Guide to the Inspection of Printed Products

Manager, Printing Procurement Division
Constitution Square
360 Albert St., 12th Floor
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0S5, CANADA
Guide to the Inspection of Printed Products

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION
2. DEFINITION OF DEFECTS
   2.1 Minor Defect
   2.2 Major Defect
   2.3 Critical Defect
3. INSPECTION OF PRINTING
   3.1 Packaging
   3.2 Selection of Samples
   3.3 Quality of the Printing
   3.4 Paper
   3.5 Finishing Operations
4. INSPECTION OF FORMS
5. INSPECTION OF ENVELOPES
1. INTRODUCTION

The *Guide to the Inspection of Printed Products* was developed by Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC). It is the intent of this document to provide a method by which all customers will be able to inspect printed products purchased through contracting with private sector suppliers.

This guide is provides suggestions related to the inspection of general commercial printing as well as specifics for forms and envelopes.

Please direct any comments or proposed revisions to:

Manager, Printing Procurement Division
Constitution Square
360 Albert St., 12th Floor
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0S5, CANADA
(613)998-0440

2. DEFINITION OF DEFECTS

2.1 Minor Defect

A minor defect is not of great consequence unless present in large numbers. It would normally pass unnoticed by the lay observer. If noticed at all, it would not normally be the source of comment, complaint or inconvenience. Small hickies, slightly grey type or an occasional broken type character would normally fall into this category.

2.2 Major Defect

These are defects which would normally be spotted by the lay observer and could result in a customer complaint. A print containing a major defect is still usable for the purpose intended, but may make the use more difficult than it should be, or may affect the appearance of the printed material. For example, a poor colour match, streaky solids, lack of detail in the halftones, or a loose stitch in a saddle wired book are normally major defects.

2.3 Critical Defect

A critical defect is one which renders the printed material unusable for its intended end-use. Typical examples would be illegible text, transposed text, pages or signatures missing from a publication, or binding which allows the pages to fall out.
3. INSPECTION OF PRINTED MATERIALS

The purpose of this section is to provide general guidance in the inspection of printed material. The inspection procedures outlined in this guide should be performed by a designated person on receipt of each printed job.

3.1 Packaging

- Check that the packages are arranged on skids in a manner which will allow them to be handled at a later date, without damaging the contents.
- Verify that the number of packages received, and quantity in each, equal the quantity ordered.
- Check for exterior damage and examine seals on packages. Exterior damage may indicate interior damage to the contents of packages.
- Check labelling of packages for contract number, title, date, stock number, etc.
- Verify that the packages are the correct size for the contents. Empty spaces in the packages can allow the material inside to move about resulting in damage.

3.2 Selection of Samples

Care must be taken to ensure that samples are chosen randomly from throughout the entire shipment. Some examples of sample size are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shipment Size</th>
<th>Number of Samples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 1,000</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,001 - 5,000</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,001 - 25,000</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25,001+</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Label samples with box or location number (e.g., sample 1 from box 1). This will facilitate further inspections or the quarantining of part of a shipment.

3.3 Quality of the Printing

- Do you have a complete piece or, for example, are pages missing?
- Is the printing clean, sharp, legible and consistent from sample to sample?
- Is there offsetting from copy to copy (ink transferring from one sheet of paper onto the next one in the stack of paper or book)?
- Is there scumming (ink spots in what should be clear areas)?
- Is there smudging of the printed image?
- Are there hickies (small white spots in the printed image) or extraneous markings (any marks which should not be there, e.g., oil, ink glue) on the printed material?
- Is the ink colour correct? Is it consistent from sample to sample?
- Is the printed image aligned with the edge of the paper? (misalignment is known as skew)
- Is the overall printed image aligned from page to page?
- In multi-colour solid printing, are the colours in proper registration?
- In process colour or halftone printing, is the printed image a good reproduction of the original material?
- Do the halftones contain mottles, scratches, broken screens, holes, plugging, etc.?
- Is the type plugging (filling-in of characters; e.g., e, 0)?

3.4 Paper

- Does the paper feel and look like the paper requested?
- Are there any colour shade variations within one sample or from sample to sample?
- Are there any dirt or specks on the paper?
- Does the paper surface have ruptures, creases or tears?

3.5 Finishing Operations

- Check that all samples have been trimmed to the size required.
- Check that all edges are clean and even.
- Check that any folding has been done properly and that the folds are at the proper positions.
- Check that any drilling or hole punching is complete and clean.
- Check that all staples or stitches are secure and in the correct position.
- Check the spine edges for excess glue on adhesive bound publications.
- Check that the binding of publications has been done securely.

4. INSPECTION OF FORMS

Besides the general inspection points applicable to all printed materials, there are some things unique to the inspection of forms, i.e., snap-sets, flat, single and multi-part forms.

- Sequentially numbered forms can be removed for inspection but must be returned, unused, to the same place in the same package after inspection.
- Ensure that all forms have been trimmed to the correct size and that the cut edges are clean and even.
- Ensure that all parts of a snap-set are firmly attached to the other parts.
- Ensure that the perforations are properly positioned, and that the perforations are strong enough to hold all parts and weak enough to snap apart without tearing forms.
- For carbon interleaved forms, ensure that the carbon is face down and as requested on the requisition (weight, colour, type).
- Check the positioning of the image from part to part.
• Check adhesion strength of forms that are padded.
• Check quality of copies for multi-part forms
  o With a ball-point pen and typewriter, fill in some sample text on each form.
  o Visually inspect all copies, ensuring that both the handwritten and typed image has transferred legibly.
  o Check the samples’ positioning on the copies and compare with the top form.

5. INSPECTION OF ENVELOPES

Besides the general inspection points applicable to all printed materials, there are some things unique to the inspection of envelopes.

• Check that the envelopes lie flat and are free from distortion.
• Check that the dimensions are correct and consistent.
• Check that windows are the correct size, position and made of the right material.
• Check that the flap opening and the folds are located as requested.
• Check that the flaps are properly glued and without excess glue.
• Peel apart the two layers of the pre-sealed seams. If this ruptures the paper, the seams are acceptable.
• If the envelopes are to be used on mechanical inserters, check that the construction of the seams and window will not interfere with the operation.
• Ensure that the envelopes are packaged in such a way that when stored, they will remain flat.

During inspection defects may be found in some or in all cartons or packages. If so, pull other samples from cartons or packages adjoining those from which the original sampling was done. This extra sampling will help to determine the extent of the defects.

Small or minor defects may, or may not, necessitate the intervention of the contracting officer depending on the extent of the defects. Major or critical defects should be reported to the contracting officer immediately so corrective action can be taken. Since defects could be sufficient to require a job to be reprinted, the material should not be distributed until a decision has been agreed to regarding the matter.

If there are no serious defects found during these preliminary tests, then the shipment is probably acceptable.