



What Did You Just Say...?

Common acronyms we use and their meanings

SCF, DPF, AARP, ACLU, WDYT... every day we use acronyms, those groups of letters that have become a shorthand version of our language.

While most of us know the important ones like USA or CEO, we all seem to fall into the habit of using acronyms within our businesses that scarcely anyone else outside the business knows. So, although we speak clearly to our clients and prospects, they may not have a clue as to what we're talking about – kind of like the teacher in the Peanuts cartoons. Although the students can hear her very well, what they hear is “wha, wha, wha.”

Working in the mailing, printing, direct marketing, fulfillment industry is no different. Here are a few of the more common acronyms we use when speaking of things “postal.”

BMEU – Bulk Mail Entry Unit. This is the facility where bulk mail is entered, verified and then released into the mail-processing stream. It is also the facility where mail can be rejected if not prepared properly. Although the BMEU may be attached physically to a Post Office™ station, it serves a separate function than the station itself. You don't go to a BMEU to buy stamps or drop off a single piece of mail.

SCF – Sectional Center Facility. An SCF is an administrative designation by the Post Office™ for the purpose of assigning duties for collection and distribution of mail and monies to a specific geographical area. The first 3 digits of a ZIP (Zone Improvement Plan) Code define the geographical area. For instance, all of the ZIP Codes that start with 982 have a specific Post Office™ in Everett, WA designated as the SCF. Sometimes an SCF will cover more than one set of 3-digit ZIP Codes. The Post Office™ on Pine Street in Tacoma, WA is designated as the SCF for all of the ZIP Codes that start with 983 and 984. There are currently 450 of these facilities located in the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii. You receive postage discounts for entering mail destined for delivery within an SCF if you enter it into the Post Office™ that is designated as the entry point for that SCF.

BMC – Bulk Mail Center. Like an SCF (above), a BMC is a highly mechanized mail processing plant that is responsible for the collection and distribution of mail within a geographical area. However, the BMC's geographical area is much larger than any other Postal facility. Each BMC or ASF (Auxiliary Service Facility) serves as the trafficking hub for all ground shipments either originating or destinating at one of the hundreds of Post Office™ locations within its service area. Each facility is linked via ground transportation to its key service area facilities as well as the other BMC plants. The BMC



that is responsible for the states of Washington, Oregon, parts of Idaho and Alaska is located in Federal Way, WA. There are 29 BMCs located in and throughout the continental United States. Like an SCF, your mail that is destined for delivery within the BMC's geographical responsibility can receive postage discounts when entered directly into the BMC.

DDU – Destination Delivery Unit. A DDU is the smallest facility in the Postal hierarchy. Bulk mail that is properly prepared may be entered at the delivery unit that serves the delivery address on the mail. There are more than 37,000 of these facilities in the United States and are your local area Post Offices™ where you buy stamps, rent Post Office boxes, get money orders, obtain federal forms, and often times apply for a passport.

NCOA – National Change of Address. NCOA is an address correction service that the USPS provides to licensees. The licensees match mailing lists submitted to them on tape or disk against change-of-address information for the entire country from all Computerized Forwarding System units.

ACS – Address Correction Service. ACS is an automated process that provides change-of-address information to participating mailers. The information is captured electronically and sent on electronic media providing a mailer with the forwarding address of the addressee or the reason for non-delivery. This service is only available on the addressee if a change-of-address order is filed with the USPS.