

National Change of Address Linkage System

Over 40 million Americans change their address annually, which creates formidable obstacles in maintaining a high-quality mailing list. The NCOA^{Link} product makes change-of-address information available to mailers to help reduce undeliverable mail pieces before mail enters the mail stream.

The NCOA^{Link} process consists of computer software purchased, leased, or developed by the licensee to access the NCOA^{Link} data. The Postal Service certifies the process and licenses the NCOA^{Link} product to private sector companies for commercial mail list processing or internal mail list management. Updated, computerized change-of-address information is provided on a regular basis to the NCOA^{Link} licensees by the Postal Service. The NCOA^{Link} process improves mail deliverability by providing mailers with current, standardized, delivery point coded addresses for individual, family, and business moves.

Input address information must first be standardized to conform to USPS[®] requirements, including the ZIP + 4[®] code. An attempt is made to match each name and address against the NCOA^{Link} product. Address change information is derived from the PS Form 3575, *Change-of-Address Order*, filed by relocating postal customers. If a match is made with the name and old address information in the NCOA^{Link} file, then the NCOA^{Link} licensee is permitted to provide the current move information (new address or undeliverable status) to update the mailing list.

The full NCOA^{Link} Product contains approximately 160 million records or 48 months of permanent address changes and is available to Full Service Provider Licensees. The limited NCOA^{Link} product contains approximately 60 million records or 18 months of permanent address changes and is available to Limited Service Provider and End User Licensees.

NCOA^{Link} helps reduce undeliverable-as-addressed (UAA) mail by correcting input addresses prior to mailing. Since 1986, Move Update predecessors such as ACSTM Service, National Change of Address (NCOA), and the *FASTforward*[®] system have saved mailers millions of dollars that otherwise would have been wasted in materials and postage. NCOA^{Link} continues this trend and, like its predecessors, provides the following benefits to mailers...

- Reduces undeliverable mail by providing the most current address information for matches made to the NCOA^{Link} file.
- Prevents re-mailings after address corrections are received because the address correction is applied prior to the mailing.
- Reduces mailer costs by reducing the number of undeliverable mail pieces by using most current address information.
- Provides the opportunity for faster product/service marketing through accurate mail delivery.

In addition to change-of-address information, NCOA^{Link} also utilizes Return Codes to provide explanation of match and non-match status. Return Codes, which indicate that a match was obtained, are accompanied by a new address or undeliverable status. Return Codes, which indicate a match was not obtained, provide the reason a match could not be made to the NCOA^{Link} file. The analysis of Return Codes can help the mailer determine the deliverability of specific address records.