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(54) **MAILING ENVELOPE**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

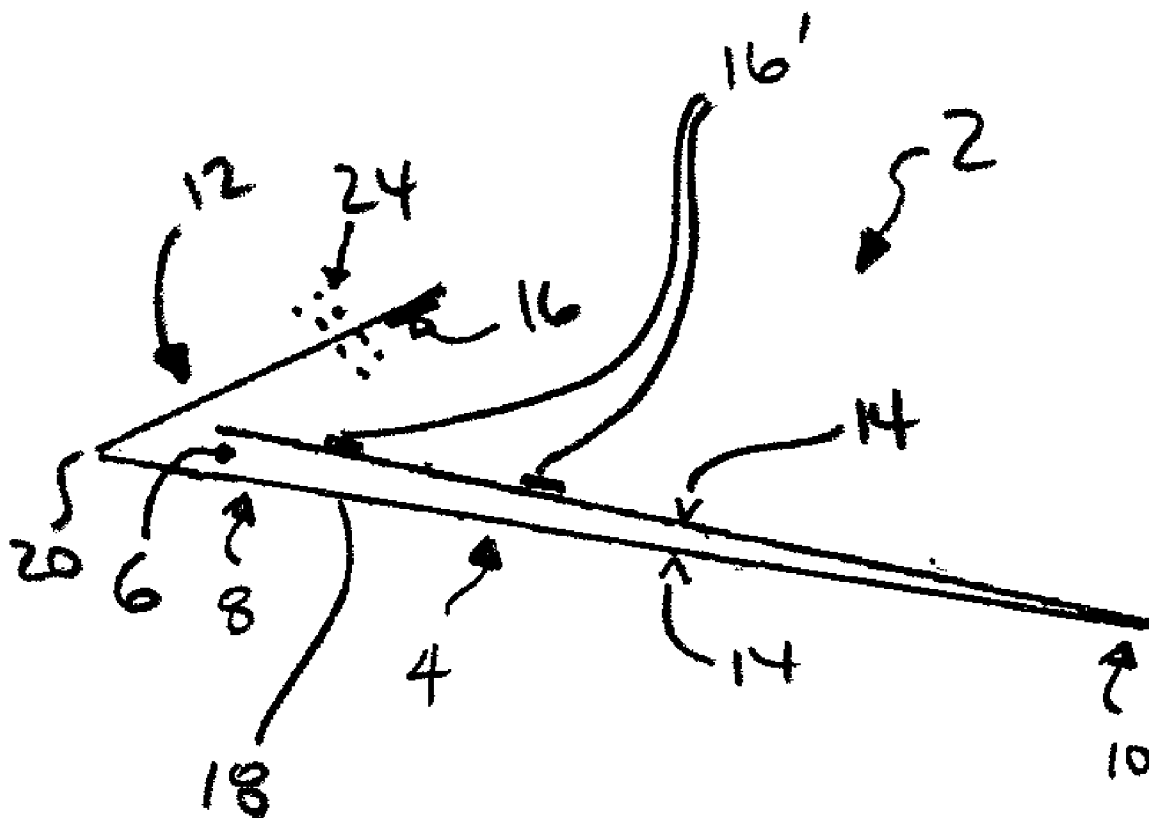
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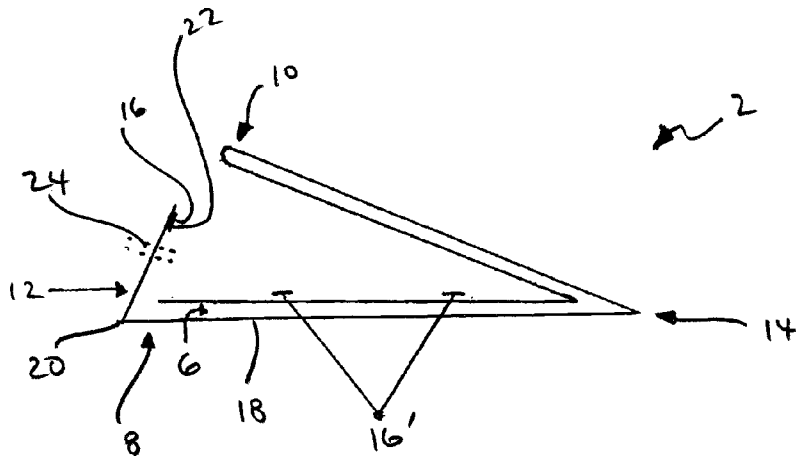
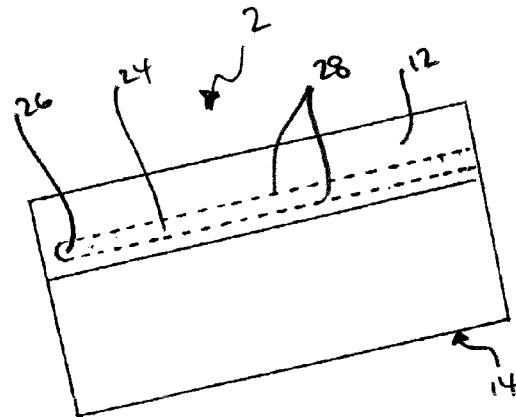
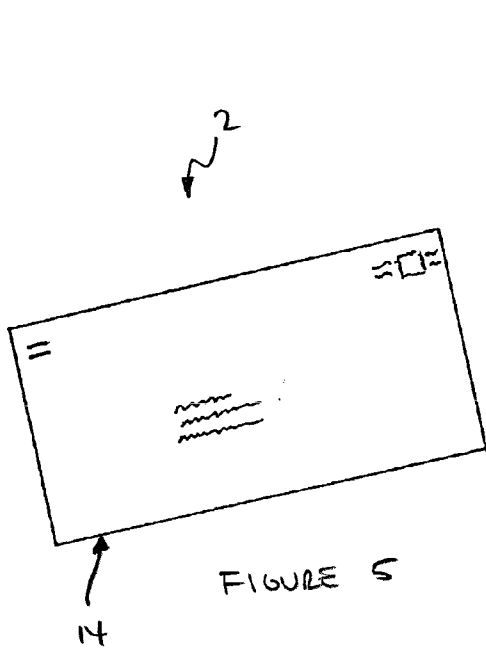
A mailing envelope comprising a sleeve with an opening at open end and a closed end, a closure associated with the opening at the open end, an envelope fold line intermediate the open end and the closed end when the envelope is in a flat configuration and one or more adhesive areas for at least partially maintaining the envelope in a folded configuration. Also, a method for packaging one or more sheets and/or components in the envelope.

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MAILING ENVELOPE

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to the field of mailing envelopes, and more particularly mailing envelopes for one or more sheets of paper and/or multiple components to be mailed.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Mailing papers, particularly through the United States Postal Service, creates a number of options with respective costs.

[0003] For example, mailing 1 to 10 or more sheets of 8½ by 11 inch paper can be done with a standard size business envelope, such as a type 10 envelope which is usually 4⅞ by 9½ inches, with the sheet(s) folded into thirds. Mailing this type of envelope is priced by weight, with the standard first class rate currently being \$0.44 for a one ounce regular envelope. Alternatively, the same 1-10 or more sheets can be placed into a flat open-end envelope that is 9 by 12 inches. Mailing this type of envelope, however, is designated a “large envelope” and as such incurs additional postage, with the standard first class rate currently being \$0.88 for a one ounce large envelope.

[0004] In this regard, current Postal regulations limit the size of regular envelopes to 6½ by 11½ inches, with envelopes having larger dimensions being charged the higher rates set for “large envelopes.” While these added costs for large envelopes are not very significant when such large envelopes are rarely used, the costs are much more significant when mass mailings or sortation issues are involved.

[0005] Of course, in deciding on the envelope to use for mailing, an important factor to consider is how the contents are delivered. When using a type 10 envelope for one or more 8½ by 11 inch sheets, as mentioned above, the recipient must remove the tri-folded sheet(s) and unfold them to view the pages. On the other hand, when a flat open end envelope is used for one or more 8½ by 11 inch sheets, the pages are removed flat. Therefore, although incurring higher mailing costs, many users prefer the flat open-end 9 by 12 inch envelopes for the presentation of the sheets in their unfolded configuration as the recipient removes them from the mailing envelope.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] The present invention is directed to a mailing envelope comprising a sleeve with an opening at open end and a closed end, a closure associated with the opening at the open end, an envelope fold line intermediate the open end and the closed end when the envelope is in a flat configuration and one or more adhesive areas for at least partially maintaining the envelope in a folded configuration.

[0007] The sleeve is sized to permit one or more full sheets of paper, preferably 8½ by 11 inches, and/or other various sized components to be inserted without folding when the envelope is in its flat configuration. Once inserted, the envelope can be folded along the envelope fold line into its folded configuration, preferably with one or more of the adhesive areas placed between adjacent folded areas to maintain the envelope in its folded configuration.

[0008] The closure of the mailing envelope can be any known type, including an adhesive between front and back layers of the sleeve along the open end, however, the closure

preferably includes a flap comprising an extension of the back layer of the sleeve that folds over the opening. Although the closure flap can be adapted to fold over and attach to the front layer of the sleeve prior to folding the envelope into its folded configuration, in its preferred embodiment, the envelope is configured into its folded configuration first. This permits the closure flap to adhere to the area of the closed end of the sleeve, thus maintaining the envelope in its folded configuration.

[0009] Additional elements are contemplated for use with the closure flap, when adapted to be a part of the mailing envelope. These include a sealing element, such as spaced adhesive areas, a glue line or an adhesive strip with a release strip, along the terminal edge of the closure flap and/or a tear strip across the closure flap intermediate the flap fold and the sealing element. Although such elements may take any number of forms, the preferred forms are more fully described below.

[0010] It is also preferred that the envelope include one or more adhesive areas at the edges of the front layer of the sleeve to maintain the envelope in its folded configuration. Most preferably, one or more adhesive tacks or tabs are placed on each lateral edge of the front layer of the sleeve, intermediate the open and closed ends of the sleeve and the fold.

[0011] Once the contents are placed into the envelope, the envelope can be folded and the adhesive areas engaged to maintain the envelope in its closed configuration. When received, the recipient can unfold the envelope into its flat configuration and remove the contents without needing to unfold the contents prior to viewing at least the top sheet.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] The present invention will be better understood when considered in view of the attached drawings, in which like reference characters indicate like parts. The drawings, however, are presented merely to illustrate the preferred embodiment of the invention without limiting the invention in any manner whatsoever.

[0013] FIG. 1 is a side cross sectional elevation of the preferred embodiment of the mailing envelope of the present invention in its open, flat configuration.

[0014] FIG. 2 is a rear perspective view of the preferred embodiment of the mailing envelope of the present invention in its open, flat configuration.

[0015] FIG. 3 is a front perspective view of the preferred embodiment of the mailing envelope of the present invention in its open, flat configuration.

[0016] FIG. 4 is a side cross sectional elevation of the preferred embodiment of the mailing envelope of the present invention in its open, partially folded configuration.

[0017] FIG. 5 is a rear perspective view of the preferred embodiment of the mailing envelope of the present invention in its folded, closed configuration.

[0018] FIG. 6 is a front perspective view of the preferred embodiment of the mailing envelope of the present invention in its folded, closed configuration.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0019] In the preferred embodiment, shown in the accompanying FIGS. 1-6, the mailing envelope 2 of the present invention comprises a sleeve 4 with an opening 6 at an open end 8 and a closed end 10. A closure 12 is associated with the

opening 6 at the open end 8 to substantially close the opening 6 about the contents of the envelope 2. The envelope 2 includes an envelope fold line 14 intermediate the open end 8 and the closed end 10 when the envelope 2 is in a flat configuration.

[0020] One or more adhesive areas 16 are used for at least partially maintaining the envelope 2 in a folded configuration. A preferred adhesive area 16 in the form of an adhesive strip or series of adhesive areas 16 is adapted to releasably secure the open end 8 of the sleeve 4 to the closed end 10 of the sleeve 4 when the envelope 2 is in its folded configuration. In its most preferred embodiment shown, the adhesive area 16 is associated with the closure 12 in the form of a flap which covers the opening 6 at the open end 8 and the closed end 10. In this embodiment, the adhesive area 16 on the flap 12 attaches to the sleeve 4 in the area of the closed end 10 to maintain the envelope in its folded configuration.

[0021] Adhesive areas 16 may further include two or more edge adhesives 16' placed at the lateral edges of the envelope 2 to further ensure that the envelope 2 is maintained in its folded configuration throughout the postal delivery process.

[0022] Although the envelope 2 can be of any size, generally dictated by the desired dimensions of the contents, it is contemplated for use with one or more sheets of 8½ by 11 inch paper for the purposes of the present application. For such use, the preferred sleeve 4 is about 9 by 12 inches, excluding the closure 12 which may add to the length of the envelope 2.

[0023] In the preferred embodiment shown, the closure 12 is preferably a flap that extends from the back layer 18 of the sleeve 4. The flap 12 has a flap fold 20 associated with the open end 8 of the sleeve 4 to cover the area of the opening 6. Most preferably, the flap 12 further includes the adhesive area 16 in the form of a sealing element 22, which is intended to both close the opening 6 and maintain the envelope in its closed configuration when sealed. Although the sealing element 22 can be a separate element from the adhesive area 16, so that it functions only to seal the opening 6, the preferred embodiment shown uses a sealing element 22 that is part of the adhesive area 16 for holding the envelope 2 in its folded configuration.

[0024] It is also preferred that the flap 12 include a release member 24 for opening the sealed envelope 2. Although this can be any suitable member, in its most preferred embodiment shown the release member 24 is a tear away strip having a user graspable tab 26 cooperating with parallel rows of frangible material such as perforations 28 above and below the tab 26 extending substantially across the flap 12.

[0025] In this embodiment, the user receiving the sealed mailing envelope 2 can grasp the tab 26 and pull it across the flap 12 to separate the portion of the flap 12 adjacent the flap fold 20 from the portion of the flap 12 with the sealing element 22 and/or the adhesive area 16. In this way, the open end 8 of the envelope 2 can be released from the closed end 10 to permit the envelope 2 to be unfolded to its flat configuration.

[0026] Whether or not the sealing element 22 closing the flap 12 also acts as an adhesive area 16 maintaining the envelope 2 in its folded configuration, the preferred embodiment of the present invention shown further includes one or more adhesive areas 16' at the lateral edges of the sleeve 4 which help maintain the envelope 2 in its folded configuration. Although any suitable adhesives can be used for the edge adhesive areas 16', these are most preferably adhesive tacks

that can be applied to the lateral edges of the sleeve 4 prior to folding the envelope 2 into its folded configuration.

[0027] In keeping, the most preferred mailing envelope 2 shown in the attached drawings is formed open for the user to insert the contents (not shown) into the opening 6. The closed end 10 of the sleeve 4 is folded at envelope fold line 14 so that the open end 8 of the sleeve 4 moves into the relative area of the closed end 10 and the edge adhesive areas 16' are brought into contact with the corresponding portions of the sleeve 4 opposite the envelope fold 14 to help maintain the envelope 2 in its folded configuration. The flap 12 is then folded over the closed end 10 of the sleeve 4, and the sealing element 22 forming the adhesive area 16 is used to fasten the flap 12 on the open end 8 of the sleeve 4 to the closed end 10 of the sleeve 4. In this embodiment, the sealing element 22 for closing the opening 6 also functions as an adhesive area 16 to maintain the envelope 2 in its folded configuration.

[0028] The mailing envelope 2 in its closed, folded configuration is shown in FIGS. 5 and 6, optionally with the mailing and return addresses and postage on the front and the flap 12 with the release member 24 on the back.

[0029] When received, the recipient merely needs to pull the tab 26 on the release member 24 and substantially bisect the flap 12 along the perforations 28 to release the open end 8 of the sleeve 4 from the closed end 10. The closed end 10 of the sleeve is unfolded from the open end 8 to arrange the envelope 2 in its open, flat configuration. The contents of the mailing envelope 2 can then be slid out of the opening 6 by the recipient and viewed without having to unfold the contents.

[0030] The envelope 2 can be formed of any suitable envelope material, including paper, cardboard, Tyvek, plastic, laminated and related stock, all well known in the mailing and envelope arts. Similarly, the adhesives can be any suitable seam glues, glue tacks, permanent, removable, resealable, water soluble, waterproof or related adhesives, also all well known in the mailing and envelope arts.

[0031] Variations, modifications and alterations to the preferred embodiment of the present invention described above will make themselves apparent to those skilled in the art. All such changes are intended to fall within the spirit and scope of the present invention, limited solely by the appended claims.

I claim:

1. A mailing envelope comprising:
 - a. a sleeve with an open end, the open end having an opening associated therewith, and a closed end;
 - b. an envelope fold line intermediate the open end and the closed end when the envelope is in a flat configuration, wherein the envelope can be folded along the fold line to bring the open end and the closed end of the sleeve into corresponding relationship to create a folded configuration; and
 - c. one or more adhesives for at least partially maintaining the envelope in the folded configuration.
2. The mailing envelope of claim 1 further comprising a closure associated with the opening at the open end to substantially close the opening once contents are enclosed within the sleeve.
3. The mailing envelope of claim 2 wherein the closure comprises an adhesive.
4. The mailing envelope of claim 1 wherein the envelope further comprises a flap.
5. The mailing envelope of claim 4 wherein at least one of the one or more adhesives is placed on the flap.

6. The mailing envelope of claim 5 wherein the at least one adhesive placed on the flap is placed in proximity to the terminal edge of the flap.

7. The mailing envelope of claim 1 further comprising a release member for assisting in the release of the open end of the sleeve from corresponding relationship to the closed end of the sleeve.

8. The mailing envelope of claim 6 further comprising a release member for assisting in the release of the open end of the sleeve from corresponding relationship to the closed end of the sleeve, wherein said release member is located between the opening and the at least one adhesive placed in proximity to the terminal edge of the flap.

9. The mailing envelope of claim 7 wherein the release member comprises a tab and a tear away strip.

10. The mailing envelope of claim 1 wherein the one or more adhesives includes one or more edge adhesives corresponding to the lateral edges of the sleeve when the envelope is in the folded configuration.

11. The mailing envelope of claim 10 wherein the edge adhesives comprise one or more glue tacks associated with each lateral edge of the sleeve in its folded configuration.

12. A mailing envelope comprising:

- a. a sleeve with an open end, the open end having an opening, and a closed end;
- b. a closure associated with the opening at the open end to substantially close the opening once contents are enclosed within the sleeve, said closure comprising a flap extending from the open end of the sleeve;
- c. an envelope fold line intermediate the open end and the closed end when the envelope is in a flat configuration, wherein the envelope can be folded along the fold line to bring the open end and the closed end of the sleeve into corresponding relationship to create a folded configuration; and
- d. an adhesive for at least partially maintaining the envelope in the folded configuration, the adhesive being placed on the flap in proximity to the terminal edge of the flap,

wherein when the closed end of the sleeve is brought into corresponding relationship to the open end to create a

folded configuration, the flap is folded over the closed end and the adhesive on the flap is adhered to an area between the envelope fold line and the closed end.

13. The mailing envelope of claim 12 further comprising a release member on the flap intermediate the adhesive and the opening of the envelope.

14. The mailing envelope of claim 13 wherein the release member comprises a tab and a tear away strip.

15. The mailing envelope of claim 12 further comprising one or more edge adhesives corresponding to the lateral edges of the sleeve when the envelope is in the folded configuration.

16. The mailing envelope of claim 15 wherein the edge adhesives comprise one or more glue tacks associated with each lateral edge of the sleeve in its folded configuration.

17. A method of packaging one or more sheets of paper in a mailing envelope comprising the steps of:

- a. inserting one or more sheets of paper into a mailing envelope comprising:
 - i. a sleeve with an open end, the open end having an opening, and a closed end;
 - ii. a closure associated with the opening at the open end to substantially close the opening once contents are enclosed within the sleeve, said closure comprising a flap extending from the open end of the sleeve;
 - iii. an envelope fold line intermediate the open end and the closed end when the envelope is in a flat configuration, wherein the envelope can be folded along the fold line to bring the open end and the closed end of the sleeve into corresponding relationship to create a folded configuration; and
 - iv. an adhesive for at least partially maintaining the envelope in the folded configuration, the adhesive being placed on the flap in proximity to the terminal edge of the flap;
- b. bringing the closed end of the sleeve into corresponding relationship to the open end to create a folded configuration;
- c. folding the flap over the closed end of the sleeve; and
- d. adhering the adhesive on the flap to an area on the sleeve between the envelope fold line and the closed end.

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