Mail Management

Trainee Handout

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Practical Exercise

Objectives

• Understand the procedures for mail management

• Identify correct date stamping techniques

References

* [M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, Chapter 1. B, Mail Management](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014111/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-ii-Chapter-1-Section-B-Mail-Management)
* [M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, Chapter 1, C, Recording the Date of Receipt of Incoming Documents](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014112/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-ii-Chapter-1-Section-C-Initial-Screening-Policies)
* [M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, Chapter 1, D, General Information About Claims That Require Priority Processing](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000020037/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-ii-Chapter-1-Section-D-Claims-That-Require-Priority-Processin)

Topic 1: Mail Management

**Classifying Mail**

The table below describes the four classes of mail Veterans Service Centers (VSCs) and Pension Management Centers (PMCs) routinely handle.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Mail Class** | **Description** |
| Incoming | Mail pertaining to claims for benefits that originates from outside the VSC/PMC. It includes the following four subclasses:   * priority mail * action mail * file mail, and * unidentified mail. |
| In-Process | Mail pertaining to an issue the VSC/PMC is already controlling/tracking through applications that include   * Share * the Veterans Appeals Control and Locator System (VACOLS) * Modern Awards Processing – Development (MAP-D), and * the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS). |
| Miscellaneous | Mail that neither constitutes an original claim for benefits (thereby requiring the creation of a claims folder) nor can be associated with an existing claims folder. It includes the following three subclasses:   * military file * unidentifiable mail, and * undeliverable mail. |
| Outgoing | Mail the VSC/PMC releases to entities outside the VSC/PMC. It includes the following three subclasses:   * express mail * intraoffice mail, and * regular/routine outgoing mail. |

**Incoming Mail**

The table below describes the four subclasses of incoming mail.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Subclass** | **Description** |
| Priority | * Any claimant who is   + diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) or Lou Gehrig’s Disease   + a participant in the Fully Developed Claim (FDC) Program   + experiencing extreme financial hardship, or   + a former Prisoner of War (FPOW). * Any current or former member of the Armed Forces who   + was very seriously injured/seriously injured (VSI/SI) in service and is *not* already receiving VA disability benefits   + is a FPOW   + is homeless   + is terminally ill   + is more than 85 years old, or   + received the Medal of Honor.   ***Important:*** priority mail is expedited ahead of claims that are not priority due to the time sensitive nature of a priority claim. |
| Action | All forms and letters requiring action or response by VA that the VSC/PMC   * receives from outside sources, and * does not consider priority mail. |
| File | Mail that requires no action or response by VA. This includes copies of system-generated letters that the Hines and Philadelphia information technology centers (ITCs) send to regional offices (ROs) for record-keeping purposes only. |
| Unidentified\_\_\_\_\_ | Mail that does not reference a Veteran or cannot be associated with a Veteran because the mail does not contain sufficient information about the Veteran to allow for accurate identification. |

**Handling Priority and Action Mail**

VSCs/PMCs screen and process mail packages uploaded to the Centralized Mail (CM) portal.

***Note***:  Compensation and Pension mail received at ROs is shipped directly to the scanning vendors without prescreening.

**Handling File Mail**

Upload all file mail to an electronic claims folder (eFolder).

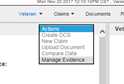
**Handling In-Process Mail**

Upon identifying in-process mail, follow the procedure outlined in [M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, Chapter 1, Section E](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000032384/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-ii-Chapter-1-Section-E-Centralized-Mail-CM-Intake#5) and the centralized mail (CM) portal training.

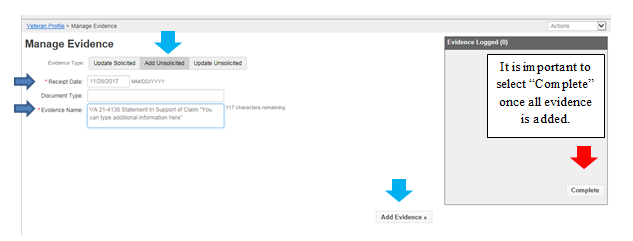
**Handling Unsolicited Evidence**

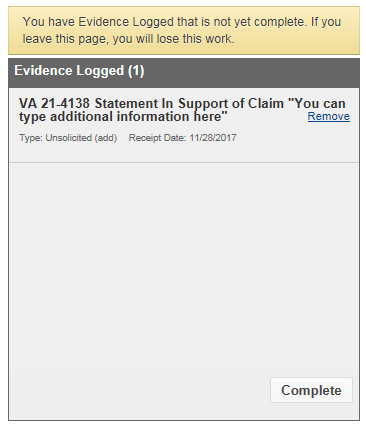
All evidence received that does not correspond to a pending tracked item must be accurately recorded with the proper receipt date using the MANAGE EVIDENCE screen in VBMS, or the EVIDENCE tab in MAP-D.

The Manage Evidence screen can be located under the Veteran Profile then select “Manage Evidence” from the drop down menu.



1. Click on the “Add Unsolicited” tab then fill out the date the documents were received and the document type. i.e. 21-4138, correspondence, etc.. Start
2. Click “Add Evidence”
3. Repeat for all evidence that you want to add.
4. IMPORTANT \*\* Once all evidence is added you must click on **Complete**. This is important as the evidence is not added to VBMS until the Complete button is selected.





**Handling Unidentified Mail**

If a return address exists for mail that does not reference a Veteran or cannot be associated with a Veteran because the mail does not contain sufficient information to allow for accurate identification

* download and print the mail from the CM portal
* return the mail to the sender, and
* ask the sender to
  + identify the Veteran to whom the mail refers, and/or
  + provide sufficient information (claim number, Social Security number (SSN), branch of service, dates of service, etc.) to allow VA to identify the Veteran within its systems of record.

If *no return address exists*, follow the instructions in [M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, Chapter 4, Section H](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014133/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-ii-Chapter-4-Section-H-File-Types) for handling *unidentifiable* mail.

**Miscellaneous Mail**

The table below describes the categories of miscellaneous mail.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Mail Category** | **Description** |
| Military File | For a description of the contents of the   * military file, see [M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, Chapter 4, Section H](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014133/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-ii-Chapter-4-Section-H-File-Types), or * temporary military file, see [M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, Chapter 4, Section H](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014133/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-ii-Chapter-4-Section-H-File-Types). |
| Unidentifiable | Mail with no return address or identifiable information needed to create a   * corporate record, or * claims folder. |
| Undeliverable | Correspondence VA sent to a claimant, beneficiary, or third party that the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) subsequently returned due to an insufficient or invalid address, expired forwarding order, or inability to identify the addressee. |

**Procedures for Handling Miscellaneous Mail**

The table below contains procedures for handling miscellaneous mail.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Mail Category** | **Procedure** |
| Military File | * Organize the material in alphabetical order by calendar year, and * maintain it in the military file. |
| Unidentifiable | * Download and print from the CM portal, and * File the mail in the unidentifiable mail files. |
| Undeliverable | Follow the instructions in [M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, Chapter 1, Section B](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014111/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-ii-Chapter-1-Section-B-Mail-Management#6a) when the USPS returns mail as undeliverable. |

**Outgoing Mail**

The table below describes the three categories of outgoing mail.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Mail Category** | **Description** |
| Express | Mail the addressee must receive by the most expedient means. |
| Intraoffice | Mail that requires delivery to other operating elements in the RO |
| Regular/routine | * Letters and forms an RO sends to a person or place outside the RO that do not require expedited delivery. * Interoffice mail for VA medical facilities, other ROs, or VA Central Office (VACO). |

**Procedures for Handling Outgoing Mail**

The table below contains procedures for handling outgoing mail.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Mail Category** | **Procedure** |
| Express | * Hand deliver the mail to the RO’s mailroom * complete an air bill from the express mail contract carrier * document the tracking number for the mail and keep it until the intended recipient has received the mail, and * follow any other procedures for sending express mail that the operating element responsible for mailroom services has established. |
| Intraoffice | Clearly identify the intended recipient to include the appropriate mail routing symbol. |
| Regular/routine | * For mail related to other off site business lines not in CM portal (Fiduciary, VR&E, Cemetery, VHA, etc.), bundle and forward mail through USPS. * Send other outgoing regular/routine (such as development or award letters) through USPS.   ***Note*:** Other RO or PMC claim related mail is no longer forwarded through USPS to the other ROs/PMCs. Upload the mail to the CM portal. |

**Determining Which RO or PMC Has Jurisdiction Over Mail From Residents of a Foreign Country**

See the table below when determining jurisdiction for mail received from residents of a foreign country.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **If the mail received is for…** | **And the claimant resides in…** | **Then refer mail to the…** |
| Disability compensation, pension, survivor benefits, or related appeals | Philippines | Manila RO |
| Disability compensation or related appeal(s), work items, or non-rating issues | A foreign country other than the Philippines | Pittsburgh RO |
| Pension or survivor claims or related appeal(s) | * Mexico * Central and South America, or * the Caribbean | St. Paul PMC |
| Pension or survivor claims or related appeal(s) | a foreign country other than   * the Philippines * Mexico * Central and South America, or * the Caribbean | Philadelphia PMC |

Topic 2: Date Stamp

**Requirement to Stamp the Date of Receipt on All Incoming Documents**

Each document submitted to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) ***must*** receive a stamp with the date of receipt.

The table below outlines requirements regarding the type of date stamps used by facilities and locations where VA has a presence.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **At a(n)…** | **Use a(n)…** |
| regional office (RO) | electronic date stamp containing black ink. |
| Out-based facility with five or more employees | electronic or manual date stamp containing red ink. |
| Out-based facility with fewer than five employees and sites conducting   * Transition Assistance and Disabled Transition Assistance briefings * pre-discharge activities * Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) activities, and * field examiner activities | manual date stamp containing red ink. |
| site conducting outreach activities | manual date stamp containing red ink.  ***Important***: The employee receiving documents at outreach events must also sign their name below the red date stamp. |
| centralized mail (CM) scanning vendor | electronic date stamp containing black ink. |

**Handling Documents Processed Without a Date Stamp**

Use the guidance in the table below when attempting to determine the date the VA received a document processed without a date stamp.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **If receipt of the document by VA is determined to be…** | **Then…** |
| the current date | stamp the document with an official date stamp. |
| prior to the current date | hand-write the date of receipt on the document. |
| unknown | 1. hand-write the best estimate for the date of receipt, and 2. identify it as an estimate on the document. |

***Important***:

* All hand-written annotations ***must*** include the
  + RO number
  + RO name
  + employee’s signature, and
  + current date.

The “received date” on a fax is an acceptable date stamp for documents faxed and directly indexed into Virtual VA. It is ***not*** necessary to print out such documents, stamp with the date of receipt, and upload back into Virtual VA.

**Placement of the Date Stamp on Incoming Documents**

Place the date stamp on the front of incoming documents in the *bottom, right corner* whenever possible, unless a VA form has a specified location for date stamp. Do not obscure data by covering with date stamp (e.g. images, hand-written or typed text, etc.).

Date stamp on the ***first*** page of all

* VA forms
* claimant correspondence, and
* cover sheets (from designated representatives (powers of attorney (POAs), attorneys, etc.)

Date stamp the ***first*** and ***last*** page of all medical evidence.

***Note***:  Do ***not*** separate batches of incoming mail.  Keep batches together with a staple, rubber band, or binder clip and separately date stamp the evidence items as described above.

**Date of Receipt for Mail Processed in the CM Portal**

Date of receipt for mail routed through the CM portal is determined by the *earliest* official date

* stamped by the RO upon receipt and prior to forwarding to the scanning vendor
* stamped by the scanning vendor, or
* found on documents such as [*VA Form 27-0820*](http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/20/cio/20s5/forms/VBA-27-0820-ARE.pdf)*,* *Report of General Information*, or facsimiles.

**Original Documents**

Claimants occasionally submit *original* versions of the following documents in support of their claims

* court records and papers, and
* marriage, birth, death, and discharge certificates.

The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) *no longer* requires return of these documents to the claimant.

***Note***:  There is ***no*** mechanism in place to retrieve original documents once shipped to the scanning vendor.

Practical Exercise

Instructions: Answer the following questions.

* 1. If mail is received for disability compensation and the veteran lives in a foreign country other than the Phillippines refer the mail to what station?
  2. An out based facility with five or more employees should have an electronic or manual date stamp containing what color of ink?
  3. Date stamp the *first* and *last* page of all \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ documents.
  4. Date of receipt for mail routed through the CM portal is determined by the *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*official date
* stamped by the RO upon receipt and prior to forwarding to the scanning vendor
* stamped by the scanning vendor, or
* found on documents such as [*VA Form 27-0820*](http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/20/cio/20s5/forms/VBA-27-0820-ARE.pdf)*,* *Report of General Information*, or facsimiles.
  1. Based on the document below what is the correct date of receipt?

