



Certified Level Standards

This document gives an overview of the key metrics needed to meet Certified level of trust. The below values are maximum thresholds for membership in good standing. Any data metric in excess of these thresholds will be considered out of compliance with Certified level standards

Windows Live Sender Reputation Data	Both group and individual ip addresses are evaluated for compliance with the standard. Groups and IP addresses are considered to be compliant with this standard if the percent voted spam is less than 50%.			
Hotmail: Complaint Rate (30 day average)	Volume Sent: to 2 million 2.9%	Volume Sent: 2 million to 10 million 1.8%	Volume Sent: 10 million to 85 million 0.8%	Volume Sent: 85 million plus 0.4%
Yahoo!: Complaint Rate (30 day average)	Volume Sent: to 5 million 2.0%	Volume Sent: 5 million to 20 million 1.5%	Volume Sent: 20 million to 100 million 1.0%	Volume Sent: 100 million plus 0.8%
Comcast Complaint Rate (30 day average)	Volume Sent: to 5 million 1.1%	Volume Sent: 5 million to 20 million 0.6%		Volume Sent: 20 million plus 0.2%
Source B Complaint Rate (30 day average)	Volume Sent: to 92,000 1.1%	Volume Sent: over 92,000 0.35%		
SpamCop: Complaints / Sender Base Volume (30 day average)	1 per million			
Sender Score: Unknown User Rate (30 day average)	10%			
Spam Traps	1 Critical trap hit 5 Significant trap hits			
Blacklists (tier one DNSBLs) (30 day average)	1 Critical listing 2 Significant listings			





How Key Metrics Are Determined

Windows Live Sender Reputation Data

Windows Live Sender Reputation Data is reflective of recipients voting whether the mail that they receive is "junk" or "not junk". If the total rate of mail classified as "junk" for either the IP Address or for the IP Group is greater than or equal to 50%, suspension may occur.

Hotmail Complaint Rate

Hotmail Complaint Rate is determined by dividing the number of complaints generated at Hotmail by the volume of mail accepted for delivery at Hotmail. Hotmail provides actual accepted volume and actual complaint volume for this calculation.

Source B Complaint Rates

The Source B Complaint Rates are determined by dividing the number of complaints generated by the volume of mail accepted for delivery at that source. Source B provides actual accepted volume and actual complaint volume for this calculation.

SpamCop Complaints

SpamCop provides actual complaint volume. Actual SpamCop complaint volume is divided by the Sender Base reported mailing volume to calculate the SpamCop Complaint rate. SenderBase mailing volume is an estimated volume based on sending volume seen by appliances around the world and queries to the SpamCop database.

Unknown User Rate

An 'unknown user' or 'no such user' or 'invalid address' is a 550 5.1.1 error message that will appear in your bounce logs. The Unknown User rate is calculated by dividing the number of these transactions as reported by Source B by the actual volume of mail attempted for delivery at Source B.

Spam Traps

Spam trap hits are reported on an absolute volume basis.





Blacklists

A listing is defined as a unique occurrence on a Blacklist. Senders listed multiple times on the same blacklist will be assessed based on number of occurrences.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do the program standards ever change?

Return Path Certification periodically reviews program standards to ensure it remains the highest quality program of its kind, and one that continues to meet the needs of both senders and receivers. Updates to the program standards may accommodate changes in the email industry, such as to account for the rise of peer-initiated email, or when a new blacklist becomes available. Important industry standards that are adopted by our receiver network may also precipitate an update to the program standards. Updates are seldom and senders are given adequate notice, so when the standards do change, there are no surprises.

How do you know so much about my email?

Return Path has developed the industry's largest collaborative email reputation data network. Participating ISPs and filtering companies contribute data about your email into our data network. This data comes from entities such as Microsoft, Yahoo!, Lashback, as well as additional anonymous sources that Return Path is obligated to keep confidential. Other data is obtained from public sources such as blacklists.

What data is considered for Certified?

Unless specifically noted as otherwise, all applicable data sources are averaged and totaled (as applicable) for all data collected in the previous 30 days. This accounts for daily variation in the data while capturing recent trends.





How are complaint rates designated?

Complaint rates are designated by the sender's volume tier, based on monthly email volume. Rates vary by receiver and are based on statistical analysis that accounts for, among other things, how a receiver solicits complaints.

Why do high volume senders have lower allowable complaint rates?

Higher-volume senders have lower allowable complaint rates. This is because higher volume senders have the potential to cause greater collateral damage to receivers. Receivers care about small increases in complaint rates for high volume senders because they have the potential to generate a significant number of complaints. Consequently, higher volume senders must behave more responsibly to minimize both absolute and relative complaints.

How does Return Path enforce complaint rates even when the corresponding volume is low?

Complaint rates are still enforced, but exceptions are made when there is a corresponding low volume of email. Each metric and client are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and in low volume instances we will make exceptions where warranted and applicable.

What is Windows Live Sender Reputation Data?

Windows Live Sender Reputation Data is based on votes solicited from email recipients at Hotmail. Hotmail resends a sampling of email to recipients and asks if it was "junk" or "not junk". Understanding why your recipients might consider your mail to be "junk" or complain about your mail can drive changes to your email program that reduce complaints overall.

How can I determine my allowable complaint rate?

Your allowable complaint rate is based on the number of messages you attempt to send to Source B or Hotmail. Higher attempted mail volumes have lower allowable complaint rates. Your attempted mail volume includes all mail that you send to the receiver for processing and does not take into consideration bounces and other such reasons that mail is rejected.

Your Daily Compliance Report includes an IP Group Total row that indicates the total IP volume sent to each of the data sources. Your allowable complaint rate for that source is determined by this total volume. When the volume is approaching the next higher total volume category, a





warning is noted in the Report. If the volume category actually changes, you will be subject to a new complaint rate applicable to the new volume.

If Unsubscribe data is for Informational purposes only, when and why should I care?

All certified senders are responsible for providing an unsubscribe option in applicable mail, and for ensuring that the unsubscribe channel is functional. During your application, and periodically thereafter, Return Path confirms your unsubscribe functionality by subscribing and then unsubscribing from your list. We test to ensure accessibility, functionality, and results in timely removal of the recipient from receiving additional email from the sender. Sender certification provides informational data regarding your Unsubscribe functionality in the form of a score. The Unsubscribe Score is on a scale of 0 to 100 and is based on the last 90 days of observed behavior. Scores of 90-100 typically mean the sender is honoring unsubscribe requests in a timely manner. This data is provided for informational use only and is not tied to definite compliance action. However, scores that fall below 90 may precipitate a manual review of your unsubscribe functionality.

Under what circumstances are IPs terminated from the program?

If a sender's IP is not compliant with any of the quantitative requirements, it is subject to suspension. Excessive suspension can result in removal of all IPs from the program. Violations of the qualitative standards result in removal of the IP address from the Certified list. Severe violations will be investigated on a case by case basis and may result in removal from the Safe list as well.

When and how are IPs enabled on the Certified whitelist?

Any IP address that meets the qualitative requirements of the program will be added to Certified. IP addresses are added and/or removed from the Certified list automatically. IPs are monitored by Standards and Security team and IPs that again meet the standards of the Certified list will be enabled following a review of the data. Please do not contact the Standards and Security team to specifically request an IP be enabled on the Certified list.

