house mail to the appropriate departments. Mail Center staff will also provide, subject to the availability of staff, other services including folding, tabbing, manual stuffing of envelopes, and photocopying.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

No outgoing US mail will be opened by Mail Center staff and incoming mail will be opened by Supervisor only when there is no other way to determine the intended recipient. Employees are required to acknowledge the confidential nature of their responsibilities by signing a Confidentiality Statement upon hire, and are made to understand that they are subject to possible termination if they violate the policy.

DEPARTMENT PROCEDURES AND RULES:

Hours of Operation: The Supervisor will open the Mail Center at 7:00 a.m. Monday through Friday, except on designated holidays or closures. When the Supervisor is unavailable, a designated Mail Clerk shall open the Mail Center.

Off-Site Pickup and Delivery: Mail Center staff makes a daily, early-morning and mid-morning pickup of U.S. mail from the Richmond Post Office. Staff also makes daily pickup and delivery of mail of designated County buildings as established by the Mail Center Supervisor.

A licensed or designated authorized agent of the U.S. Post Office will receive and take possession of the County's outgoing mail.

Separation of Mail: Departments are requested to separate all inter-office mail, mail with postage affixed, and mail to be metered. All inter-office mail should be clearly marked as such and preferably placed in an inter-office envelope to prevent it from inadvertently being metered. The Mail Center maintains a supply of used inter-office envelopes.

Inter-office mail will be sorted and distributed to department mailboxes on a continuing basis during work hours.

Delivery to Mail Center: Outgoing mail should be deposited to the Mail Center as soon as possible. Departments with large volumes of mail or more than usual are requested to deposit their mail to the Mail Center multiple times a day.

All outgoing U.S. mail should be received by the Mail Center prior to 4:00 p.m. in order to be processed and postmarked by the U.S. Post Office on that date. After 4:00 p.m. departments are responsible for same-day delivery to the U.S. Post Office.

All courier and next-day correspondence should be deposited to the Mail Center no later than 3:00 p.m.

Addressing: Whenever possible, outgoing mail should be prepared in typewritten form with a proper address format in the return and delivery areas. It will be metered and its cost attributed to the proper department for internal record keeping.

Inter-office correspondence should legibly display date, recipient/department, and sender/department, and preferably be placed in an inter-office envelope.

Changes: Departments are requested to give the Mail Center reasonable notice in advance of significant changes to their daily mail routine, such as quantity or delivery time of mail deposited. These changes should be discussed in detail with the Mail Center Supervisor preferably during the annual budget request process prior to being finalized.

Permits and Meters: The Mail Center Supervisor shall be responsible for acquiring and maintaining all Postal Permits for the County. Likewise, the Mail Center Supervisor shall exercise control over the funding and operation of all postage meters. Departments using off-site meters are required to notify the Supervisor in writing 48 hours prior to requesting a drawdown of funds.

APPROPRIATE USAGE:

No outgoing U.S. or privately handled mail will be metered or otherwise paid for by the Mail Center unless it displays the statement “Official Business – Penalty for Private Use.” Seasonal, special occasion and sympathy cards will **not** be deemed official business. Any questionable items will be referred to the County Auditor and/or returned to the submitting department.

PERSONAL MAIL:

The Mail Center will only accept outgoing personal letters as long as postage is affixed; postage is not available for purchase in the Mail Center.

Employees are prohibited from using the Mail Center main location or serviceable addresses to send or receive for *personal* use.

If the Mail Center receives correspondence or packages that appear questionable, for which:

- No purchase order number is evident,
- No *County Business* endorsement is visible;

an email will be sent to the employee to notify the employee of the delivery. The employee will provide information indicating that the correspondence or package is *County Business*; once confirmed, completion of delivery will resume through the regular mail process. If the package cannot be confirmed as *County Business* within 24 hours of employee email notification, it will be returned to the sender immediately.

It will be the addressee’s responsibility to reorder the item for delivery to a non-Mail Center serviceable address or location. The Mail Center is not responsible for any failed or delayed receipt of personal items that were returned to sender due to a violation of this Policy. Upon return to the sender, any damaged or lost item is not the responsibility of the Mail Center.

TRACKING MAIL BETWEEN DEPARTMENTS:

When the need arises for tracking mail sent between departments of the County, the sending department(s) shall notify the Mail Center. The Mail Center staff will affix to the mail in question a form containing blanks for all requested data. Unless otherwise required by law or circumstance, execution of this form shall be used in lieu of certified or other accountable mail.

MAIL PERMITS AND REMOTE METERS:

The Mail Center Supervisor shall exercise control over the issuance and usage of all Fort Bend County mailing permits and all of the county’s postage meters.

REVISED and ADOPTED BY COMMISSIONERS COURT on the _____ day of _____, 2018.

SIGNED by:

Robert E. Hebert
Fort Bend County Judge

ATTESTED by:

Laura Richard
Fort Bend County Clerk

SUBMITTED by:

Edna Chavez
Mail Center Supervisor

*Note: Original Mail Center Policy and Procedures adopted by Commissioners Court August 3, 2004.
Amended by Commissioners Court on March 28, 2017.
Amended by Commissioners Court on the ____ day of _____, 2018.*