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(54) **MAIL ENVELOPE**

BRIEFUMSCHLAG

AMELIORATIONS APPORTEES A UNE ENVELOPPE POSTALE

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Description

Background of the invention

[0001] The present invention relates to an improved mail envelope and, in particular, an envelope for holding herein letters or messages requiring an acknowledgment receipt confirmation, such as, for example, fiscal documents, bills, legal acts or the like, for which it would be expedient, necessary or indispensable to demonstrate an actually performed delivery.

[0002] As is known, for sending "registered" or "insured" mail standard envelopes are used to which, if necessary, are coupled cards, usually called "acknowledgments of receipt" or "return receipts" which, as delivered to the addressee or other appointed parties, are signed, completed with the receipt date, stamped by the post office and then returned to the sender to prove a performed delivery.

[0003] In this field are also known and frequently used so-called "pre-enveloped" or "selfenveloped" forms, generally comprising a form element folded one or more times on horizontal and/or vertical lines, printed as a single piece and then closed on three sides thereof, in which are provided, for example: a payment bill, a part for the sender communications and a part forming the front of the cover or sealed letter and usually bearing both the sender and addressee data.

[0004] Such an envelope has been recently modified by forming on its rear, (with the envelope in a closed condition), a pre-etched portion defining a removable pre-printed "acknowledgment of receipt" to be returned to the sender. This type of form, which provides practical multifacturing, since it could be made by nearly fully mechanized continuous printing and forming methods, has been anyhow updated to meet recent data privacy requirements, i.e. to prevent the use of envelopes or covers in which a removal of a portion whereof would expose personal data to the view. Actually, the characteristics of these prior forms do not meet both privacy rules and power authority dispositions related to bills or invoices for consumes and services.

[0005] To the above a further requirement must be added of unequivocally proving both a receipt of the letter and its effective contents, for avoiding possible disputes which, for documents related to administrative insurance and judicial fields, could be very objectable. In fact, frequently a signed receipt of "return receipt" documents is released by members of a family, secretaries, appointed porters, thereby rendering an effective identification of an advice data very difficult.

[0006] Thus, it would be necessary to prove the receipt both of an envelope or cover and the contents thereof, while fully meeting the personal data privacy law requirements both in Italy and other countries.

[0007] The aim of the invention is just to meet the above mentioned requirements.

[0008] In some cases it could be required to have a

separable acknowledgment of receipt element having a greater substance than the substance of the envelope forming die cut element.

Summary of the invention

[0009] According to one aspect of the present invention, the above requirements and aim are solved by an improved mail envelope presenting the features set forth in claim 1.

The patent CH 678 418 A discloses a postal envelope comprising a separable acknowledgment of receipt (10) which is integrated in the anterior side or address side thereof, may be easily written, and is easily detachable while leaving in the envelope a window (5) which is covered by an opaque covering sheet (6) which latter may be a copying one.

In another embodiment behind said covering sheet (6) is placed a further covering self-copying sheet (14).

Therefore, the addressee's address is to be written on the envelope.

This leads to two drawbacks:

- 1) the address onto the letter will be a copied address and, therefore, a not elegant and respectful approach with the address, and
- 2) the necessary separated writing of

- the letter text onto the letters, and
- the address onto the envelopes

slows down the necessary total writing time and does not allow to make the best of the modern computerized facilities. Furthermore, it can not be avoided the possibility to insert a letter for a given addressee in the envelope on which the address of another addressee is written. After having closed the envelope there is no possibility to check the correctness between said given letter and the addressee written on the envelope, that is on the separable acknowledgment of receipt.

This is an important disadvantage when considering that in several public offices it is usual to write and send daily between 1.000 and 5.000 letters or more.

Furthermore, the envelopes disclosed in CH 678 418 A do not allow a reading of bar-codes applied onto the letter inserted into said envelopes because said bar-codes would not be reached by a reading laser ray. A bar-code reading would advantageously allow for example a particularly quick letter writing of complicated texts by using computerized facilities.

According to the main teaching of this patent a separable acknowledgment of receipt is only provided in the envelope address side, and more precisely in an area including the address area because the addressee's address is to be written (onto said separable acknowledgment of receipt) at the address area provided to this pur-

pose on the postal envelopes.

The size of said separable acknowledgment of receipt on the address side and the substance of the suggested paper (even if a substance of 90 g/m² instead of the usual 80g/m² is proposed) do not allow to use the proposed separable acknowledgment of receipt as a mail receipt to be stamped and returned back by mail to the sender.

[0010] Within the scope of this aim, a further object of the invention is to provide an envelope including a separable acknowledgment of receipt element or sheet having a substance greater than that of the envelope forming die cut element. This scope is achieved with the feature stated in claim 3.

Brief description of the drawings

[0011] The mail envelope according to the present invention will be hereinbelow disclosed, by way of several indicative but not limitative examples, and with reference to the accompanying drawings, where:

Figure 1 is a view of the front portion of the envelope, showing both the zone provided for receiving the addressee address and the "acknowledgment of receipt" forming portion;

Figure 2 is a detail view of the components of the "acknowledgment of receipt" portion of the envelope shown in figure 1;

Figure 3 illustrates an example of an envelope including a vertical "acknowledgment of receipt" portion;

Figure 4 illustrates an example of an envelope including a rear "acknowledgment of receipt portion";

Figure 5 illustrates a top plan view of a paper die-cut element for forming a modified embodiment of the subject improved envelope; and

Figure 6 illustrates a rear perspective view of an envelope made by the die-cut element shown in figure 5.

Description of the preferred embodiments

[0012] As shown in the accompanying figures, the present invention consists of an envelope (1) having any desired shapes and size, made of a paper or other material, forming the outer cover for a letter, i.e. any desired documents (2), said envelope (1) comprising at least a part of the surface thereof delimited to define an "acknowledgment of receipt" or receipt portion (3) also having any desired shapes and size, and designed for bearing thereon all or a portion of the information necessary to identify the sender, the addressee and the spaces to be marked with a signature, date and other optional information, by the person receiving the envelope.

[0013] The body of the envelope (1) is provided, at said "acknowledgment of receipt" or receipt portion (3), with perimetrical pre-etched or weakened portions (3a),

as well as a marked corner (3b) for facilitating the removal of said acknowledgment of receipt or receipt portion (3) from the envelope body, as necessary; moreover, at said "acknowledgment of receipt" or receipt portion (3), inside the body of the envelope (1), an opaque copying sheet (4) designed to fully conceal the zone corresponding to the surface of the document (2) held inside the envelope is provided; the bottom surface of the opaque sheet arranged under the "acknowledgment receipt" or receipt portion (3) comprising, at the bottom thereof, a copying layer responsive to the pressure of a writing instrument. Said opaque sheet (4) can comprise a plastics material, for example polystyrene or the like, or a chemical paper sheet, or a sheet made of a copying material such as a "carbon paper" material, having suitable size, weight and strength characteristics. Advantageously, the mentioned "acknowledgment of receipt" or receipt portion (3) has such a size and substance to provide a removable card. Further advantageously, both the "acknowledgment of receipt" or receipt portion (3) and the opaque copying sheet (4) would have a size and shape related to the characteristics of the envelope therewith they will form an integrating part. Advantageously, the enveloped document will be imprinted in that zone thereof adjoining the region defined by the die-cut window (5) of the envelope (1), which region is usually left blank and unprinted, and, accordingly, is adapted to bear the information provided on the acknowledgment of receipt or receipt portion (3), including the signature of the party receiving the letter as well as the receipt date.

[0014] The data printed both on the envelope and document would comprise all of the desired personal data, including the address and registry specific date, reference codes, reasons and anything other necessary for advice purposes. If from 1,000 to 5,000 letters per day are sent, then integrated laser printing information and automatic enveloping systems will be used, designed to print both on the document to be sent and on the envelope therefor the data held in a database. The operations for printing the document, printing the envelope and closing said envelope are of sequential type and comprise a single operating cycle and, accordingly, no error will occur in printing the data related to the document and envelope, since they will be taken from the data base for each cycle. This technical solution allows to confirm the definition of "impossibility of mismatching errors" as conventionally used in this field. In the case of greater volume daily deliveries, on the other hand, a different operating method will be carried out, providing to use a bar-code printed on the document to be put into the envelope near the personal data zone, preferably, though not exclusively, just above the latter; the bar-code printed on the document will be exposed through the envelope die-cut window after having introduced the document into the envelope and, accordingly, it can be seen, read-out and interpreted by suitable instruments. Said bar code printed on said document can be seen

through the addressee window or through a suitable window (5a) specifically designed for highlighting it. This code allows to access a database holding all the data to be printed on the envelope, so as to customize said envelope even after the closure thereof, without any error possibilities. As included, the window (5a) for highlighting the bar code will be arranged, preferably, though not exclusively, on the front of the envelope above the addressee window.

[0015] Some operating embodiments of the improved mail envelope according to the present invention will be hereinbelow disclosed by way of an indicative but not limitative example.

Example No. 1

[0016]

Size: An envelope designed for holding one or more UNI 4 standard size sheets as differently folded, for example of 110x230 mm, 160x230 mm, 230x330 mm and so on size.

Material: Manual use paper with substances varying depending on requirements, starting from 80 grams/m² to high substances of the order of 120/130 grams/m².

An opaque copying sheet: A polystyrene sheet of a Dow Window type film printed on a side by a black ink and carbonated on the other one.

Working: Printing either before or after its machine packaging.

Example No. 2

[0017]

Size: An envelope designed for holding one or more UNI 4 standard size sheets as differently folded, for example of 110x230 mm, 160x230 mm, 230x330 mm and so on size.

Material: Manual use paper with substances varying depending on requirements, starting from 80 grams/m² to high substances of the order of 120/130 grams/m².

An opaque copying sheet: Chemical paper sheet.

Working: Printing either before or after its machine packaging.

Example No. 3

[0018]

Size: An envelope designed for holding one or more UNI 4 standard size sheets as differently folded, for example of 110x230 mm, 160x230 mm, 230x330 mm and so on size.

Material: Manual use paper with substances varying depending on requirements, starting from 80

grams/m² to high substances of the order of 120/130 grams/m².

An opaque copying sheet: A plastics material sheet metalized on a side and carbonated on the other.

[0019] From the above disclosure and as shown in the accompanying drawings, the operation of the envelope according to the present invention would be self evident, which operation would be anyhow herein disclosed by way of an indicative but not limitative example:

First Step: The surface of the envelope (1) is pre-printed, based on the information provided on the document to be included, both at the "acknowledgment of receipt" or receipt portion (3) and at other points with other information useful or necessary for identifying and routing it, and into said envelope the document to be sent to the addressee will be introduced.

Second Step: Upon arriving at destination, the envelope will be received by the receiving party which will appose the date and signature and will sign in the spaces provided for signing the "acknowledgment of receipt" or receipt portion (3) thereby imprinting, owing to the provision of the underlaying opaque copying sheet, that same information on the surface of the document held herein; then the mailer will remove the duly compiled "acknowledgment of receipt" or receipt portion (3).

[0020] Even if the use of the subject envelope is a mainly mechanized one, considering the provided volumes, said envelope could anyhow be properly used even outside of a mechanized mailing managing system, and it could also include a blank or neutral acknowledgment of receipt or receipt portion. In both embodiments, the improved envelope according to the present invention can likewise be used for a manual delivery, if necessary to achieve a receipt proving a performed delivery.

Reference is now made to the example shown in figures 5 and 6, in which, as a paper die-cut sheet 1A for forming the envelope 1, it is possible to choose a conventional substance in grams for example of 150g/m² whereas for the additional die-cut element 10 a sheet having a substance in grams of 80 g/m² could be chosen. The additional die-cut element 10 would be preferably provided with a surface substantially equal to that enclosed by the pre-etched frame 3a defining the separable sheet 3. The coupling of the additional sheet 10 in the pre-etched area 3a is carried out, for example, by an adhesive applied on the additional die-cut element 10 and/or on the envelope 1 forming die-cut sheet or element. In the shown example, accordingly, the composite sheet 11 would have a substance, in grams, of 150 + 80 = 230 g/m².

With this embodiment the further advantage is obtained

that it is provided a high substance separable sheet element without the need of simultaneously increasing the substance of the envelope forming paper die-cut element. A further advantage is that the additional die-cut element can be performed during the automatic processing for forming the envelopes.

[0021] The envelope according to the invention can have any required shape and size, and, moreover, also the "acknowledgment of receipt" or receipt portion and corresponding opaque copying sheet could also have any desired shape and size and be arranged at any desired point of said envelope, without departing from the scope of the invention as indicatively disclosed and illustrated, and hereinbelow claimed.

Claims

1. Mail envelope (1) comprising in the envelope body a detachable acknowledgment receipt (3) defined by a pre-etched frame (3a) and provided with an underlying copying sheet (4) for simultaneously writing data such as signature of acknowledgement of receipt onto said acknowledgment receipt and the letter (2) inserted into the envelope,
characterized in that the following feature combination is provided:

- i. said acknowledgment receipt (3) is provided in an envelope area which is different from the area provided for writing the address onto the envelope, either onto the envelope front side or the envelope back side,
- ii. in the envelope in the area provided for writing the address a first die-cut window (5) is provided, which is closed by an underlying transparent sheet allowing reading of the address onto the letter (2) inside the envelope (1),
- iii. said first transparent window (5) is also provided for laser reading a bar code information written onto the letter (2) inside the envelope (1), or
- iv. a second transparent window (5a) is provided in said envelope

- (1) for laser reading a bar code information written onto the letter
(2) inside the envelope (1).

2. Mail envelope according to claim 1, **characterized in that** said second window (5a) is placed, preferably above said first window (5) adjacent to or at a distance from the latter (5).

3. Mail envelope according to claim 1, **characterized in that** to said detachable acknowledgment receipt (3) an additional die-cut element (10) having substantially the same size is bonded, for example

glued.

Patentansprüche

1. Briefumschlag (1), der im Umschlagkörper einen ablösbaren Empfangsschein (3) enthält, der durch einen vorgeschwächten Rahmen (3a) bestimmt und mit einem unterliegenden Kopierblatt (4) zum gleichzeitigen Beschriften von Daten wie die Unterschrift auf den genannten Empfangsschein sowie auf den in den Umschlag eingelegten Brief (2) versehen ist,

dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass

die folgende Merkmalkombination vorgesehen ist:

- i. der genannte Empfangsschein (3) ist in einer Umschlagfläche vorgesehen, die verschieden als die Umschlagfläche ist, die zum Schreiben der Adresse auf den Umschlag ist, und zwar entweder auf der Umschlagvorderseite oder auf der Umschlagrückseite,
- ii. im Umschlag, in der zum Schreiben der Adresse vorgesehenen Umschlagfläche ist ein erstes ausgeschnittenes Fenster (5) vorgesehen, das durch ein unterstehendes durchsichtiges Blatt geschlossen ist, das es ermöglicht, die Adresse auf dem sich im Umschlag (1) befindenden Brief (2) zu lesen,
- iii. das genannte erste durchsichtige Fenster (5) ist ebenfalls zum Laser-Lesen der Information eines Balkencodes vorgesehen, die auf dem sich im Briefumschlag (1) befindenden Brief (2) befindet, oder
- iv. ein zweites durchsichtiges Fenster (5a) ist im genannten Umschlag (1) zum Laser-Lesen einer auf dem sich im Umschlag (1) befindenden Brief (2) geschriebenen Balkencodinformation vorgesehen.

2. Briefumschlag nach Anspruch 1, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** das genannte zweite Fenster (5a) vorzugsweise oberhalb des genannten ersten Fensters (5) neben dem letzteren oder zu einem bestimmten Abstand vom letzteren (5) vorgesehen ist.

3. Briefumschlag nach Anspruch 1, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** mit dem genannten ablösbaren Empfangsschein (3) ein zusätzliches gestanztes Papierstück verbunden z.B. geklebt ist, das im wesentlichen die gleiche Größe aufweist.

Revendications

1. Enveloppe postale (1) comprenant, dans le corps de l'enveloppe, un accusé de réception (3) détacha-

ble défini par un cadre préimprimé (3a) et muni d'une feuille de copie sous-jacente (4) permettant d'écrire simultanément les données telles que la signature de l'accusé de réception sur ledit accusé de réception et la lettre (2) insérée dans l'enveloppe, 5

caractérisée en ce que la combinaison de caractéristiques suivante est fournie:

i. ledit accusé de réception (3) apparaît dans une partie de l'enveloppe autre que la partie prévue pour écrire l'adresse sur l'enveloppe, ou sur l'avant de l'enveloppe, ou sur l'arrière de l'enveloppe; 10

ii. il y a, sur l'enveloppe, dans la partie prévue pour écrire l'adresse, une première fenêtre (5) découpée à l'emporte-pièce qui est fermée par une feuille transparente sous-jacente permettant de lire l'adresse figurant sur la lettre (2) placée à l'intérieur de l'enveloppe (1); 15 20

iii. ladite première fenêtre transparente (5) permet également de lire au laser les informations de code-barres écrites sur la lettre (2) placée à l'intérieur de l'enveloppe (1) ou 25

iv. il y a une seconde fenêtre transparente (5a) dans ladite enveloppe (1) qui permet de lire au laser les informations de code-barres écrites sur la lettre (2) placée à l'intérieur de l'enveloppe (1). 30

2. Enveloppe postale selon la revendication 1, **caractérisée en ce que** ladite seconde fenêtre (5a) est de préférence placée au-dessus de ladite première fenêtre (5) de manière adjacente à cette dernière (5) ou à une certaine distance de cette dernière (5). 35

3. Enveloppe postale selon la revendication 1, **caractérisée en ce que** un élément découpé à l'emporte-pièce (10) supplémentaire est attaché, par exemple collé, audit accusé de réception détachable (3), cet élément étant essentiellement de la même taille. 40

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