

Civil Rights Issues and Mailing Lists

Extension mailing lists should be developed and maintained as professional business lists. These lists are for the private use of Extension as a means for contacting clientele about programs being offered or to communicate other Extension information. The lists should not be construed as social lists available to the public for their use.

Please be aware that the Penalty Mail Program regulations are still in effect which means that penalty mail regulations prohibit you from sharing these lists with private entities. The regulation states that:

“Mailing lists comprise a system of records established to assist in carrying out the various programs of Cooperative Extension. These mailing lists are for the sole use of Extension personnel and shall not be furnished directly or indirectly to any other person, firm, association, or Federal Government agency. The release of these lists could adversely affect the credibility of Cooperative Extension within the community. Mailing lists are NOT Federal records and, therefore, not covered by the Federal Freedom of Information or Privacy Acts that pertain to Federal records. This longstanding policy of the US Department of Agriculture is based in part on 18 U.S.C. 1902, 7 U.S.C. 472, 7 U.S.C. 1373c, and Title 7 C.R.R., Part O, Subtitle A, Subpart B.”

Lists should be developed which are consistent with the policies which govern such lists in the county or state Extension program. When developing mailing lists the following criteria should be given consideration.

1. Mailing lists should be for the exclusive use of Cooperative Extension, unless permission has been granted by the list recipient for extended use.
2. The salutation should address the individual the way they wish to be known not necessarily using the salutation conventions that may be available via electronic technology. For example persons may not wish to have the Mr. Mrs. Ms., Dr. etc. attached to the mailing list address field.
3. General clientele mailing lists should not be developed which specifically segregate individuals by religious affiliation, color, national origin, age, or disability. Some subject specific programs may require specialized lists to be developed. Insure that such lists are inclusive of all qualified persons within the service area.
4. General mailing lists should be representative of all clientele targeted for the specific Extension program/information being announced.
5. Extension employees should be able to respond to the question – To what extent do you believe or know that this mailing list includes minorities and underserved persons in the service area.
6. Mailing lists should be representative of all ethnic and racial groups within the community or region they are developed for.
7. The conventions and design mechanics used to develop the mailing list are left to each Extension office to determine based on the technologies and applications available to the list developer.