

USPS Postmark Rule Change: What It Means for Tax Filers and Deadlines

December 17, 2025

Starting December 24, 2025, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) will change how postmark dates are determined. This update could impact anyone mailing time-sensitive documents like tax returns, bill payments, or legal filings.

What's Changing?

Current Rule: The postmark usually reflects the date you drop your mail in a USPS mailbox or at the post office.

New Rule: The postmark will now show the date your envelope is first processed by an automated USPS sorting machine. This could be **later than the day you mailed it**.

Example: You mail your tax return in a blue collection box at 6 PM on April 15 (Tax Day). USPS picks up the mail that night but doesn't process it until April 16. Under the new rule, the postmark will read April 16. For the IRS, that means your return is late — even though you mailed it on time.

Why This Matters

The IRS and other agencies use the postmark date to determine if your filing was on time. A delayed postmark could lead to late penalties, interest charges, or rejected filings.

How to Avoid Problems

- **Go to the counter:** Request a hand-stamped postmark showing the actual mailing date.
- **Buy postage at the counter:** The printed label includes the correct acceptance date.
- **Use Certified or Registered Mail:** These services provide a receipt with the mailing date for proof.