

**SAM – INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
(California Technology Agency)**

**COMPLIANCE WITH UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE, OPTICAL  
CHARACTER RECOGNITION GUIDELINES**

**5179**

(Reviewed 03/11)

The United States Postal Service (USPS) has adopted guidelines to allow for optical character recognition of alphanumeric data contained in mailing addresses. Government agencies are strongly encouraged to follow these guidelines as a means of ensuring more efficient and accurate mail processing; more consistent mail delivery; and more stable postal operating costs.

To the extent that it is determined to be cost-effective, agencies must follow the USPS Optical Character Recognition (OCR) guidelines in the design and operation of automated information systems that include preparation of mailing addresses.

The OCR guidelines apply to letter mail within the following dimensions;

1. Height at least 3–1/2" and no more than 6–1/8";
2. Length at least 5" and no more than 11–1/2";
3. Thickness at least 0.007" and no more than 0.25"; and,
4. Aspect ratio (length divided by height) of from 1.3 to 2.5.

The details of the guidelines are set forth in the USPS publication, "A Guide to Business Mail Preparation" (Publication 25), which is available without charge. Agencies should contact their USPS Commercial Account Representative to obtain the current edition.