



# Canada Post Corporation eLink Program

## Approval and Post go live requirements for Customer Developed shipping systems

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## Summary

This guide has been developed to assist customers participating with the eLink program in order to support their parcel shipping preparation requirements.

The eLink Program approves and monitors standard and custom shipping software for compliance to Canada Post's specifications.

The approval process is designed to ensure that the output of the shipping system conforms to our requirements which will allow for efficient package handling using our automated equipment, item tracking and accurate billing.

Included in this guide is the process to obtain approval as well as expectations post go live in order to participate in this program.

# Approval Process

The approval process is designed to ensure shipping systems outputs conform to our specifications and to allow for efficient mail handling, traceability and accurate billing. All Customer Developed Shipping Systems (CDSS) must undergo this extensive approval process to ensure they meet the requirements of Canada Post's shipping and business rules.

The following outputs are required to be approved for based on current specifications available:

- Shipping label – Domestic, USA or International services
- Manifest data file
- Paper manifest
- Customs forms – USA and International services only

In order to facilitate efficient delivery and traceability, the label produced by a shipping system must have the appropriate addressing, service required, delivery options and barcode (including encoding).

A paper manifest must be prepared and accompany all mailings in order to meet acceptance and transportation regulations.

Canada Post also requires the manifest data file to be posted to our **secure SFTP** site to initiate tracking capabilities as well as to provide accurate electronic billing. Once approval has been granted, credentials will be provided to our sftp site.

## Services Provided

Customers are assigned an eLink coordinator to assist through the approval process and to manage day to day activities.

The assigned eLink coordinator will also provide assistance with;

- Shipping Label, manifest data file and Paper Manifest approval
- Overall Approval Progress monitoring
- Development support

## Test Cases

As part of our approval process, we have established formal test cases that will be provided once development is completed. It is mandatory that these scenarios are completed based on the desired services and options seeking approval for.

Depending on services and options submitted for approval, a physical shipping label, entry on a manifest data file and corresponding paper manifest will be expected. Physical labels must be provided for evaluation by our Engineering Department for Barcode quality and final approval. The corresponding manifest data file and paper manifest can be emailed to your eLink coordinator.

## Service level agreement

Based on new customers seeking approval depending on the number of services and options, we strive to provide evaluation reports within **5 business days**.

Labels received from an existing customers seeking approval, we strive to provide evaluation reports within **2 business days**.

## Hours of Coverage

Approval department contacts will be available between 8:00 A.M. and 6:00 P.M. (Eastern Standard Time) Monday through Friday.

## Office Address

All physical labels are to be sent to:

CANADA POST CORPORATION  
**ORDER ACCEPTANCE – eLink Program**  
2701 RIVERSIDE DRIVE  
**SUITE N0440**  
OTTAWA ON K1A 0B1

## Approval Notification

Approval notification will be issued via e-mail within **2 business days** of acknowledgement of receipt and may be provided with other output approvals. Approved eLink data files will remain on file at Canada Post.

Evaluation reports on non-conforming eLink data file will be e-mailed within **2 business days** of acknowledgement of receipt.

## Label, Manifest Data Files and Paper Manifest requirements

### Shipping Label Approval – Domestic, USA and International services

Properly prepared shipping labels ensure timely delivery of parcels. Labels not meeting the mandatory requirements can cause delays in delivery or result in mail items being returned.

Labels produced must meet the minimum requirements as outlined in the specifications document in order to obtain Canada Post approval and will be provided to the Engineering group at Canada Post for evaluation.

Canada Post will entertain custom label formats as well as additional elements such as logos or additional barcodes however are subject to approval.

### Approval requirements:

During the development process we strongly encourage samples to be sent via email so we can provide feedback on placement of barcodes and other elements. This allows us to provide feedback early in the process. Physical labels must be provided for final approval.

A Shipping Label Verification report will be provided on the results of your label(s) and barcode(s).

As part of our approval process we perform the following activities;

- Ensure barcode meets scanning requirement on all labels supplied. A minimum **grade of "B"** for the barcode quality must be met.

**Please note:** Scanning requirements **must be met** or labels will be returned without further validation.

- Ensure that data in the barcode is encoded correctly and all minimum mandatory elements are printed on the label.
- All options including cubed (CU), oversize (O/S) are conditional options based on dimensions provided.
- Labels must include unique sequential tracking numbers in order to validate check digit calculation.
- Customer Number must be a valid number with billing privileges (used in the indicia and tracking barcode).

## Window Envelope products

- Samples of envelopes with inserts must be supplied in accordance with the above stipulations.
- All Additional elements/requirements must be met for window envelopes.
- Test the print quality of the bar code through the window (glare and reflectance can affect the quality if applicable).
- Perform a “tap test” (if applicable) to ensure that the content does not shift.

Approved labels will remain on file at Canada Post until the next required mandatory update or when a change is submitted.

Customer must not make changes to labels once approval has been granted. Prior to incorporating any additional services and/or options, we require new samples to be submitted for approval as described in this document.

### **Tracking numbers must not be re-used for a period of 365 days.**

Canada Post will communicate mandatory changes to the specification minimum of 90 days in advance of implementation.

## Tracking numbers

Domestic services format of barcodes are Next Generation barcode and are system generated based on our specifications. Canada Post does not issue ranges for these services and manual tracking labels are not permitted for use with the eLink program.

USA/International services – Ranges for USA and International services are issued by Canada Post and a request must be sent to [barcodes@canadapost.ca](mailto:barcodes@canadapost.ca)  
Manual tracking labels are not permitted for use with the eLink program.

## Manifest Data file

In order to ensure that customers' benefit from accurate electronic billing, shipping systems must meet the requirements as outlined in the eLink data file Specifications document in order to obtain CPC approval.

All mandatory fields must be completed and field data type must be respected. Please refer to the eLink data file specification for more information.

### Approval requirements:

- The data file must be in a comma-delimited text file containing the data results based on test cases provided.
- All Canada Post Parcel services can be combined in one file.
- The data file must contain the data that is represented on the paper manifest.
- Items shipped to the USA or internationally will require a Customs and Items record.
- Provide test file containing correct tombstone information (i.e. Customer Number, Contract Number, Induction Site, etc.)
- Provide test file containing information that is provided in test case scenarios and mandatory information required.

### We will provide;

- Development support (phone, e-mail, conference calls) to review or clarify specification documents
- Complete detailed analysis of eLink data file
- Provide a test finding report that will outline all of the requirements of the eLink data file with a Pass or Fail grade as well as an explanation of failures.



## Note:

The manifest data file should not exceed 10,000 lines of data due to process efficiencies.

Manifests that are sent electronically will have rating calculated based on Canada Post's calculations. eLink manifests can be provided to Canada Post with or without rates and unless requested, rates provided in the test files will not be validated. This includes both the shipping and options fees.

Canada Post will communicate mandatory changes to the specification minimum of 90 days in advance of implementation.

**Canada Post requires all Customers participating in the eLink program to keep a copy of all production manifest eLink data files for a minimum of 90 days.**

## Paper Manifest Approval

A paper manifest must always accompany shipments either at time of pick up or induction at a Canada Post Facility. The paper manifest must meet the requirements as outlined in *The Guide to producing paper manifests - eLink program*.

### Approval requirements

- The Paper manifest must contain the same mandatory data elements that are displayed in the data file including line number.
- The Paper manifest must match the content of the paper manifest (Summary or Detailed).
- Manifest numbers need to be produced in sequential order and must not be skipped.
- The Shipment date must reflect the actual date of the mailing.
- All paper manifests must include a bar code that contains the manifest number.
- A Detailed version manifest and Summary version manifest must be submitted for approval. Once approved, the Summary version can be the primary version produced however a detailed manifest must be made available upon demand.

### We will provide;

- Provide development support (phone, e-mail, conference calls) to review or clarify specification documents
- Complete detailed review of the manifest where details will be verified against the actual data in the submitted eLink data file.
- Provide a Test findings report that will outline all of the requirements of the paper manifest with a Pass or Fail grade as well as an explanation of the failures.

**Note:**

Customers must not make any changes to the paper manifest once approved by Canada Post. Prior to incorporating any changes, check with your assigned eLink co-coordinator for approval requirements.

Canada Post will communicate mandatory changes to the specification minimum of 90 days in advance of implementation.

## **Post Go Live Expectations**

### **Compliance and Notification of changes**

Canada Post will communicate mandatory changes to specifications a minimum of 90 days in advance of implementation.

As a condition of participating in this program Customers must submit changes for approval prior to date of implementation.

Due to the potential impacts to delivery of items, changes must not be made to any output without prior approval.

\*Please note that prior to incorporating any new services and/or options, the approval process must be followed as described in the approval section of this document.

### **Review and Monitoring**

In order to ensure that the approved version of labels has been successfully moved into production, Canada Post may request actual label samples from the customer site on the first day of shipping (this can be via photocopy, fax or PDF). Samples will be validated.

Samples of live labels will be randomly requested from customers for quality and compliance of specifications.

### **Posting of Manifest Data Files**

All manifest data files are to be posted to the customer's assigned mailbox on Canada Post's **secure SFTP** site ([secure.cpmlink.ca](https://secure.cpmlink.ca)) prior to pick up or induction to Canada Post. The username and password will be provided to the customer directly and the site will be put on hold until the customer is ready to go live.

#### **Please Note:**

This is sftp environment is a production environment and under no circumstances should test files be posted. For testing assistance please contact your eLink coordinator for assistance.

### **Suspended Files**

eLink manifest data files suspend for a variety of reasons but most commonly due to missing mandatory information or invalid characters being provided. Customers will receive an automated email notification of the suspended files and the issue.

The file will be corrected by Canada Post however customers are expected to address the issue to prevent future files from suspending.

Suspended files will be subject to a surcharge.

### **Manifest Number Gap Report**

The Gap Report records manifest numbers not accounted for within a range of manifest numbers consumed. Manifest numbers must be consumed in a sequential order.

Manifest numbers must start at 00001 and numbers must not be skipped.

## Duplicate Manifests

Manifest numbers must not be reused for a period of 365 days. When it is discovered that a customer site is producing duplicate manifests, the following chain of events will take place:

- Customers will receive an automated email notification
- The expectation is that the customer resolves this issue within 2 business days of being notified.

## Duplicate Tracking Numbers (PINs)

Tracking numbers must not be reused for a period of 365 days from the first time it is generated. When a tracking number is used before the mandatory period of time has lapsed, the events on our website and other parcel tracking services will be suppressed.

When we discover that a customer site is producing duplicate tracking numbers, the following chain of events will take place:

- Notification of the issue via email/phone call
- Customers are expected to report back when the issue has been resolved.

## Voided/ Cancelled Labels

If an item is voided/cancelled, the tracking number must still be provide to Canada Post as a voided item. To void an item, the transaction data is still provided in the manifest data file however the indicator in the status field with a '1'.

## Non-transmitted Order and Non-manifested item Surcharge

Customers are expected to manifest all items when inducting to Canada Post. The Recon Report will identify tracking numbers processed in our network where an electronic order has not been received. This report is provided to the customer and the expectation is for the customer to recover data files where these items have been reported.

### **Non-transmitted order surcharge**

All items that are dropped off or picked up must be accompanied by an order document (manifest) at the time of pick up or drop off at an authorized Canada Post facility. A surcharge will be applied to orders that have not been transmitted to Canada Post on the same day and prior to drop-off or pickup of shipments.

### **Non-manifested item surcharge**

A surcharge will be applied if an item is inducted to Canada Post (pick up or drop off) and is not manifested and submitted electronically.