
U.S. ZIP Codes *NextGen* Documentation

US ZIP Codes US ZIP Codes
Basic  **Geo** 

Introduction:

Thank you for trying / buying our products! This document will explain the *NextGen* products and file layout. The *NextGen* products were introduced in May, 2012. They have an improved file format, including a header record, and have fewer product combinations, making it a superior product.

Our legacy products required the use of a Windows-based Data Extractor and have had some formatting issues which we couldn't change because we have so many clients using the old format.

About GreatData:

We were the first company to sell postal code data on the Internet (since the mid-90s) and were the first company selling Canadian Postal Code data. Even after all these years, we continue to improve our products with every version.

Product Info:

We have two versions of our U.S. *NextGen* products: a **Basic** and **Geo** version. The difference between these versions is that the Geo version has latitude / longitude information.

All products have ZIP Code, City, State, County, Telephone Area Codes, FIPS Code, MSA Codes, Time Zones a Daylight Savings Time flag, and a ZIP Code Type flag.

Within each product, there are two editions: a **Standard** edition with just the primary city for that ZIP Code, and a **Plus** edition with multiple cities per ZIP Code. Some applications only require one city per ZIP, but others need the multiple cities for each ZIP Code which is ideal for applications such as store locators or where you need to verify a ZIP/City combination.

Data Fields:

The data fields consist of the following:

- A 5-digit **ZIP Code**
- A 2-character **state abbreviation** (see our states.csv file for the matching state names).
- The 30-character **city** name.
- The 30-character **county** name.

Accuracy Matters!

- The Plus editions will have a **sequence number** that can be used along with the ZIP Code in an index. The record with sequence 1 contains the city that we believe is the real primary city for a ZIP Code. This is not always the same as the USPS' Primary city, which is often the nearest major city, rather than the actual city that the ZIP covers. Sequence 2 would be the second-most city that the ZIP covers, etc.
- The Plus editions will also have a **PAN code**. The record with a 'P' contains the city that the USPS considers the primary city for that ZIP. As mentioned previously, it isn't always geographically correct. 'A' is an alternate city name that the USPS considers 'Acceptable.' 'N' are city names that are not considered as an acceptable alternate name by the USPS, but may be correct geographically (the ZIP Code covers that city). We recommend using all records that we provide. **We manually verify all of our city names and filter out many junk city names that are included in standard USPS data.** Manual verification is part of what we call, 'The GreatData Difference.'
- The **Geo** versions will have **latitude / longitude**. Note that West Longitudes (just about all of the U.S. locations), contain a negative number. The only exceptions are some U.S. territories in the Pacific that are past the International Date Line. Our coordinates are the approximate center of a Zip Code. When we manually verify our coordinates, we try to use a **population-based center point**, rather than a geographical center. The reason for this is that the geo center could be in a lake, airport, golf course, forest, etc. and our coordinates are often used in store locators, so you want a point where the people are.
- A 3-digit **telephone area code**. This is the primary area code for a ZIP Code. Often, there may be two or more area codes for a ZIP Code. If you need all of them, consider our Multiple Area Codes per ZIP Code product.
- A 2-digit **State FIPS** Code. The FIPS is a U.S. Government standard code.
- A 3-digit **County FIPS** Code.
- A 5-digit **Place (city / town) FIPS** Code. Note that not all places have been assigned a FIPS Code by the government, so some records will have a zero place FIPS Code.
- A 4-digit **MSA Code**. These are Metropolitan Statistical Area codes. These codes define greater metropolitan areas such as the greater Miami area. Not all Zip Codes have an MSA code because many Zips are in rural areas. Refer to **msa-list.csv** which lists the metropolitan area and its corresponding code.
 - MSAs, CMSAs and PMSAs are defined by the U.S. Office of Management & Budget (OMB). The definitions are often obscure, but an MSA usually includes one city with 50,000 or more inhabitants and the county which the city falls within. It can also include nearby counties if they are within commuting distance.
 - A CMSA is a *Consolidated* MSA. It will contain a larger area where the combined population is one million or more people. If an area falls within the CMSA, then the individual cities comprise PMSAs (Primary MSAs).
 - For instance, Abilene, Texas has a population of about 124,000 and is MSA code 0040. Akron, Ohio is PMSA 0080 because it is part of the Cleveland-Akron CMSA (1692).

- We do not use CMSA codes in our data, just the PMSA, because the PMSA is the smaller unit and more precise. Please refer to the **cmsa-all.csv** file for a list of all PMSAs in a CMSA.
- A 1 or 2-digit **Time Zone**. We use a standard format which is the number of hours from Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) (formerly called Greenwich Mean Time [GMT]). Western hemisphere records have negative numbers. Most zones range from -5 (Eastern Standard Time) to -10 (Hawaiian Standard Time), but there are some South Pacific areas outside of this range.
- A 1-character **Daylight Savings Time Flag**. This will be 'Y' if the area observes Daylight Savings Time and 'N' if it doesn't.
- **Type Codes**: These codes are as follows:
 - Blank – Primarily used for General Delivery, but may include PO Boxes.
 - B – Businesses and government agencies that have their own private ZIP Code.
 - E – Exclusively used for PO Boxes (no General Delivery)
 - M – Military APO / FPO

ADDITIONAL FILES:

- **msa-list.csv**: This is the master list of MSA codes. It contains the code, type (MSA, PMSA, or CMSA) and the name of the metropolitan area.
- **cmsa-all.csv**: This is a master list of all PMSAs within a CMSA.
- **states.csv**: This is a list of U.S. and Canadian state and province abbreviations and names along with the country abbreviation. This includes all U.S. territories (Guam, U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, etc.).
- **uszc-basic-demo.xlsx**: This is an Excel spreadsheet of the basic demo data with one city per ZIP Code. It makes viewing the data easier than just looking at the CSV file. You can click on the headers to view a more detailed description of each field, plus you can click on the download by each header to sort or select various info, such as the state, where you could choose to just view, 'MA', for example.
- **uszc-geo-demo.xlsx, usplus-basic-demo.xlsx, usplus-geo-demo.xlsx**: these are similar demo files with latitude/longitude and/or the Plus version (with multiple cities per ZIP).