

Common NCOA Questions

How does NCOA work?

When a person or business moves, they generally wish to continue to receive their mail at their new location. By filling out a Change of Address form, bills, bank statements, letters, and all other first class mail is forwarded to the new address for a period of one year. This information from the Change of Address form is added to a giant database containing more than 125 million changes of addresses. Through our NCOA service, your database is cross-referenced with the Postal NCOA Database to find moves and then updated with the newest addresses.

How current is the NCOA database?

Address moves appear in the NCOA databases approximately 4 to 6 weeks after the Postal Service is notified.

How long is a change of address kept in the NCOA database?

Changes of addresses are kept in the NCOA database for 4 years. So moves taken place longer than 4 years ago will not come up as an NCOA “match”.

When will the NCOA database NOT find a match?

1. The input address is not a legal Postal address.
2. The person never filled out a Change of Address form.
3. The person filed a temporary move (eg. A college student who moves home for the summer).
4. The person filed a move within the last 4 to 6 weeks.
5. The person moved too long ago (over 4 years) to be in the database.

Does sending my list through NCOA guarantee that I will not receive any returns?

No. In fact, you still may get 5% back or more after using our NCOA Service. The reasons are many. First of all, NCOA is not foolproof: Sometimes people do not fill out a Change of Address Form; Or, they have moved more than 4 years ago, or less than 4 weeks ago. Even more of a problem is the “match” itself. While the addresses are standardized to keep from errors, NCOA also matches on individual or business names. Misspellings of names may cause NCOA to not find a match. Lastly, NCOA is only a Change of Address service. It will not tell you if someone passed away, or a business closed down. In conclusion, NCOA will clean up your list to some extent, but no service will make it perfect.

How often should I update my file?

The Postal Service requires companies to update their files every 95 days to qualify for the automated postage rates. NCOA is one way to update your files. Also, there is another reason to use NCOA often. It is extremely inexpensive compared to sending out a mailing piece to the wrong address. Many companies feel that the savings justify using NCOA before every mailing.

What part do you play in sending my list through NCOA?

To submit your file for NCOA it needs to be formatted a specific way. We will handle this formatting. Also, when your list comes back, we run it through software that uses the information provided by the NCOA database to update your fields. We encourage our customers to use NCOA because we know it will increase their return on investment and make their direct mail more successful.

Call us today and ask to have your list sent through NCOA before every mailing. It is well worth it!