ENTERPRISE MAIL MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

1. **REASON FOR ISSUE**: To revise Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) policy and procedures for ensuring an efficient mail management program and to address the recommendations in the Government Accountability Office Report (GAO-17-800T).

2. **SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES**: This handbook represents a full rewrite of the policies and responsibilities for managing VA's Enterprise Mail Management (EMM) Program. Major changes include incorporating Enterprise-level performance measures, updated reporting requirements, and updated security requirements.

3. **RESPONSIBLE OFFICE**: Office of Information Technology (OIT) (005), Compliance, Risk and Remediation (CRR) (005X), Enterprise Mail Management Program Office (005X6E).

4. **RELATED DIRECTIVE**: VA Directive 6340, Enterprise Mail Management.

5. **RESCISSIONS**: VA Handbook 6340, Mail Management Procedures, dated July 26, 2018 and Notice 20-01, Mail Management Procedures, dated January 23, 2020.

CERTIFIED BY:

BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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1. **PURPOSE.** This handbook implements Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Directive 6340, Enterprise Mail Management (EMM), and contains the mandatory procedures for implementing an effective VA EMM program.

2. **SCOPE.** This handbook covers requirements for the efficient, cost-effective, and secure management of incoming, internal, and outgoing mail. The scope includes, but is not limited to, Enterprise-level performance measures, reporting requirements, and security requirements. This handbook pertains to all VA mail facilities regardless of Administration or Staff Office, size, mail volume, or expenditure.

3. **RESPONSIBILITIES.** In addition to the responsibilities detailed in VA Directive 6340 Section 3, Enterprise Mail Management, the following roles and responsibilities are required to support the program:

    a. **Enterprise Mail Manager** – Director-level position responsible for the overall management and administration of the VA EMM Program. Ensures VA adheres to Federal Management Regulations and all VA policies and procedures for mail operations.

    b. **Administration/Staff Office Mail Manager** – Designated official responsible for maintaining oversight of mail programs and adhering to Federal Management Regulations and all VA EMM policies and procedures for mail operations at the Administration/Staff Office level.

    c. **Mail Managers** – Facility based staff/employees that may have differing titles, roles and responsibilities depending on the organization. In this case those roles and responsibilities include the oversight or management of day-to-day mail operations and resources required. Any time the term "Mail Manager(s)" is referenced in this handbook, it is referring to this level of Mail Manager.

4. **PROCEDURES.** This section describes procedures for implementing the policy in the associated Directive 6340. Mail Managers must follow the United States Postal Service (USPS) Domestic Mail Manual (DMM) and International Mail Manual (IMM) when preparing or shipping VA mail.

    a. **Requirements per the FMR 102-192:**

    (1) Mail Postage Expenditures and Mail Volumes. Mail rooms must report their respective mail volumes (pieces) and postage expenditures (in dollars) by class, weight, special services, etc. Reporting Requirements are found on the EMM SharePoint Site.

    (2) Training. Ensure that facility and administration/staff office level mail personnel receive appropriate certifications and training in order to successfully perform their assigned duties.

(3) Mail Security. Facilities must have a written mail security plan, regardless of the facility's mail volume.

b. **Metrics:**

(1) Mail Postage Expenditures and Mail Volumes. Mail Managers must report their respective mail volumes (pieces) and postage expenditures (in dollars) by class, weight, special services, etc., to the EMM Office as per the Reporting Requirements on the EMM SharePoint site.

(2) Training:

1. Administration/Staff Office Mail Managers and Mail Managers must participate in required mail-related training sessions and capture participation in TMS.

2. Mail Managers must maintain a record of the mail facility staff who participate in required mail-related training sessions that are commensurate with the size and scope of their responsibilities and provide records to the EMM Office as requested.

(3) Mail Security. Mail Managers must report that they have a documented security plan in place that is tested annually.

c. **Enterprise Mail Management Acquisition.** Mail Managers must use the EMM Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract, which provides options for leasing mail equipment, software, and services, when new mail facility equipment is needed. The IDIQ contract allows Mail Managers to upgrade equipment, reduce Enterprise leasing costs, and standardize VA's mailing platform.

(1) IDIQ Task Order Questionnaire.

(2) Contract information can be found on the EMM SharePoint Site. Mail Managers must follow the Task Order Proposal Request (TOPR) Process, which is presented on the VA Process Asset Library (PAL) and VA EMM SharePoint sites. Mail Managers are required to perform the following tasks:

1. TOPR Guide.

2. Monitor all leased equipment accounts for user compliance with this handbook.

3. Ensure the designated Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) or point of contact (POC) monitors the contractor's performance and manages users' complaints.

4. Monitor accounts and assist account holders of leased equipment with service and payment issues.

d. **Training.**

(1) Mail Managers and mail facility staff must receive annual training to ensure personnel at all levels understand the importance of cost-effective mailing practices for internal, incoming, and outgoing mail, and of the security of VA mail.

(2) Administration/Staff Office Mail Managers and Mail Managers must participate in required annual mail-related training sessions.

(3) Mail Managers must maintain a record of the mail facility staff who participate in required mail-related training sessions annually that are commensurate with the size and scope of their responsibilities.

(4) Mail Managers must ensure facility- and program-level mail personnel receive appropriate equipment, software and SOP training and maintain all necessary certifications associated with the performance of their assigned duties.

(5) Mail Managers and mail facility staff must participate in quarterly EMM mail meetings.

(6) Mail Managers and mail facility staff must ensure participation in VA and/or industry training and information sessions is documented, for example via self-certification in the Talent Management Service (TMS) or the appropriate self-certification method for each training.

e. **Security**. Each mail facility must have a written security plan regardless of the facility's mail volume. The scope and level of detail for each mail facility security plan should be commensurate with the size and responsibilities of each facility. The Mail Managers must develop a plan that is specifically tailored to the security threats and risks of the mail facilities. Mail Managers must develop local mail security plans using the VA Mail Security Plan found on the [EMM SharePoint Site](). The local plan may vary somewhat from the overall VA plan to meet local conditions but must address each of the critical elements listed. Mail Managers must review and update the facility mail security plan annually. Mail Managers must annually validate and submit the following mail center security plan certification statement to the Administration Mail Manager to provide to the EMM Program Office:

"*I certify this mail center has a mail security plan according to the VA Handbook 6340 Enterprise Mail Management.*"

f. **Internal Mail.** Internal mail includes any mail that is generated and delivered within a facility or to another VA facility, as long as it is delivered by VA personnel or a designated VA contractor. When processing internal mail, mail facilities must:

(1) Map out internal routes to prevent overlap or duplication of service and to maximize efficiencies and the sorting of mail.

(2) Only use special pick-up and expedited delivery services when regular service will not suffice.

(3) Use mail addresses that include the following elements: name or title, routing code, and building code and/or location.

g. **Incoming Mail.** Incoming mail includes any mail coming into a facility that is delivered by any service provider, such as USPS, United Parcel Service (UPS), Federal Express (FedEx), etc. The objective of incoming mail management is to deliver mail to the intended end recipient or office address within the shortest possible time after receipt, within one business day. Mail Managers must establish and document procedures to meet delivery requirements. In instances where VA is the mailer, VA will reimburse the carrier for any additional shipping costs and/or fees.

(1) **Sorting**. Mail Managers must ensure their facility sorts incoming mail with minimum handling between the time it is received and the time it is delivered to the intended recipient. The procedures in each facility can vary, depending on the size of the office and the types of services that the mail facility staff provides.

(2) **Routing**. Mail facilities must use mail routing symbols or office names to distribute mail. Mail routing symbols and office names identify mail stops within the facility.

1. Facilities must review mail routing instructions at least annually to ensure they are current and meet mail delivery requirements.

2. Facilities must maintain up-to-date routing symbols or lists of office names to assist in accurate routing.

3. Any VA personnel sending mail to be processed by a VA mail facility must include the sender's mail routing symbol or office name in the return address label.

4. Mail received at VA facilities for Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) must be forwarded unopened directly to the addressee.

5. Forwarding of mail (including misdirected mail and requested forwarding) must follow the policies established in the USPS DMM or local facility SOPs.

(3) **Date Stamping.** Date stamping of mail to record receipt by VA shall be completed when the date of receipt protects the interest of the Federal Government, its employees, and the public.

1. At a minimum, information to be reflected on date stamps will include date, designation (VA), and installation (e.g., Central Office, Regional Office, or

field location). The date stamp should not cover any part of the correspondence required for processing.

2. When physical date stamping is necessary, a single stamp impression will suffice; it should not cover any part of the correspondence required for processing.

(4) **Accountable Mail.** Mail Managers must establish procedures for tracking accountable mail.

1. Accountable incoming mail includes registered, certified, insured, and expedited mail.

2. Mail Managers may designate employees of the mail facility or their designees to sign USPS PS Form 3811, Domestic Return Receipt, for registered, certified, and insured mail.

(5) **Personal Mail.** Employees are not permitted to use the mail products, facilities, and/or services of the VA for their personal purposes.

1. Personal mail means incoming or outgoing mail that is not related to official business of the Federal Government.

2. Employees living at a VA field facility may receive personal mail addressed to their official address.

h. **Outgoing Mail.** Mail Managers must select the most efficient, cost-effective, and secure method for managing outgoing mail. Methods would include:

(1) Preparing mail and shipping packages based upon the contents, location of origin, and location of destination, using processes that adhere to all shipping rules and regulations, including those pertaining to hazardous materials (HAZMAT)

(2) Using the appropriate envelope specifications and direct accountability methods as specified in vendor guidance or the local mail SOP.

(3) Processing mail presented to VA by a VSO according to outgoing mail procedures.

(4) Accountability. USPS requires VA to reimburse USPS for services rendered. VA mailers are allowed to use all rate classes and categories except subsidized rates (i.e., non-profit and library rates).

1. Negotiated Service Agreements (NSAs) are permitted but must be negotiated with USPS as required.

2. GSA Schedule 48 rates are recommended.

(5) **Outgoing Small Packages.** Mail Managers must use the current mandatory sourcing vehicle for small package express, ground domestic, and international delivery services whenever such services are necessary to meet the needs of the Department. Information can be found in Directive 7179, via email at VATLC@mail.va.gov,or at https://vaww.va.gov/opal/lss/dspds.asp

USPS provides products and services that are in direct competition with Expedited Carriers. Mail Managers are required to shop for the best rate when shipping. VA is required to use the lowest price option compatible without compromising service.

(6) **Addressing Standards.** All mail dispatched from VA must be clearly printed, stamped or marked with pen or permanent marker, and must include complete recipient and sender addresses.

Addresses for all domestic and international mail and packages must conform to USPS addressing specifications. Details on domestic and international addressing and packaging are available at https://pe.usps.com/

(7) **Special Services**. The USPS offers special services that require additional payment over basic postage, such as certified mail, business reply mail, permit imprint, registered mail, insurance, merchandise return service, certificates of mailing, return receipts, signature confirmation, and delivery confirmation.

1. VA must follow the policies and procedures for special services as outlined in the USPS DMM and Service Guides of delivery carriers.

2. Facilities must limit the use of special services to situations where law or VA Regulation requires them or when they are mission essential.

3. Individual mail facility SOPs should include guidance on the use of special services. See individual carrier websites for additional information on special services.

(8) **Surcharges.** Letter and flat mail must be the proper size. All letter-size mail must be compatible with USPS automated mail processing equipment. Mail pieces smaller than minimum letter-size dimensions are not mailable. A mail piece that exceeds any of the dimensions will incur a surcharge and will be processed using slower and less efficient manual methods. Mailers should avoid these surcharges whenever possible. The USPS DMM contains details on surcharges and mail dimensions.

(9) **Address Information System Products.** Mail facilities must make maximum use of USPS address information system products. The USPS main website, https://www.usps.com, offers a variety of products and services to help mailers maintain deliverable and automation- compatible mailing procedures.

(10) **Mail List Management.** All VA organizations responsible for maintaining mailing lists must review and update those lists annually to eliminate improper addresses, duplicate addresses, and the names of those addressees no longer desiring to receive materials or those who have left VA. Where possible, VA organizations must consolidate mailings to a single addressee to save postage and other costs. The mailing lists must be consistent with the needs and best interests of the VA.

(11) **Postage Stamps and Envelopes.** Mail facility staff may not remove postage stamps from envelopes or parcels. Stamps are not to be defaced or marked in any way that might destroy the postmark.

5. **DEFINITIONS.**

a. **Accountable Mail** – Mail that requires the signature of the addressee or addressee's agent upon receipt to provide evidence of delivery or indemnification for loss or damage. (https://about.usps.com/publications/pub32/pub32_terms.htm)

b. **Administration/Staff Office Mail Manager** – Designated official responsible for maintaining oversight of mail programs and adhering to Federal Management Regulations and all VA EMM policies and procedures for mail operations at the Administration/Staff Office level.

c. **Contract Postal Unit** – Supplier-owned or supplier-leased site operated by the supplier under contract to the USPS to provide postal products and services to the public at USPS prices.(https://about.usps.com/suppliers/becoming/contract-postal-unit.htm)

d. **Enterprise Mail Manager** – Director-level position responsible for the overall management and administration of the VA EMM Program. Ensures VA adheres to Federal Management Regulations and all VA policies and procedures for mail operations.

e. **Mail** – Letters, memoranda, postal cards, reports, forms and form letters, documents, papers, packages, publications, and other material received or dispatched by VA using USPS and vendors such as Federal Express (FedEx), United Parcel Service (UPS), etc. (https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2014-title41-vol3/pdf/CFR-2014-title41-vol3-sec102-192-175.pdf)

f. **Mail Facility** – Physical location or office where mail operations are performed.

g. **Mail Manager** – Facility based staff/employees that may have differing titles, roles and responsibilities depending on the organization. In this case those roles and responsibilities include the oversight or management of day-to-day mail operations and resources required.

h. **Special Services** – Mail services that require extra payment over basic postage. (https://about.usps.com/publications/pub32/pub32_terms.htm)

6. **REFERENCES.**

a. General Services Administration (GSA) Federal Management Regulation (FMR) Parts 102-192

b. VA Directive 7179: Mandatory use of the Federal Strategic Sourcing Initiative for domestic delivery services for express and ground small package shipments and express heavyweight shipments

c. Consolidated Address and Territorial Bulletin 1-N

d. VA Handbook 0730/4, Security and Law Enforcement, March 2013

e. VA Process Asset Library (PAL) TOPR

f. USPS Domestic Mail Manual (DMM)

g. International Mail Manual (IMM)

h. EMM SharePoint Site