### Section B. Mail Management

#### Overview

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| In This Section | This section contains the following topics: |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Topic | Topic Name |
| 1 | Classifying Mail |
| 2 | Handling Incoming Mail |
| 3 | Handling Miscellaneous Mail |
| 4 | Handling Outgoing Mail |

#### 1. Classifying Mail

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Change Date | July 20, 2015 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| a. Classes of 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.   ***Important***: If any Federal Tax Information (FTI) is received, follow proper handling and storage procedures.  ***References***: For more information about   * handling incoming mail, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 1.B.2 * the definition of FTI, see M21-1, Part X, 9.A.1.b, and * storage and handling of FTI, see * M21-1, Part X, 9.B, and * [*IRS Publication 1075*](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p1075.pdf). |
| 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).   ***References***: For more information about   * placing claims under control, see * the [*Share User’s Guide*](http://css.vba.va.gov/SHARE/), or * the [*VBMS User Guide*](http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/VBMS/resources.asp), and * M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 3.D.2 * placing appeals under control in VACOLS, see * the [*VACOLS User Guide*](http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/21/publicat/Users/Index.htm#bmv), and * M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 3.E, and * handling in-process mail, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 1.B.2. |
| 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.   ***Reference***: For more information about handling miscellaneous mail, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 1.B.3. |
| 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.   ***Reference***: For more information about handling outgoing mail, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 1.B.4. |

|  |
| --- |
| ***Reference***: For more information about the entities within a regional office (RO) that are responsible for mail management, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 1.A.4. |

#### 2. Handling Incoming Mail

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Introduction | This topic contains instructions for handling incoming mail, including   * subclasses of incoming mail * handling priority and action mail * placing claims and 800 series work items (WIs) under end product (EP) control * handling file mail * handling unidentified mail * handling in-process mail, and * handling unsolicited evidence. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Change Date | October 30, 2015 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| a. Subclasses of Incoming Mail | The table below describes the four subclasses of incoming mail. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Subclass | Description |
| Priority | Mail related to claims fitting the criteria identified in M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 1.D.1.a require priority processing.  ***Note***: RO management may decide to include additional types of mail in this subclass. |
| 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 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. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| b. 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.  ***References***: For more information on   * claims requiring priority processing, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 1.D.1.a. * procedures for processing CM packages, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 1.E.5.c, and * receipt, separation, and routing of physical mail in the mailroom, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 1.E.2. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| c. Placing Claims and 800 Series WIs Under EP Control | VSCs/PMCs use VBMS, Share, and other computer applications to control pending workload. This workload is not limited to claims for VA benefits, as it also includes electronic 800 series work items (WIs), which are computer-generated notices that require action by the VSC/PMC that receives them.  When establishing control in VBMS or Share, users must select/enter the minimum required claim information shown in M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 3.D.2.c.  Exceptas noted in the table below, the date of claim (DOC) for ***claims for VA benefits*** is the earliest date VA received the claim in any of its facilities, to include its medical centers and scanning vendors.  ***Example***: E-mails received at VA facilities are uploaded to VBMS as portable document format (PDF) documents. The sent date on the saved document represents the date received; therefore, the sent date will be used as the DOC.  The table below also contains instructions for   * establishing pre-discharge claims * using end product (EP) 930, and * determining the DOC for WI controlling EPs. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| When ... | Then ... |
| establishing control of a pre-discharge claim | use a *future* DOC (the day after the anticipated date of separation from service).  ***Exception***: If the pre-discharge claim will be processed in VBMS, follow the instructions in the [*VBMS Job Instruction Sheet - Pre-Discharge Claim Establishment*](http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/VBMS/Resources_Job_Instruction_Sheets.asp). |
| a VSC/PMC employee prematurely cleared or closed a pending EP | reestablish control, using   * EP 930, and * the DOC of the EP that was prematurely cleared. |
| establishing a control EP (130, 290, 310, etc.) for a 800 series WI | use a DOC which matches the date of the 800 series WI.  ***Note***: If no date is shown, use the date the VSC/PMC initiated review of the WI. |

|  |
| --- |
| ***Important***: If a possible under/overpayment could result from the 800 series WI (such as removal of dependents to an earlier payment date), an EP 693 must be established. For more information on under/overpayment controlling EPs, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 1.C.6.  ***References***: For more information about   * using Share, see the [*Share User’s Guide*](http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/21/Systems/share.htm) * establishing EPs, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 3.D.2 * establishing control of pre-discharge claims, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart i, 2.A.2 * EPs, see M21-4, Appendix B * claim labels, see M21-4, Appendix C, or * WIs, see the [*VETSNET 800 Series Work Items Desk Reference*](http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/21/systems/docs/WIDR.DOC). |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| d. Handling File Mail | Upload all file mail to an electronic claims folder (eFolder).  ***Important***: Do ***not*** place file mail under control in VBMS, Share, or VACOLS.  ***References***: For more information on   * processing mail in the CM portal, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 1.E.5, and * establishing a claims folder, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 3.B.2. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| e. 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, 4.H.3 for handling *unidentifiable* mail. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| f. Handling In-Process Mail | Upon identifying in-process mail, follow the procedure outlined in M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 1.E.5.d. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| g. 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.  ***Important***: Do not use VA specific abbreviations or jargon when entering evidence description. Plain language should be used whenever possible as it will be visible through eBenefits.  ***References***: For more information on   * recording evidence in * VBMS, see the [VBMS User Guide](http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/VBMS/docs/VBMS_Release_9_0_UserGuide.pdf), or * MAP-D, see the [MAP-D User Guide](http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/VetsNet/Claims_Docs/webhelp/Claim_Development1.htm), and * processing solicited and unsolicited mail, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 1.E.5.d. |

#### 3. Handling Miscellaneous Mail

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Introduction | This topic contains instructions for handling miscellaneous mail, including   * descriptions of miscellaneous mail, and * procedures for handling miscellaneous mail. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Change Date | July 22, 2015 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| a. Descriptions of 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, 4.H.1.b, or * temporary military file, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 4.H.2.b. |
| 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. |

|  |
| --- |
| ***Reference***: See M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, Chapter 5 for more information about   * claim jurisdiction, and * transferring claims folders into and out of an RO. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| b. 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.   ***Important***: Military mail guidance ***does not*** apply to mail processed through the CM portal.  ***Note***: At the end of each calendar year, close the military file and dispose of it according to [*RCS VB-1, Part 1, Section III, Administrative, Item No. 03-132.200*](http://www.benefits.va.gov/WARMS/docs/admin20/rcs/part1/sec03.doc)*.*  ***Reference***: For more information on military file mail, see   * M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 4.H.1, and * M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 4.H.2. |
| Unidentifiable | * Download and print from the CM portal, and * File the mail in the unidentifiable mail files.   ***Reference***: For more information on processing, storage and disposition of unidentifiable mail, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 4.H.3. |
| Undeliverable | Follow the instructions in M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 1.B.9 when the USPS returns mail as undeliverable. |

#### 4. Handling Outgoing Mail

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Introduction | This topic contains instructions for handling outgoing mail, including   * descriptions of outgoing mail, and * procedures for handling outgoing mail. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Change Date | July 20, 2015 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| a. Descriptions of 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 within an 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). |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| b. 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.   ***Note***: VSCs/PMCs are responsible for maintaining a supply of air bills. |
| 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.  ***Reference***: For more information on receipt, separation, and routing of physical mail in the mailroom, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 1.E.2. |