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# Treasury Financial Manual

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## Chapter 5000

### REQUISITIONING, PREPARING, AND ISSUING TREASURY CHECKS

This chapter prescribes the procedures disbursing officers use to requisition, prepare, and issue four-digit checking account symbol checks drawn on the United States Treasury. Topics include submitting disbursing officers' signature specimens, ordering and controlling blank check stock, and inscribing checks. The procedures apply to all disbursing offices except where otherwise indicated.

#### **Section 5010—Authority**

See, *inter alia*, 31 U.S.C. 321, 3321, 3325, 3528.

#### **Section 5015—Submission of Disbursing Officers' Signature Specimens and Designation of Assistants**

Officials who are empowered to designate disbursing officers must designate only the minimum number necessary to perform disbursing functions efficiently. [Per 31 U.S.C. § 3321 and Treasury Directive 16-36, the Chief Disbursing Officer (CDO) is the only official who may designate Fiscal Service Disbursing Officers.] Agencies must maintain records of disbursing officer designations and revocations of authority, including designated disbursing officers' (and assistants') signature specimens.

##### **5015.10—Manual Signature Specimens**

Before issuing checks, a newly designated disbursing officer must forward manual signature specimens to the agency official responsible for maintaining disbursing officer signature specimen files. Manual signatures on checks must show a reasonably uniform agreement with the specimen signatures on file. If the disbursing officer elects to change his/her signature or if a change in signature occurs as a natural development, the disbursing officer must submit a new specimen signature.

##### **5015.20—Requests for Authority to Use Facsimile Signatures and Submission of Specimens**

A disbursing officer may request authority to use a facsimile signature, if necessary to meet the requirements of Section 5015.10. Such a request is regarded as including an assurance, whether stated or not, that essential security safeguards against unauthorized use of the facsimile signature are provided.

The disbursing officer must process a notice of approval before the facsimile plates are used to sign checks. The facsimile signature plates must be numbered in sequence in the lower left corner beginning with the number 1 unless another system of identification is approved. Any such alternate system must ensure control of the plates.

When a facsimile plate is withdrawn from service and is not to be used again, it must be given to authorized officials for destruction per procedures established by the agency involved. When the plate has been destroyed, a properly executed certificate identifying the specific plate and date of destruction must be given to the disbursing officer and the agency official responsible for maintaining specimen signature files.

#### **5015.30—Designation of Assistant Disbursing Officers and Submission of Signature Specimens**

A disbursing officer may designate an assistant disbursing officer to sign checks drawn on Treasury in the name of the disbursing officer. [Per 31 U.S.C. § 3321 and Treasury Directive 16-36, the CDO is the only official who may designate Fiscal Service disbursing officers.] The disbursing officer forwards the original designation form and specimens of the assistant disbursing officer's manual signature to the agency official responsible for maintaining specimen signature files.

#### **5015.40—Termination or Cancellation of Designation**

Disbursing officers must promptly notify the agency official who designates disbursing officers of the effective date of the designation terminations or cancellations of disbursing officers under their jurisdiction.

### **Section 5020—Specifications and Characteristics of Treasury Checks**

#### **5020.10—General Physical Characteristics**

Blank Treasury checks measure 3-1/4" wide and 7-3/8" long (after bursting and separation from check formats) and are printed on 28-pound paper. The paper used for Treasury checks has a distinct watermark pattern (consisting of both "shaded" and "wire") manufactured in the paper. This pattern is continuous with "U.S. TREASURY" repeated randomly. The watermark design reads both forwards and backwards. The color of the check is multihued, ranging from light blue to pale peach, featuring the Statue of Liberty boldly engraved on the left side of the check and faintly reproduced in the middle of the check.

#### **5020.20—Blank Check Formats**

Disbursing offices may order blank checks in any of the following formats according to their needs:

- Format A—Single check style.
- Format D—Marginally punched, continuous-form single checks. The overall width is 8-1/2 inches, including a 9/16-inch perforated marginal aligning strip on each side for pin feed or over-platen feed devices. These checks are packed in cartons of 1,000, 2,000, or 4,000 checks.
- Format E—Continuous form checks with a check-sized statement on the right. The statement may be preprinted with the check serial number and other information desired by disbursing offices (see subsection 5020.30). The overall width is 15-7/8 inches, including a 9/16-inch perforated marginal aligning strip on each side for pin feed or over-platen feed devices. These checks are packed in cartons of 4,000 checks and statements.
- Format G—Marginally punched, continuous-form checks with a check-sized statement above or below the check. The statement may be preprinted with the check serial number and other information desired by disbursing offices (see subsection 5020.30). The overall width is 8-1/2 inches, including a 9/16-inch perforated marginal aligning strip on each side for pin feed or over-platen feed devices. These checks are packed in cartons of 1,000 or 2,000 checks and statements.

Format GS—A marginally punched sheet of two checks and two statements. The overall size is 8-1/2 inches by 13 inches, including a 9/16-inch perforated marginal aligning strip, with horizontal perforations every 3- 1/4 inches. The disbursing office may opt to have the marginal strips removed before shipping.

- Format H—A marginally punched, continuous form of two checks in tandem. The overall width is 15-7/8 inches, including a 9/16-inch margin on each side for pin feed or over-platen feed devices. The checks do not have any preprinted symbol or serial numbers. A consecutive inventory control number (ICN) is printed at the top of each check. There are 80,000 checks per roll.
- Format HP—These checks are the same as Format H with a horizontal perforation every 13 inches across the overall width of 15-7/8 inches.
- Format I—Marginally punched, continuous-form checks with a statement on the left side. The statement may be preprinted with the check serial number and other information desired by disbursing offices (see subsection 5020.30). The overall width is 15-7/8 inches, including a 9/16-inch perforated marginal aligning strip on each side for pin feed or over- platen feed devices. These checks are packed in cartons of 1,000 or 2,000 checks and statements.
- Format J—A marginally punched, continuous sheet of four checks. The overall size is 8-1/2 inches by 13 inches, including a 9/16-inch marginal aligning strip on each side. The disbursing office may opt to have the marginal strips removed before shipping.
- Format K—A two-up, marginally punched, continuous roll with a statement below the check. The overall width is 15-7/8 inches, including a 9/16-inch perforated marginal aligning strip on each side, with horizontal perforations every 3-1/4 inches between each check and statement. There are 40,000 checks and statements per roll.
- Format M—A one-up, marginally punched sheet with one statement above or below the check. The overall size is 8-1/2 inches by 13 inches, including a 9/16-inch perforated marginal aligning strip on each side. The disbursing office may opt to have the marginal strips removed before shipping.

### **5020.30—Statement Printing Options**

For check formats listed in subsection 5020.20 that have a statement, the statement may be preprinted with the check serial number and other information desired by the disbursing offices, as described by the options in this subsection.

The following statement printing options are available for formats E, G, GS, I, K, and M:

- option A: Number only,
- option B: Personalized imprint only,
- option C: Statement back only,
- option D: Number and personalized imprint,
- option E: Number and statement back,
- option F: Personalized imprint and statement back, and
- option G: Number, personalized imprint, and statement back.

The following formats also are available for testing equipment and software:

- test grid checks in Formats D and J,
- specimen checks in Formats H, HP, and K.

### **5020.40—Check Symbol Numbers**

Checks with serial numbers are preprinted with the four-digit checking account symbol assigned to the disbursing office from which the checks will be issued. The Philadelphia Financial Center's (PFC) Accounting Section (see Contacts) controls and assigns checking account symbol numbers. The checking account symbol number is in the upper right corner of the check, just before the preprinted serial number. These two numbers, separated by a hyphen, constitute the unique check number. The checking account symbol number and related check digit are preprinted in ink in magnetic ink character recognition (MICR) positions 53 through 49.

#### **5020.50—Check Serial Numbers**

Checks are preprinted with a serial number in the upper right corner after a hyphen immediately following the check symbol number. Serial numbers must not be duplicated within the same checking account symbol. Serial numbers for each account symbol begin with 00001000 and continue through 99999999. The serial number and related check digits are preprinted in MICR positions 31 through 23.

When all serial numbers of a check symbol have been used, Fiscal Service will assign a new checking account symbol for the next supply of checks, if necessary. Accordingly, as serial numbers of checks issued approach 99999999, the disbursing officer should notify PFC's Accounting Section (see Contacts) so a new checking account symbol can be assigned before the next supply of blank checks is ordered. When ordering the new check supply, the disbursing officer should allow additional time for the proof to be changed, in addition to the time normally required to print and deliver the checks (see subsections 5025.30 and 5025.40).

#### **5020.60—Emergency Check Stock**

Disbursing offices with high-volume printing equipment using check stock without preprinted check symbol/serial numbers and MICR encoding must have check printing equipment that can print the check symbol/serial numbers and related MICR encoding on the blank check stock. Under emergency situations only, these disbursing offices may use their print systems to produce prenumbered and MICR-encoded check stock for use by other disbursing offices within that agency.

For example, if office "A" has a fire and its entire supply of check symbol 1234 check stock is destroyed, and office "B" has such high-volume printing equipment, then disbursing office "B" can create a limited supply of emergency check symbol 1234 checks for office "A" to last until regular stock is available through normal channels. The emergency check stock created bears check symbol 1234 and check serial numbers in the 90-99 million range, per arrangements with the Accounting Section (see Contacts).

Another example where emergency check stock systems may be used is during unexpected military deployment. Emergency military checks will bear the appropriate check symbol and serial numbers in the 90-99 million range, per agreements with the Accounting Section (see Contacts). Manual signatures for emergency check stock should be submitted to the same agency official responsible for maintaining disbursing office signatures (see subsection 5015.10). The disbursing office must notify the Accounting Section of the check symbol and serial number ranges involved before the creation and use of emergency checks.

Disbursing offices must not use the emergency check stock system to avoid ordering checks through normal channels. Any emergency check stock must be created under the following conditions:

- it must be produced on a print system that has a post/print verification feature to ensure the integrity of the printed and MICR encoded symbol serial numbers, and

internal control procedures must be in place to prevent issuing duplicate payments bearing the same check symbol/serial numbers.

### **5020.70—Transit Number Symbol**

Blank Treasury checks bear transit number symbols preprinted in magnetic ink within the 1/2-inch band provided at the bottom of the document. This number, 00000051, plus the check digit “8”, are in MICR positions 42 through 34. The banking system uses the transit number symbol to route and process items for payment. Disbursing offices should verify the accuracy of these transit number symbols and other preprinted and MICR-encoded information before using or issuing checks.

## **Section 5025—Requisitioning Treasury Checks**

### **5025.10—Contract Information**

The U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO) awards a 5-year contract for printing blank checks and exercises overall control over their procurement, while administrative control is exercised by Treasury's Mission Support Services Branch. After each contract is awarded, the Mission Support Services Branch (see Contacts) issues a notice to all disbursing offices specifying the unit cost of blank checks by type of format and changes to related costs, such as new or revised proofs. Prices are subject to annual changes based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers—Commodities Less Food (CPI), excluding paper and reimbursable postage or transportation costs. Paper prices also are subject to change monthly because of fluctuating costs. This change is based on the BLS Producer Price Indexes Report (BLS code 0913-01) for Offset & Text, Table 6—Producer Price Indexes and Percent Changes for Commodity Groupings and Individual Items.

Current contract information inquiries should be directed to the Mission Support Services Branch (see Contacts).

### **5025.20—Designation of Officials Authorized to Sign Check Requisitions**

Before any check print orders are submitted, the ordering agency must designate one primary and one alternate official as having authority to sign check print orders. Agencies designate these officials by completing a FS Form 1186: Signature File—U.S. Treasury Check Orders, and submitting the completed form to PFC's Accounting Section (see Contacts). These forms may be obtained by contacting the Mission Support Services. The Mission Support Services uses the FS Form 1186 to verify the signature on check print orders and to ensure that only authorized officials requisition checks.

### **5025.30—Print Order Form**

Disbursing offices use GPO 2431: Print Order—Department of the Treasury Paper Check and Proofs (Appendix 1), to order checks, proofs, and revisions to proofs. (Exception—Fiscal Service's Resource Management Division solicits and consolidates the requirements of Fiscal Service Regional Financial Centers on an annual basis and prepares GPO 2431s, as appropriate.)

Current contract prices for check formats and new or revised proofs apply to orders approved by Fiscal Service and received by the contractor up to midnight of the last day of the contract period. All such orders must be delivered within 30 workdays after the contract expires. Disbursing offices must not request that the contractor make deliveries more than 30 workdays after the termination of the contract under which an order is placed. When an order is submitted near the end of a contract period and the disbursing office is

placing an order under that contract, it should allow Fiscal Service a minimum of three workdays to process the order and to deliver it to the contractor before the period expires.

Disbursing offices may submit orders requesting deliveries over a period of time. However, final delivery must be made within 30 days after the contract expires.

When specifying delivery dates, disbursing offices should allow two months for printing time (including approval of the order by Treasury and GPO). They should allow an additional two weeks when a change to the check proof is requested.

#### **5025.40—Check Proofs**

On proof orders that call for a change in the check imprint or format, the Mission Support Services Branch will forward to the administrative office a photo-print proof of the check provided by the contractor. An authorized individual must review and approve the proof. The agency should retain a copy of the proof and must return the original promptly to the Mission Support Services Branch. The approved proof authorizes the contractor to proceed with printing the checks as ordered.

Treasury's Mission Support Services Branch must have in its possession an approved proof before placement of an order for checks.

#### **5025.50—Quantities of Checks**

Disbursing offices should order a supply of checks to last a year, unless there is a good reason to request a supply for a longer or shorter period. They should explain any such reason on GPO 2431 under "Remarks." The minimum amount of any format, except roll stock, is 1,000 checks. Larger quantities must be in multiples of 1,000.

#### **5025.60—Check Numbers**

The initial order for serially numbered checks must specify that the numbers begin with 00001000. All serial number ranges end in xxx999. Subsequent orders must specify serial numbers that follow exactly in sequence as those on preceding orders.

#### **5025.70—Shipping**

The contractor ships checks to the delivery destination designated on GPO 2431 via express package carrier or registered mail if express packages cannot be accepted. However, roll stock is palletized and ships via armored carrier. The contractor sends an advice of shipment notice to the consignee when the order is shipped.

The contractor prepays all shipping charges. These charges are included in the contractor's invoice.

#### **5025.80—Cancellation of Orders**

If production operations have begun, Treasury's Mission Support Services Branch advises the disbursing office of the cost charged. Then, the GPO 2431 requesting the order is canceled, properly notating the amount charged, and is used as the basis for the contractor's invoice to GPO.

When a print order has been canceled, the disbursing office or its administrative office must notify

the Accounting Section (see Contacts).

## **Section 5030—Safekeeping and Control of Blank Check Stock**

### **5030.10—Safekeeping**

Disbursing officers are responsible for strictly protecting blank checks against loss or theft. Procedures should include such security measures as the following:

The level of security required for blank check stock (BCS) storage and construction of a secure storage room or installation of a GSA-approved security container are addressed in the context of the following:

- the level of risk to which BCS is exposed,
- other security provided by the facility within which BCS is located, and
- meeting minimum requirements set forth for the protection of BCS.

Disbursing offices may store BCS in either an appropriately protected GSA-approved security container or in a secure room (see Appendix 2). BCS storage should provide a high standard of security against theft and should prevent damage to checks from moisture, light, and heat.

The container must be protected by volumetric or capacitance intrusion detection devices for which alarms result in appropriate, timely responses. Volumetric devices detect the presence of a body or moving object within a specific area via the use of infrared, microwave, or sonar measurement devices. Capacitance devices detect intruders via the use of measurement devices that detect electrical properties of the human body. Typically, both volumetric and capacitance detection devices are used together to reduce the likelihood of false alarms. Used in concert, these two types of devices can detect relatively harmless intruders, such as mice, while simultaneously indicating that the electrical measurements of the intruders do not indicate human bodies; therefore, no alarm is initiated. Each type of detection device has its strengths and weaknesses, which must be considered in designing a system that makes effective use of both types of technology.

#### **Note:**

- All intrusion detection devices must be connected to a manned, 24-hour monitoring station and must use supervised or secure lines. The monitoring station must be supported by an appropriate, timely response capability.
- If volumetric devices are used, dual technology volumetric intrusion devices are preferred because they minimize the potential for false alarms.

Disbursing offices must restrict access to BCS storage to officially authorized persons only. They must log entry and exit to BCS storage and must maintain the logs for a minimum of one year. Automated access control into and out of the secure area is recommended in lieu of manually maintained logs, but is not mandatory.

Disbursing offices should prohibit smoking, eating, or other activities that could damage BCS in the storage area.

Access controls such as lock combinations or personal identification numbers must immediately be changed when the possibility of compromise exists. Circumstances that warrant combination changes include the following:

- the transfer, retirement, termination, or resignation of a person having the combination or access code,
- installation of new secure storage areas,
- repairs being made to the locking mechanism,
- upon notification that any records containing combinations or access control codes or devices have been lost, stolen, or compromised,
- one year has elapsed since the combination or access control codes were changed.

Access control cards and similar devices must be immediately deactivated any time the individual to whom issued no longer requires access or when the individual retires, resigns, or is terminated.

Intrusion detection devices must be installed in the secure room and must be coupled with an appropriate and timely response capability (for instance, Federal Protective Service, contract security, police, or other designated personnel). Automated assessment capability is acceptable; however, response capability must exist.

Officially designated persons should inspect and lock secure storage containers or areas for BCS storage. Persons so designated should inspect the secure container or storage area before locking and should certify the result of the inspection and the security of storage in a written log.

The disbursing officer or an authorized representative should conduct unannounced inventories of blank checks at irregular intervals. Unannounced inventories should be conducted at least every 60 days. Irregularities should be investigated immediately, and any loss or theft should be reported as prescribed in subsection 5030.20.

#### **5030.20—Loss or Theft**

Immediately upon discovery of lost, missing, or stolen blank checks, the disbursing office must notify, via telephone, the nearest office of the U.S. Secret Service (or other appropriate agency), Fiscal Service's Security Division via the Fiscal Service Service Desk 304-480-7777, and the Accounting Section (see Contacts). The disbursing office should follow up with a letter, fax, or email, or the most expeditious means otherwise available. The follow-up notification must include the following:

- the checking account symbol and serial numbers of the checks involved, and
- a statement giving complete information concerning the circumstances of the lost, missing, or stolen checks. If the loss involves a range of consecutive serially numbered checks, only the beginning and ending serial numbers of the range are needed.

Disbursing officers should report checks that are discovered to be missing, lost, or stolen before issuance (including any items missing from blank check shipments received from the contractor), as voids, per [Volume I, Part 4, Chapter 6000](#), subsection 6040.10, to PFC's Accounting Section (see Contacts).

Disbursing officers using unnumbered check stock (without the preprinted checking account symbol and serial numbers) should report the inventory control numbers of the lost, missing, or stolen checks to the nearest office of the U.S. Secret Service or other appropriate agencies such as local law enforcement. Fiscal Service's Security Division should also be informed of the circumstances of the lost, missing, or stolen checks. They do not have to inform the Accounting Section or report the checks as voids since the checks do not have any check numbers.

#### **5030.30—Quality Control Inspections and Reporting Irregularities**



Immediately before using blank checks, the disbursing office must examine a sample group to ensure the checks are satisfactory and bear correct preprinted information. The checks must have a proper background tint and printing that is clear, complete, and of uniform density with no smears or blotches. The disbursing office must verify preprinted checking account symbols and serial numbers, MICR encoding, and other information to ensure there are no discrepancies.

If discrepancies between preprinted check symbols and serial numbers, or other defects are discovered, the disbursing office must notify Treasury's Mission Support Services Branch, which then notifies the contractor for replacement or credit (providing the number of items involved is large enough to warrant such action). The disbursing office must void and process the irregular checks per [Volume I, Part 4, Chapter 6000](#), Section 6040. It must handle apparent gaps or "skips" within the serial number ranges as possible losses of the items bearing the missing serial numbers, per subsection 5030.20.

#### **5030.40—Disposition of Unused BCS**

When a new disbursing officer takes over the four-digit check symbol checking accounts of his or her predecessor, he or she also takes over the unused BCS. Checks preprinted with check symbol numbers must not be altered nor issued over a different account symbol.

Disbursing offices have been given authority to destroy unused checks locally and to report the destroyed checks as void checks (see [Volume I, Part 4, Chapter 6000](#), Section 6040).

The disbursing offices must destroy unused checks by shredding or incineration. Shredded fragments must not be larger than 1/4-inch width, and Fiscal Service strongly recommends the use of a cross-cut shredder. The disbursing office must complete and submit to the Accounting Section a Certificate of Destruction, signed by the disbursing officer and three witnesses to the actual destruction, each time checks are destroyed. The Certificate of Destruction must show the method and date of destruction, the quantity of checks destroyed, the applicable check symbol number, and the serial numbers of the checks destroyed (beginning and ending numbers for each range of consecutively numbered checks). The disbursing officer should retain a copy of the Certificate of Destruction as part of the blank check inventory control records.

### **Section 5035—Drawing and Inscribing Treasury Checks**

#### **5035.10—Protection of Checks in Process of Preparation**

Disbursing officers must maintain efficient controls for checks in the process of preparation. These controls must be designed to protect against loss or theft and must provide for prompt disclosure of check loss or theft. See subsection 5030.20 for procedures to follow in the event of loss or theft.

#### **5035.15—Postprint Verification of Checks Without Preprinted Check Symbol and Serial Numbers**

Check printing systems using checks without preprinted check symbol and serial numbers must have a postprint verification unit that reads and verifies certain critical data elements after the optical character reader-B (OCR-B) and MICR data have been printed. The data elements read are the OCR-B check symbol, serial number, the dollar amount, and the entire MICR line. The system must internally calculate the check digits for the check symbol and serial number on the MICR line and must verify correctness. It must compare the MICR data with the OCR-B data and both the OCR-B and MICR data with the data from the input tape. If any character fails to verify correctly, the check or checks must be rejected, marked "void-not negotiable," and reprinted correctly at a later time.

## **5035.20—Mechanical Equipment for Drawing Checks**

Disbursing offices should select machinery per its ability to draw checks according to procedures and standards in this chapter. Disbursing offices should not enter requisitions for checks with radical changes in standard forms just to accommodate the peculiarities of a certain machine. In addition, the disbursing office should consider the manufacturer's ability to service the machinery when selecting any equipment.

Disbursing offices should maintain the equipment to produce the best results in writing checks. Adjustments that provide for placement and alignment of the data added to the check must always be in good order. The inking mechanism should receive careful attention. Excessively inked ribbons and worn ribbons should not be used.

### **5035.20a— Requirements Applicable to Check Signing Machines**

Machines that print facsimile signatures on checks must have mechanical features to prevent unauthorized use of the disbursing officer's facsimile signature.

## **5035.25—Quality Standards of Printing**

The printed or written characters of the data added in drawing checks, including the facsimile signature, should have sharp lines, a continuous and homogeneous deposit of ink, and no filling. Also, the characters printed using ribbon technology must not have a pronounced ribbon pattern. Data added in drawing checks must show no appreciable impairment of legibility after being passed through endorsers. Contrast between added printed or written data and the surface tint of the check should ensure high legibility for accurate reading in rapid handling and should serve as a deterrent to alteration.

## **5035.30—General Instructions for Inscribing and Positioning of Data Added to Checks**

The correct position of the date, amount, payee's name, and signature of the disbursing officer is determined by the physical characteristics and layout of the blank check. Disbursing officers must avoid deviations from the normal positioning of this information on checks. If not reprinted on the checks by the contractor, the disbursing office must ensure that the place of issue and the object for which drawn are shown on checks before issuance. To standardize printing and facilitate accuracy verification, words on checks should be inscribed in all uppercase (that is, capital) letters and punctuation should be omitted, except commas used in addresses and to set off names of more than two payees. Spaces that would invite or facilitate alteration and addition must not be left unfilled. Data not essential for issuance and payment should be reduced to a minimum and may appear only to the left of the center of the check, just above the line running completely across the face of the check above the MICR line.

## **5035.35—Inscription of Payee Name and Other Identification Data**

### **5035.35a—Payee's Name**

Checks must be clearly inscribed with the complete payee name to facilitate accurate payee identification at the time of check negotiation. Disbursing offices, and others, that prepare vouchers and schedules on which disbursing offices must rely when preparing checks must write the names in a manner that will ensure proper identification procedures. To ensure correct endorsement and for other customary reasons, the surname of the payee should appear last. The correct order is first name, middle name or initial, and last name. Where the payee has an often-used surname, the use of initials only (such as "J D MILLER" or "R T JONES") in lieu of full given names can cause confusion as to the identity of the rightful payee. When a

payee's legal given name consists of initials only, the words "Initials Only" should be shown after the initials.

In view of the important services provided by banks and merchants that cash Treasury checks, the federal government has a special obligation to see that payees' names, as they appear on checks, contribute to prompt and specific identification of the payees when the checks are presented for cashing or are received by banking institutions for deposit to the payees' accounts. Requirements for inscribing checks drawn to agencies of the federal government are prescribed in [Volume I, Part 5, Chapter 2000](#), Section 2015.

#### **5035.35b—Address**

When checks are to be mailed, the full and complete address of the payee must be entered on the checks or envelopes, including as necessary: rural route numbers, box numbers, house numbers, zip codes, and any other information essential to correct delivery.

#### **5035.35c—Other Identification Data**

Checks drawn to commercial concerns, institutions, grantees, or vendors often require account or invoice numbers and other kinds of identification data, as well as the payee name, in order to be properly applied to the account for which moneys are due. Such identification data must be inscribed on the checks on the basis of voucher-schedules of payments prepared by the agencies per [Volume I, Part 4A, Chapter 2000](#). Disbursing offices must not place identification data in any position on a check where it is visible through the envelope window. In the absence of such data on the voucher-schedules, enclosures (that is, invoices, tear-off coupons, or other forms) containing the identification data may be provided for mailing with the checks.

#### **5035.40—Position of Check Issue Date**

Disbursing offices must write the date of issue in the upper right portion of the check, either above or below the check number.

The date must be written in month (spelled out or abbreviated), day, year sequence.

#### **5035.45—Restriction on Postdating of Checks**

Disbursing offices must not inscribe checks with a date of issue that is later than the date the checks are delivered to the payees. If the checks bear issue dates predetermined in accordance with a time schedule, they must not be delivered to the payees in advance of the scheduled payment date. However, mailed checks should be released to the U.S. Postal Service reasonably in advance of the issue date to allow for transit time.

#### **5035.50—Inscription of Check Amount**

The check amount must be printed per the quality standards prescribed in subsection 5035.25. The amount must be printed in clearly distinguishable type characters. For example, the "1" and "7" must be clearly distinct. In addition, the type should be of a conservative and standard design and of a size to discourage alteration and make any attempts at altering figures clearly evident (OCR-B is recommended). Particular attention should be given to characters that might be susceptible to conversion to a higher figure; for example, altering a "1" to a "7" or a "3" to an "8". The printing should be of large enough size to withstand folding, spindling, and small tears. The check amount data should not be visible through the envelope

window in the address field, since the numbers might confuse U.S. Postal Service address-scanning equipment.

#### **5035.50a—Printing of Dollar Sign**

If the amount is printed once, only in numerical figures, then the dollar sign must be included as part of the amount printing. If the amount is printed twice on the checks (once in numerical figures and the second in alphabetical letters) the dollar sign does not have to be used for the numerical figures, provided these figures are printed within the convenience amount box and all available print sections within the block contain asterisks.

#### **5035.50b—Printing and Positioning of Marginal Amount**

On checks without preprinted amount boxes, the amount of the check should appear in the right-quarter section of the check in the area above the signature of the disbursing officer and below the check number. It should be in horizontal alignment with the name or address of the payee. The amount figures should fill their allotted area completely. No space should be left unfilled that might be susceptible to use for fraudulent insertion.

#### **5035.50c—Inscription of Medial Amount in Body of Checks**

Writing the amount in the body of a check in words (usually feasible when a machine capable of writing words is used) provides the disbursing office and Treasury greater safety against alteration of amount. Therefore, Treasury encourages this practice. However, if the disbursing office determines that a substantial cost savings would result from not writing the medial amount, Treasury permits this.

If the disbursing office determines that substantial cost savings would result from writing the medial amount in figures, either of the following forms may be used: “\$50and75cents” or “\$50and75/100”. No spacing appears within an amount written in either form. Contact the Resource Management Division for guidance (see Contacts).

#### **5035.50d—Maximum Amount for Which Checks Can be Issued**

Disbursing offices must not issue a check in an amount exceeding \$99,999,999.99. When it is necessary to make payment in excess of this amount, the disbursing office must issue two or more checks.

#### **5035.55—Signatures of Disbursing Officers**

Each check issued must bear one of the following:

- the manual signature of the disbursing officer,
- an approved facsimile signature of the disbursing officer, or
- the manual signature of an assistant disbursing officer who has been officially designated as prescribed in subsection 5015.30.

#### **5035.55a—Manual Signatures of Disbursing Officers**

Manual signatures must generally agree with specimens previously submitted to the agency official responsible for maintaining specimen signature files (see subsection 5015.10). Disbursing officers should avoid awkward or unusual conditions that would cause an abnormal signature on the checks. A permanent

dark blue, blue-black, or black ink should be used for manual signatures. The ink should not be subject to fading and should not be readily soluble in water.

#### **5035.55b—Facsimile Signatures**

When facsimile signatures are used, the disbursing officer's approved facsimile signature must be printed on checks in accordance with subsection 5035.20a. The facsimile should appear within a frame or border that conforms to the design adopted by the disbursing officer's department or administrative office.

#### **5035.55c—Manual Signatures of Assistant Disbursing Officers**

Checks drawn by an assistant disbursing officer must be signed by the assistant below the printed, typed, or stamped title of the disbursing officer for whom the assistant disbursing officer is acting, as follows:

(Title of Disbursing Officer)

By \_\_\_\_\_

(Signature of Assistant)

The assistant must abide by subsection 5035.55a for the manual signature of the disbursing officer.

#### **5035.60—Space Provided for Printing in Magnetic Ink**

The standard Treasury check format provides space at the bottom of the check for information encoded in magnetic ink used by banks in proof and payment operations. Disbursing offices must be careful not to enter printed data within the 1/2-inch band at the bottom of the check.

#### **5035.65—Controls to Prevent Release of Imperfect Checks**

Disbursing offices must establish controls to prevent the release of imperfect checks. They should treat checks prepared on defective check stock or bearing erasures, alterations, overprinting, strike-overs, and imperfect letters or figures as spoiled or should void them. Disbursing offices must deface and dispose of imperfect checks as prescribed in [Volume I, Part 4, Chapter 6000](#), Section 6030, to prevent the possibility of their being negotiated.

#### **5035.70—Imperfect Checks Returned by Holders**

If a holder returns an imperfect check, the disbursing office must carefully examine the check to determine:

- if the imperfection may have occurred during the issuance process, or was the result of accidental mutilation after issuance, or
- if the imperfection and circumstances surrounding the return of the check constitute likely evidence of an attempt to alter or fraudulently negotiate the check.

Depending on the circumstances, the disbursing office must take the appropriate action as described in subsection 5035.70a or 5035.70b.

#### **5035.70a—No Apparent Evidence of Attempted Fraud**

If the inspection reveals no basis that the imperfection resulted from an attempt to fraudulently alter the

check, the disbursing office should issue the holder a control check, or an alternate serially numbered check. See [Volume I, Part 4, Chapter 6000](#), Sections 6030, 6040, and 6045, for procedures concerning spoiled and void checks.

#### **5035.70b—Evidence of Possible Fraud**

If a check returned by a holder bears evidence of attempted fraud, the disbursing office must send the check immediately to the nearest office of the U.S. Secret Service with an explanation of how and from whom it was received. The disbursing office also must submit an online unavailable check cancellation transaction to the Treasury Check Information System (TCIS).

#### **Contacts**

***For inquiries concerning contract prices and other contract related matters; shipping costs; notices to cancel orders for blank checks; and notices of problems, defects, or missing items in shipments received from the contractor, contact:***

Department of the Treasury  
Mission Support Services  
Treasury Annex, Room 6400 J  
Pennsylvania Avenue & Madison Pl., NW  
Washington, DC 20220  
Telephone: 202-622-1402  
Email: [Tina.Decker@treasury.gov](mailto:Tina.Decker@treasury.gov)

***Direct requests for assignment of check symbols; requests for and submission of FS Form 1186s; prenotification of check symbol and serial numbers involved in emergency check stock cases; submission of GPO 2431; notification of canceled print orders; and missing, lost, or stolen (before issuance) checks, including items missing from blank check shipments received from the contractor that were not replaced, to:***

Philadelphia Financial Center  
Attention: Accounting Section  
Payment Management  
Bureau of the Fiscal Service  
Department of the Treasury  
PO Box 603  
Bensalem, PA 19020  
Telephone: 215-516-8006  
Email: [shawn.king@fiscal.treasury.gov](mailto:shawn.king@fiscal.treasury.gov)

***Direct requests for GPO 2431 to the agency's printing officer. The printing officer should forward a Portable Document Format (pdf) file of the request to:***

U.S. Government Printing Office  
Mail Stop: CSAPS, Team 2, Room C-817  
732 North Capitol Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20401  
Telephone: 202-512-1239  
Email: [aps-team2@gpo.gov](mailto:aps-team2@gpo.gov)

**Direct matters regarding blank check stock security, loss, or theft to:**

Department of the Treasury  
Bureau of the Fiscal Service  
Security Division  
AC Information and Security Services  
3201 Pennsy Drive, Building E  
Landover, MD 20785  
General information: 304-480-7777  
Report incidents: 304-480-7777

**Direct inquiries concerning all other matters, including requests for approval of the placement of printing on checks and approval of additional printing, to:**

Department of the Treasury  
Bureau of the Fiscal Service  
Payment Management  
Resource Management Division  
3201 Pennsy Drive, Building E  
Landover, MD 20785  
Telephone: 202-874-7126  
Email: [Greg.Gamble@fiscal.treasury.gov](mailto:Greg.Gamble@fiscal.treasury.gov)

**Appendices Listing**

<b>Appendix No.</b>	<b>Form</b>	<b>Title</b>
1	GPO 2431	<a href="#">Print Order</a>
2	-----	<a href="#">Definition of a Secure Room &amp; Vault Area</a>
3	FS Form 1186	<a href="#">Signature File - U.S. Treasury Check Order</a>