

OUT OF SERVICE MAILMARK CHARGE - FAQs

Q. When is the charge being introduced?

On the 2nd of September 2024

Q. Why has Royal Mail decided to start converting charges for 'out of specification' non-compliances?

Mail which has to be, due to design or production, manually sorted or processed on the wrong machine does not reflect the actual read rate %. This in turn results in mail being processed, without adjustments, at a cost which does not reflect the postage paid.

Q. Is there a grace period?

Royal Mail will not provide a 'grace period' from the launch date.

Q. Why is there no grace period?

- Many of the mailings which are problematic to process have been raised with mail producers and some end clients for over 12-24 months.
- There are some common themes in terms of problematic postings such as sealing and design of one-piece mailers, location and application of tab seals and flexibility. Royal Mail expect that once the customer/producer are aware of the issue, a solution can be applied.

Q. Will my entire mailing be changed to another format?

No, not necessarily.

Royal Mail will only consider those items which (a) have not been seen and (b) which have had to be sorted on a different machine.

Royal Mail's operational teams try hard to get the items through the right automation despite being presented with mail that is out of specification, but this is not always possible. The charge is applied to the out of specification volumes we have been unable to process correctly.

Q. Which items may have charges applied?

The items which have to be sorted on a machine not intended for that format (e.g. letters on a large letter machine, large letters on a parcel machine) and those which have to be manually processed.

Q. How will Royal Mail calculate the items to be charged?

Charges may only be applied to volume manually processed or seen on the wrong machine for the declared format.

Q. Is there anything I can do if I don't agree with the charges applied?

The existing appeals process applies, please speak to your Client Relationship Manager if you feel an incorrect charge has been applied.

Q. Why aren't Royal Mail applying charges to all the unseen and all the items processed on the wrong machine?

Royal Mail's operational sites are very customer focussed and will do all they can to process mail through the automation. This adjustment means only out of specification items that cannot be processed on the correct machine will be 'converted'. For example, if 100% of a mailing is out of specification but Royal Mail's operational sites can process all of it and they will try a number of times, then in this scenario, no 'conversion' will be applied.

Q. What process will Royal Mail follow?

A number of steps will take place;

1. A read rate of 90% on the correct machine type (for that format) is required.
2. 'Volume not Seen' (items are declared but not seen on the automation) + 'Volume processed on the wrong machine' (e.g. letters on a large letter machine) are highlighted by Royal Mail's internal reporting and reviewed by their iRP team.
3. At least one operational site must have reported issues with the mailing.
4. There must be visuals clearly showing the issue / out of specification design, with the item checked against published specifications.
5. It is important to note that Royal Mail will continue to exclude volume of mail at a Mail Centre where issues have been reported (e.g. a power failure).

Q. Would a charge be raised if only one or a few Mail Centres reported they had issues?

Yes, if the read rate falls below what is expected and the item is out of specification.

Q. How do I know if there are items being processed on the wrong machine?

The volume, by SCID and eManifest, can be seen on Active and Historic PDF reports.

Q. Can I have item level data of the items affected?

The PDF reports updated on 4th April 2024 provide the overall volume (and %) of mail which has been seen on the incorrect machine and continue to show the volume (and %) of mail not seen. Item level data will be available later this year through Mailmark Direct Data.

Q. Will images be made available where issues are identified?

If Royal Mail send advisory notifications and/or apply charges, then they will include an image to support this.

Q. What steps could I take to ensure my mail meets the specifications?

- Review of your mailpiece designs, do they meet the current published specifications?
- Review the construction of your mailing, is the sealing or the application of tab seals good enough for the mail to withstand multiple machine sorts?