

Aliases

Aliases

Admin path: **Email Server > Aliases** (`view_mailbox_aliases.cfm`, `inc/add_mailbox_alias_action.cfm`, `inc/edit_mailbox_alias_action.cfm`, `inc/delete_mailbox_alias_action.cfm`, `inc/get_mailbox_alias_json.cfm`).

This page manages **alternate email addresses for local mailboxes** on the Email Server topology. Each row in the `mailbox_aliases` table maps one inbound address (e.g., `sales@company.com`) to either an existing local mailbox or to Postfix's discard transport for silent disposal. The destination must be local — to an existing Dovecot mailbox on this server. For forwarding to external addresses or for relay-topology domains, use [Email Relay > Virtual Recipients](#) instead.

Aliases have **no SMTP authentication, no IMAP/POP3 access, and no password of their own**. They are rewrite rules consumed by Postfix before content filtering. The optional **Send-As** flag adds a row to `sender_login_maps` so the destination mailbox owner can send mail under the alias address from their existing IMAP/Submission session.

Not the same as Virtual Recipients

Email Server aliases and Email Relay virtual recipients share the same underlying Postfix lookup but enforce different topology rules. See [Virtual Recipients](#) for the full distinction; the short version:

| | Mailbox Aliases (this page) | Virtual Recipients |
|-------------------|---|--|
| Table | <code>mailbox_aliases</code> | <code>virtual_recipients</code> |
| Domain type | Mailbox domains (<code>domains.type = 'mailbox'</code>) | Relay domains (<code>domains.type = 'relay'</code> or NULL) |
| Delivery target | A local Dovecot mailbox, or <code>discard:silently</code> | Anywhere — internal or external |
| UNIQUE on address | Yes (one delivery per alias) | No (fan-out via multiple rows) |
| Send-As | Optional, surfaced as a toggle | Schema flag, not yet wired through |

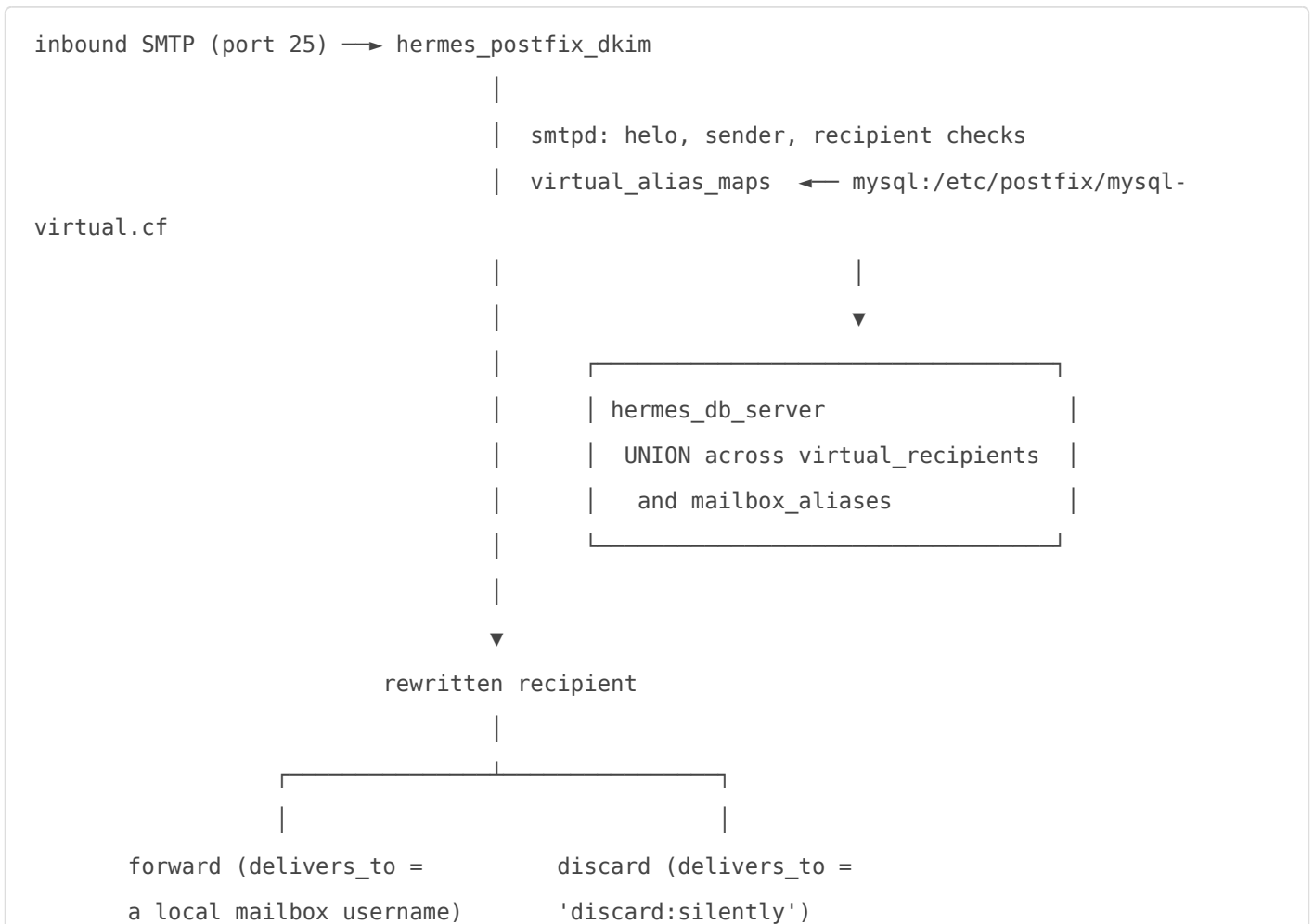
| | Mailbox Aliases (this page) | Virtual Recipients |
|---------------------|--|---|
| Catch-all (@domain) | Not supported | Supported |
| Discard transport | Supported (silent drop) | Not supported |
| Typical use | support@company.com → tina@company.com (both local) | info@company.com → admin@externalpartner.example |

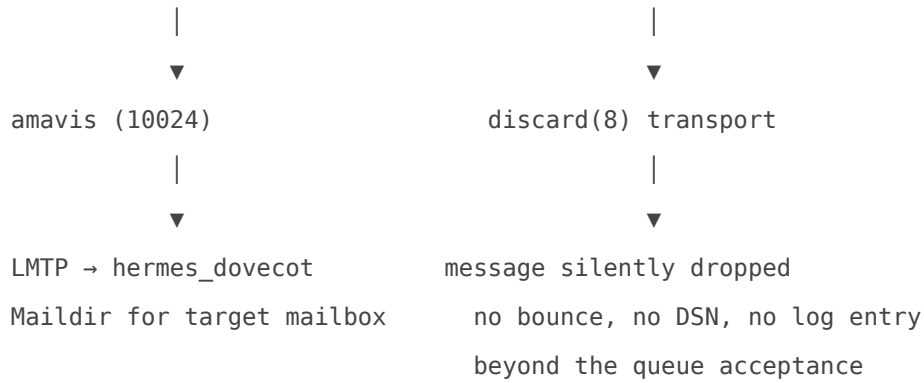
Both tables feed the same `virtual_alias_maps` lookup via a single UNION query in `mysql-virtual.cf`:

```
SELECT maps FROM virtual_recipients WHERE virtual_address = '%s'
UNION
SELECT delivers_to FROM mailbox_aliases WHERE alias_address = '%s'
```

The add handlers in each page enforce the topology gate: trying to create a mailbox alias for a relay domain is rejected with error 12, and the Virtual Recipients add handler rejects mailbox-domain rows with a pointer back to this page.

Storage and lookup path





The MySQL lookup is live — adding a row in this page takes effect on the next inbound message, with no Postfix reload, no `postmap`, and no template regeneration.

The `mailbox_aliases` table

| Column | Type | Role |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| <code>id</code> | INT PK | Surrogate key |
| <code>alias_address</code> | VARCHAR(255), UNIQUE | The address being rewritten. Full email only — no catch-all syntax. The UNIQUE constraint enforces one delivery target per alias address. |
| <code>delivers_to</code> | VARCHAR(255) | Destination. For <code>alias_type = 'forward'</code> this is the local mailbox username; for <code>alias_type = 'discard'</code> this is hardcoded to the literal string <code>discard:silently</code> , which Postfix routes through the <code>discard(8)</code> transport. |
| <code>alias_type</code> | VARCHAR(20) | <code>forward</code> (default) or <code>discard</code> |
| <code>send_as</code> | TINYINT(3) | <code>1</code> if the destination mailbox is allowed to send mail as the alias address. Wired into <code>sender_login_maps</code> on insert/update. |
| <code>domain_id</code> | INT | FK to <code>domains.id</code> ; set on insert from the parsed domain part of <code>alias_address</code> . Used to filter the page by domain and to enforce the mailbox-topology gate. |
| <code>created_at</code> | DATETIME | Audit timestamp |

The UNIQUE key on `alias_address` is the reason fan-out isn't supported here — one inbound address resolves to exactly one destination. To deliver one inbound address to several mailboxes, use a [shared mailbox](#) (which gives multiple users access to a single inbox) or, for true fan-out, use

the relay topology with virtual recipients.

The two alias types

Forward

Delivers mail to an existing local mailbox. The mailbox must exist in the `mailboxes` table — the add handler verifies this with `error 16` on failure. The `Delivers To` dropdown is sourced from the live mailbox list (`mailbox_type = 'user'`), so you can only pick a real target.

```
sales@company.com    →  tina@company.com
support@company.com  →  helpdesk@company.com
```

Both addresses must be on a mailbox domain that this server hosts. Cross-domain forwards are allowed as long as both sides are local mailbox domains.

Discard

Silently drops all mail with no bounce, no DSN, and no error returned to the sender. The handler hardcodes `delivers_to = 'discard:silently'`, which Postfix interprets as the `discard(8)` transport with the literal next hop `silently`. Useful for addresses like `noreply@` or `donotreply@` where bounces would invite spam-mining attempts.

```
noreply@company.com    →  discarded
donotreply@company.com →  discarded
unsubscribe@company.com →  discarded
```

“ **Operational consequence.** Discard is irrecoverable — there is no queue entry, no quarantine, no recovery. The message is accepted by Postfix and immediately dropped. Use discard for addresses that should never receive replies; do not use it as a quiet alternative to bouncing mail you actually want to reject (use Postfix recipient restrictions for that).

Fields on the page

Add Alias modal

| Field | Notes |
|----------------------|--|
| Alias Address | Full email. Must validate as an email, must be on a mailbox domain (<code>domains.type = 'mailbox'</code>), and must not already exist as a mailbox, an alias, or a virtual recipient. Conflicts produce errors 12 / 13 / 14 / 17 respectively. |
| Type | <code>Forward (deliver to mailbox)</code> (default) or <code>Discard (silently drop all mail)</code> . JS toggles the Delivers To and Send-As fields based on selection. |
| Delivers To | Tom Select typeahead populated from <code>mailboxes WHERE mailbox_type = 'user'</code> . Required for forward type, ignored for discard. The handler verifies the target mailbox exists at submit time. |
| Allow Send-As | <code>No</code> (default) or <code>Yes</code> . Only applies to forward type. When <code>Yes</code> , an <code>INSERT IGNORE</code> into <code>sender_login_maps</code> allows the destination mailbox owner to send under the alias address from their existing Submission session. |

Aliases table

DataTables surface — searchable, sortable, paginated, `stateSave: true`. Columns:

| Column | Source |
|-------------|---|
| Actions | Edit (opens modal) / Delete (opens confirmation modal) |
| Alias | <code>mailbox_aliases.alias_address</code> |
| Domain | <code>domains.domain</code> (joined via <code>domain_id</code>) |
| Type | Badge — <code>Forward</code> (blue) or <code>Discard</code> (dark) |
| Delivers To | <code>mailbox_aliases.delivers_to</code> for forwards; <code>Silently dropped</code> for discards |
| Send-As | Badge — <code>YES</code> / <code>NO</code> for forwards; em-dash for discards |

A Domain filter dropdown above the table narrows the visible rows to a single mailbox domain. The dropdown only lists domains that currently have at least one alias.

Edit modal

Address is read-only after creation — changing the local-part would break any send-as mappings that already reference it. Type, Delivers To, and Send-As are all editable, with the same forward/discard toggle behavior as the Add modal. The handler diffs the old send-as state against

the new one and adds or removes the `sender_login_maps` row accordingly so the change to send-as is reflected without rewriting unrelated maps.

Delete

Per-row delete with a confirmation modal. The handler removes the alias row and any `sender_login_maps` entries for the alias address. Because aliases don't own a Maildir or any on-disk state, deletion is instant and reversible only by re-creating the alias.

Send-As — what it actually does

When Send-As is enabled on a forward alias, the handler inserts:

```
INSERT IGNORE INTO sender_login_maps (sender, login_user)
VALUES ('sales@company.com', 'tina@company.com');
```

That row participates in Postfix's `smtpd_sender_login_maps` lookup on the submission port. The effect: when `tina@company.com` authenticates to Submission (587) and tries to send a message with `From: sales@company.com`, Postfix accepts the From: because the `(sender, login_user)` pair exists in the map. Without Send-As, Postfix's `reject_sender_login_mismatch` would reject the submission because `tina@` is not the canonical owner of `sales@`.

This makes Send-As a true alternate-identity grant, not just a "vanity From:". The user typically configures the alias as a secondary identity in their mail client (Outlook → Account Settings → multiple email addresses; Apple Mail → Edit Email Addresses; Thunderbird → Manage Identities) and picks it from the From: dropdown when composing.

The deletion handler removes the matching `sender_login_maps` row when the alias is deleted; the edit handler removes the old row and inserts the new one when Send-As is toggled or Delivers To changes.

Conflict checks at insert time

The add handler runs four duplicate checks before the INSERT:

| Check | Error | What it prevents |
|---|-------|---|
| <code>mailboxes WHERE username = alias_address</code> | 13 | Alias collides with an actual mailbox. The mailbox itself would always win the lookup, so the alias would be dead weight. |

| Check | Error | What it prevents |
|---|-------|--|
| <code>mailbox_aliases WHERE alias_address = alias_address</code> | 14 | Duplicate alias row (also enforced by the UNIQUE key, but caught earlier with a friendlier message). |
| <code>virtual_recipients WHERE virtual_address = alias_address</code> | 17 | Alias collides with a relay-topology virtual recipient. The UNION lookup would return both rows and the resulting fan-out is almost never the intent — the error tells the admin to remove the relay-side row first. |
| <code>domains WHERE domain = X AND type = 'mailbox'</code> | 12 | Alias's domain isn't on the mailbox-topology side. Use Virtual Recipients for relay domains. |

All four checks are advisory in the UI sense but enforced server-side so a forged form post can't bypass them.

Domain-delete dependency

There is no explicit dependency check on mailbox-domain deletion for aliases — but mailbox domains are typically not removed unless every mailbox under them is also being removed, and the alias rows become orphaned (`domain_id` no longer resolves) rather than actively harmful. Stale `mailbox_aliases` rows whose `domain_id` no longer exists are skipped by the page query because of the `INNER JOIN domains ... AND d.type = 'mailbox'`. Operational best practice: delete aliases first, then mailboxes, then the domain.

Failure semantics

| What breaks | What happens |
|--|------------------------------|
| Blank alias address in Add | error 10 banner, no DB write |
| Invalid email format | error 11 |
| Domain not in <code>domains</code> or not mailbox-type | error 12 |
| Address already exists as a mailbox | error 13 |
| Address already exists as an alias | error 14 |
| Address already exists as a virtual recipient | error 17 |
| Forward type with blank Delivers To | error 15 |
| Delivers To target mailbox doesn't exist | error 16 |

| What breaks | What happens |
|--|---|
| Edit with missing alias_id | error 20 |
| Edit / delete with stale alias_id | error 21 |
| MySQL <code>hermes_db_server</code> down | Postfix <code>virtual_alias_maps</code> lookups fail. Default behavior is to defer affected mail with a temporary error and retry — legitimate mail is held, not bounced. |

Files and containers touched

| Path | Owner | Role |
|---|---|--|
| <code>config/hermes/var/www/html/admin/2/view_mailbox_aliases.cfm</code> | <code>hermes_commandbox</code> | Page + table + Add / Edit / Delete modals |
| <code>config/hermes/var/www/html/admin/2/inc/add_mailbox_alias_action.cfm</code> | <code>hermes_commandbox</code> | Add handler with the four-way conflict check |
| <code>config/hermes/var/www/html/admin/2/inc/edit_mailbox_alias_action.cfm</code> | <code>hermes_commandbox</code> | Edit handler — toggles <code>sender_login_maps</code> on send-as changes |
| <code>config/hermes/var/www/html/admin/2/inc/delete_mailbox_alias_action.cfm</code> | <code>hermes_commandbox</code> | Delete handler — removes alias row + any send-as map entry |
| <code>config/hermes/var/www/html/admin/2/inc/get_mailbox_alias_json.cfm</code> | <code>hermes_commandbox</code> | AJAX endpoint that hydrates the Edit modal |
| <code>/etc/postfix/mysql-virtual.cf</code> | <code>hermes_postfix_dkim</code> (volume-mounted) | The UNION lookup definition shared with <code>virtual_recipients</code> |
| <code>mailbox_aliases</code> , <code>sender_login_maps</code> , <code>mailboxes</code> , <code>domains</code> , <code>virtual_recipients</code> | <code>hermes_db_server</code> | Storage and conflict-detection tables |

Nothing on this page shells out to Postfix — no `postmap`, no `postfix reload`, no template regeneration. The MySQL lookup picks up new rows on the next inbound message.

Related

- [Email Relay > Virtual Recipients](#) — the relay-topology equivalent. Use that page when the destination is external (Gmail, partner domain) or when fan-out to multiple destinations from one address is needed.
- [Domains](#) — the mailbox-domain list this page filters against. An alias's domain must exist there with `type = 'mailbox'`.
- [Mailboxes](#) — the destination mailbox list. The Delivers To dropdown is populated from active user mailboxes.

- [Shared Mailboxes](#) — when several users need to read the same incoming mail (rather than one user receiving forwards), use a shared mailbox instead of a forward alias.
 - [Mailbox Rules](#) — Sieve-based filtering that runs on the destination mailbox after alias rewrite. Aliases route mail to a mailbox; Sieve rules then sort it within that mailbox.
 - [Settings](#) — the global Email Server toggles. Aliases work regardless of the Mailbox Sharing master switch — they have no Dovecot-side configuration to be gated on.
 - [Authentication Settings](#) — Submission-port authentication that the Send-As flag piggybacks on. A user must be able to authenticate to Submission as their primary address before Send-As lets them switch identities.
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