



Mail subclasses and handling classes: purpose and usage

Introduction

- 1 The concept of mail subclass is complex: it is used for multiple purposes at multiple levels. The usage has also evolved over time.
- 2 The handling class mainly indicates if the mail item or receptacle it relates to is registered or insured. The concept of handling class is linked to mail subclasses.
- 3 The purpose of this document is to describe and clarify the current situation both for mail subclasses and handling classes.

Mail subclasses

- 4 The mail subclass code was initially created for EDI messaging as there was a need to electronically represent despatching requirements as specified in the UPU Convention. Today it is used in EDI messages PRECON/RESCON, PREDES/REDES, CARDIT, EMSEVT and eVN. It is also part of the despatch and receptacle identifiers S8 and S9. It appears on the S47 receptacle label as well as in other UPU documents.
- 5 Mail subclass is a two-character code of which the first character is the mail class: U (letters), C (parcels), E (EMS) and T (empty receptacles), and the second divides the class into products and services, physical handling characteristics and other special uses.
- 6 Mail subclasses may be used at three possible levels: despatch, receptacle and item. UPU code list 117 indicates at what level(s) each mail subclass may be used.
- 7 The table below provides a summary of the usage of the mail subclass code in EDI messages at receptacle and item level:

Message and version (standard)	Usage at receptacle level	Usage at item level
EMSEVT V3.0 (M40)	no	yes
PREDES V2.0 (M14) and V2.1 (M41)	yes	yes
REDES V1.1 (M13)	yes	no
PRECON V1.1 (M10)	yes	no
RESCON V1.1 (M12)	yes	no
eVN (M42)	yes	no

Mail subclass codes: usage at despatch-level

- 8 Mail subclass distinguishes different despatch series¹ within the mail class. In its simplest and most commonly-used form the second character is "N", which stands for "normal" (ordinary).
- 9 When there is a single despatch series for a given mail category and class between two offices of exchange the "normal" variant is usually applied. For example, if there is only one despatch series for priority

¹ The dispatch series is the system by which postal dispatches are sequentially numbered. It consists of 15 characters: six-character origin IMPC code (code list 108); six-character destination IMPC code (code list 108); one-character mail category (A, B, C, D) (code list 115); two-character mail subclass code (code list 117) where the first character is the mail class code (U, C, E, T) (code list 116).

letter post, the mail subclass code is usually UN. When combined with mail category “A” for airmail this yields a despatch type (i.e. a concatenation of category and subclass) of AUN.

10 However, there can be a business need for more than one despatch series for a given mail category and class. For example, an origin may choose to have a separate despatch series containing exclusively registered items by using mail subclass UR (with despatch type AUR in the case of airmail).

11 EMS is an example of widespread common use of multiple mail subclass codes. For example, if origin postal operators separate EMS documents from merchandise, they may form two separate despatch series: one with mail subclass code ED (EMS, documents) and one with mail subclass code EM (EMS, merchandise), with despatch types AED and AEM respectively. If documents and merchandise are mixed in the same despatch series, then the mail subclass is EN (EMS, Mixed), with despatch type AEN.

Mail subclass codes: usage at receptacle level

12 The receptacle ID (S9 receptacle identifier) uses only the despatch-level mail subclass code. Thus, each receptacle in a despatch has the same despatch ID (S8 despatch identifier). However, within a given despatch, the receptacle subclass can differ from its despatch subclass. Reference list (RL) 117a indicates the valid combinations of mail subclasses at despatch and receptacle level.

13 For example, according to RL 117a, a despatch of mail subclass UN (Letters – LC/AO) may include a receptacle of subclass UM (Letters – M-bags, indicating it to be an M-bag). In such a case, the characters “UN” are in the barcoded receptacle ID (in character positions 14–15 of the 29-character identifier) for all receptacles in the despatch. The mail subclass code “UM” is provided in the PREDES message in the data element “receptacle-subclass” (data element name in PREDES V2.1).

14 On a receptacle label, the despatch mail subclass code appears as part of the receptacle ID and is also printed separately as part of the despatch type, in zone A4. The receptacle mail subclass code is printed in zone B2 when different from the despatch mail subclass. This is illustrated by the two figures below:

A0		C0		C1		C2	
From A1		C3		C4		C5	
A2		C6		Seal C7			
A3		To		D0			
Desp. Type A4		Desp. No. A5		D1			
Date		A6		D2			
Rec. Type A7		Rec. No. A8		Receptacle ID			
Format B0		B1		E0			
Rec. Subcl. B2		No. of Items B3		E1			
Gross Kg B4		Net Kg B5		Date Transport		Unload	
B6		F0				F1	
Prod. Date B7		B8					

		Airmail		CN 35	
From ARBUEB (ARA)		BUE AVION		M	
CORREO AR		To		ESMADB (ESA)	
Desp. Type AUN		Desp. No. 178		MADRID AP	
Date		2016-07-04		CyT Espagne	
Rec. Type BG		Rec. No. 2		Receptacle ID	
Seal					
Rec. Subcl. UM		No. of Items		ARBUEB ESMADB AUN 6 0178 002 00 0191	
Gross Kg 19.1		Net Kg		Date Transport	
				4 EZE AR 1132 MAD	
				MAD	

15 For a despatch-level mail subclass code a specific set of receptacle level subclass codes that are operationally logical is typically allowed. For example, while the previous example illustrates an operationally logical combination of a despatch of subclass UN that includes a receptacle of subclass of UM, it would be illogical for a despatch of subclass UM (M-bags) to include a receptacle of subclass UN (LC/AO). In a despatch, the despatch-level mail subclass is always allowed at receptacle level and is the value to be used at receptacle level, unless the contents of the receptacle have additional characteristics to be identified with a different receptacle level subclass, following allowed combinations in RL 117a.

16 For letter mail, the valid combinations make it possible to distinguish receptacles containing exclusively LC mail (letters and cards) or AO mail (other objects, typically small packets), even when the despatch subclass does not make such a distinction. For example, within a UN (LC/AO) despatch, one receptacle may have subclass UA (AO mail) and another subclass UL (LC mail).

17 The receptacle level subclass is also used to distinguish special receptacles within “normal” (ordinary) despatches, such as receptacles containing empty bags, IBRS, M-bags, etc.

18 In PREDES and PRECON messages, the mail subclass representing the receptacle-subclass is included only if the receptacle subclass differs from the despatch subclass.

19 The receptacle subclass should be provided in RESDES and RESCON messages only when the information recorded for the receptacle received differs from the information received in the corresponding pre-advise message (PREDES or PRECON).

Mail subclass codes: usage at item level

20 The usage of mail subclasses at item level is limited to EDI messages: the item-level mail subclass does not appear as such in any identifier, UPU form or label. However, information associated with a mail subclass code may appear on an item-level form or label. For example, the EMS manifest includes boxes indicating if the EMS item is documents or merchandise (corresponding respectively to mail subclass codes ED and EM).

21 The usage of mail subclasses at item level is not driven by any reference list providing valid combinations; it is only driven by code list 117: CL 117 indicates for each subclass code if its usage is valid or not at item level.

22 EMSEVT V3 (M40) and PREDES V2.0 (M14) / V2.1 (M41) include a conditional data element for the mail subclass at item level. In PREDES, a rule is also provided: the item-level subclass should be provided only when it differs from the receptacle subclass.

23 For EMS, the usage of the mail subclass at item level is used to distinguish between documents/merchandise at item level in a receptacle containing both documents and merchandise (mail subclass codes EA, EI and EN). Segregation or identification of mail subclass at item level is required if operational and/or accounting processes require the information.

24 Three types of item-level subclasses can be distinguished: subclasses that correspond to item characteristics (merchandise/document, LC/AO), subclasses that correspond to the handling of the item (à découvert, returned) and subclasses that relate to specific payment agreements (EMS, IBRS).

25 In order to avoid unnecessary complexity, the usage of mail subclass at item level is limited to cases where the added value is clear. With this objective, at the time this document was written, the usage of several codes at item level was being phased out (CB, CN and UN).

Handling class codes

26 Handling class indicates the presence of registered or insured mail which typically requires special handling.

27 Handling class codes as given in code list 107 are: N, Normal; R, Registered; and V, Insured.

28 The table below provides a summary of the usage of the handling class code in EDI messages at receptacle and item level:

Message and version (standard)	Usage at receptacle level	Usage at item level
EMSEVT V3.0 (M40)	no	yes
PREDES V2.0 (M14) PREDES V2.1 (M41)	yes	yes
PRECON V1.1 (M10) RESCON V1.1 (M12)	yes	no
CARDIT V1.2 (M47) CARDIT V2.1 (M48)	yes	no

29 The preceding table shows that the usage of the handling class in EDI messages is quite similar to the usage of the mail subclass. There is also a logical link between the two concepts:

- a receptacle of subclass CV (insured parcels) should have handling class “V” (insured);
- all receptacles in a despatch of subclass UR (registered letters) should have handling class “R” (registered).

Handling class codes: usage at receptacle level

30 S9 provides a registered/insured indicator in character position 25 with possible values “0”, “1”, or “9”, defined as follows:

- “0”, Receptacle does not contain registered and/or insured items;
- “1”, Receptacle contains registered and/or insured items;
- “9”, No information is available in the receptacle ID.

NOTE 1 The purpose of the registered/insured indicator is to assist operators in the receptacle opening process and to enable transit operators to assign transit receptacles to delivery bills by scanning the barcoded receptacle ID in the absence of the PRECON pre-advice message.

NOTE 2 Usage of value “9” should be limited to very special cases, typically when a receptacle is found with a damaged label or no label and a new label needs to be applied to it. The party applying the substitute label may use “9” here, not knowing the exact contents of the receptacle.

31 There should be a direct correlation between the registered/insured indicator and the data element called “receptacle handling class” in the PREDES message in terms of noting that the receptacle handling class (value “R” or “V”) is more precise than the registered/insured indicator (value “1” may correspond to either value R or V).

32 PRECON, RESCON, PREDES, RESDES and CARDIT include a conditional data element for the handling class. In PREDES V2.1 (M41), detailed information is provided on how to use the attribute. In particular, only values “R” and “V” are allowed; if the receptacle is “normal” (as opposed to registered or insured) the conditional information is not provided. A similar rule is also in place in CARDIT V1.2 (M47) and CARDIT V2.1 (M48). There is no such rule in PRECON or PREDES V2.0 (M14). Based on a different rule, the handling class is only provided in RESCON when it differs from the information in the corresponding PRECON. Similarly, the handling class should be provided in RESDES when it differs from the information in the corresponding PREDES.

33 In PREDES V2.1 (M41), an additional data element is provided at receptacle level, to complement the receptacle handling class: it is called “receptacle handling class exclusive” and indicates whether the receptacle contains mail of the given handling class exclusively (data element value “Y”) or not (data element is not provided).

Handling class codes: usage at item level

34 EMSEVT V3 (M40), PREDES V2.0 (M14), PREDES V2.1 (M41) and CUSITM (M43) include a conditional data element for the handling class at item level. Value “N” (normal) is not allowed in these messages, except in PREDES V2.0.

35 For letter post at item level, the handling class information duplicates information provided by the S10 identifier: code list 124 providing service indicators (first two characters of the S10 identifier) contains separate ranges for registered and insured letters. However, there is no specific range for insured parcels (although CV is often used for insured parcels in practice), so the handling class code information is very important for parcels.