USPS® INTELLIGENT MAIL PACKAGE BARCODE (IMpb) BACKGROUND AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Background

In 2013, the United States Postal Service (USPS®) made changes to its barcode specifications which impact several UPS services and the customers that use them. These include UPS SurePost®, UPS Basic, UPS Mail Innovations and UPS Returns® Flexible Access.

The USPS released the final Intelligent Mail package barcode (IMpb) specification in 2011 making IMpb a mandatory barcode format for all commercial and online mailers, enabling the USPS to provide better end-to-end visibility and service performance. The effective date for the change was January 7, 2013, and all packages moving in the USPS system must be in compliance with this required label and barcode specification.

UPS supports the IMpb barcode for all UPS / postal related services including UPS SurePost:
- UPS SurePost: Customer's shipping technology must be in compliance with IMpb label specification
- UPS Basic: this service has been discontinued
- UPS Returns Flexible Access: UPS will be discontinuing in 2014

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is Intelligent Mail Package Barcode (IMpb)?

The Intelligent Mail Package Barcode is the US Postal Service's current generation tracking barcode for parcels and Extra Services. It uses the same industry-standard GS1-128 symbology as the previous Confirmation Services barcode but with several enhancements.

2. When did UPS begin requiring IMpb compliant labels be used for SurePost shipments?

The USPS required an effective date of January 7, 2013 and shippers were required to update their systems to produce IMpb compliant labels by the end of 2012.

3. Will UPS accept UPS Returns® Flexible Access packages with an Intelligent Mail package barcode?

The UPS Returns Flexible Access service will be discontinued in 2014 but shippers still under contract to produce labels must be IMpb compliant.

4. What customer shipping systems changes are required to meet the USPS IMpb requirements?

All UPS SurePost customers must be compliant with IMpb barcode specifications for certification. Customers shipping UPS SurePost with a WorldShip system must be on WorldShip® 2012 or later.
- Customers using ConnectShip must use a current version that supports compliant IMpb
- Customers using a UPS Ready® vendor system must use a version of their vendor / provider's SurePost module that supports compliant IMpb
- Customers using a Host manifest system must comply with the IMpb label specifications and electronic transmission specifications