

Memorandum of Understanding on Route Adjustments

In continuing action to cushion the potential impact of the implementation of automation, a Memorandum of Understanding has been agreed upon between the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association and the U.S. Postal Service. The parties have agreed to accept the recommendation of the National Joint Steering Committee (NJSC) for the Quality of Work Life/Employee Involvement (QWL/EI) Committee to place a temporary moratorium on three contractual provisions of the Agreement relating to the 1) adjustment of rural route; 2) the conversion of auxiliary routes; and 3) the posting of vacant routes.

The Memorandum and the attached guidelines will explain the procedure in detail. The points to remember is that it is only a temporary moratorium on these provisions; that it will only apply to routes and offices where automation is expected to be implemented within three years; that the carrier must agree in the case of allowing a 47- and 48-hour route to grow unadjusted; that the State Steward must agree to allow an auxiliary route to go unconverted and a vacant route to go unposted. This assures bi-lateral agreement on each issue. The Memorandum and the guidelines follow:

Memorandum of Understanding Between the USPS and NRLCA

In recognition of the potential impact implementation of automation, mechanization and technological changes may have on rural route evaluations and to minimize the compensation impact to individual rural carriers, the parties agree to accept the recommendations of the National Joint Steering Committee (NJSC) for the Quality of Work Life/Employee Involvement (QWL/EI) process (as detailed in the accompanying document) to place a temporary moratorium on the following three (3) contractual provisions:

1. Article 9.2.C.7. which identifies 47- and 48-K route evaluations as interim classifications pending route adjustments;
2. Article 12.3.A.6. which normally requires an auxiliary route to be converted to regular status when the official evaluation reaches 35 hours or more; and.
3. Article 12.3.A.2. which requires the posting (with some exceptions) of vacant routes within thirty (30) days.

It is further agreed that these modifications expire May 15, 1991, but may with mutual agreement be extended on or before that date.

/s/ Joseph J. Mahon, Jr.
Joseph J. Mahon, Jr.
Assistant Postmaster General
Labor Relations Department

October 4, 1990

/s/ Vernon H. Meier
Vernon H. Meier
President,
National Rural Letter Carriers' Association

October 4, 1990

Implementation Guidelines Attached

Memorandum for Field Division General Managers/Postmasters

Subject: Rural Route Adjustments, Auxiliary Route Conversions and Vacant Route Postings

As discussed in my memorandum dated August 22, the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) of June 28, between the United States Postal Service and the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association (NRLCA) provided the means to jointly review and make recommendations regarding changes to the rural evaluated system that may be necessary as a result of automation, mechanization and technological changes. This MOU established procedures for soliciting input from region and division joint steering committees and other sources.

The National Joint Steering Committee (NJSC) for the Quality of Work Life/Employee Involvement (QWL/EI) process has initiated various actions associated with conducting necessary reviews to determine work methods and alternatives. Recognizing the potential impact on individual rural route evaluations, the NJSC has recommended placing a temporary moratorium on three contractual provisions. Specifically those provisions are: Article 9.2.C.7., which identifies 47- and 48-K route evaluations as interim classification pending route adjustments; Article 12.3.A.6. which normally requires an auxiliary route evaluated at 35 or more hours as the result of an official mail count be converted to regular status; and Article 12.3.A.2. which requires the posting (with some exceptions) of vacant routes within thirty (30) days.

These actions may help facilitate the overall automation goal and minimize the compensation impact for rural letter carriers. In addition to the actions governed by these contractual provisions, the parties intend that a moratorium be placed on the adjustment of any rural route which has the potential of being impacted by automation except when operationally necessary or where FLSA requirements are endangered.

Attached are specific guidelines addressing these issues developed by the NJSC and endorsed by the USPS and the NRLCA. These guidelines have been identified as "STEP 1, 2 and 3" and may only be considered and implemented in the order presented and only in those units where automation implementation will occur within the next three years. In offices where it is determined that automation will not be implemented within three (3) years, these provisions are not applicable. At this time, the automation deployment schedule has not been finalized. However, as an aid to your decision making process, consideration should be given to those offices with a high concentration of rural routes (10 routes or more), or where city and rural delivery routes are located at the same facility. Offices close to a General Mail Facility (GMF), Area Distribution Center (ADC), or other centralized distribution point should also be considered. Additionally, you will have opportunities to add or subtract locations to this list as final deployment schedules are released and your ability to provide automated mail to rural carriers improves.

It is the intent of the parties that these modifications be used by affected offices until a sufficient buffer has been established to minimize the compensation impact to regular rural carriers. Rural routes in some associate offices may not be impacted.

Auxiliary Route Conversions and Vacant Route Adjustments

by automation in the immediate future. Therefore, the need for a careful office-by-office review (considering overall division/MSA automation goals as well as equipment deployment/utilization schedules) prior to implementing any of these procedures cannot be over emphasized.

The Delivery Management Division has tentatively scheduled a joint meeting with the NJSC, Rural Carrier State Stewards and your Manager, Delivery Programs, for October 15 and 16 to thoroughly explain these procedures. Your office will be provided an agenda and location information within the next two weeks. In the interim, please provide copies of these guidelines to your NRLCA/USPS QWL/EI Division Joint Steering Committee (DJSC) and all associate office postmasters and managers involved with rural route adjustments, conversion of auxiliary routes to regular status and vacant rural route postings.

To the greatest extent possible you must use the NRLCA/USPS QWL/EI process and more specifically, your DJSC to assist designated "automation affected" offices to understand automation deployment and implementation.

Questions regarding these procedures may be directed to Norman Cloher of my staff at PEN 268-3015 or William R. Brown, Jr., Vice President of the NRLCA and/or Scottie B. Hicks, Secretary-Treasurer of the NRLCA at (703) 684-5545.

/s/Allen Kane

Attachment

CONCURRENCE

/s/William R. Brown, Jr.

William R. Brown, Jr.

Co-Chair,

/s/Charles Edmiston, III

Charles Edmiston, III

Member

/s/(by SBH) Larry D. Jones

Larry D. Jones

Member

/s/Arthur Porwick

Arthur Porwick

Co-Chair,

/s/Scottie B. Hicks

Scottie B. Hicks

Member

/s/Richard J. McKillop

Richard J. McKillop

Member

Enclosures

cc: Regional Directors Operations Support
QWL/EI N.J.S.C. and Regional Joint Steering
Committees

Step #1

Guidelines Relative To: Article 9.2.C.7.

This provision identifies routes in the 47- and 48-K classification as interim classifications pending route adjustments.

Note: The intent of the parties is that a moratorium be placed upon the adjustment of any route which has the potential of being impacted by automation, unless it is operationally necessary or FLSA compliance dictates otherwise.

Modification: Local management may, with MSC/division concurrence, allow routes in these classifications to retain their evaluation provided:

- there is a likelihood the route will be impacted by automation within the next three years;
- the carrier agrees in writing;
- the carrier will not exceed his/her FLSA commitment (12 hours per day, 56 hours per week or 2,080 hours within the guarantee year); and/or
- service and operations will not be adversely affected. (As an example, mail may not be delayed and normal outgoing dispatches must be maintained.)

Required Procedures:

- The local management official must thoroughly discuss with the carrier, the anticipated impact of automation implementation and other issues under review, and provide the carrier with an understanding of his/her options. If, after this discussion the carrier desires to retain the evaluation, he/she must complete Exhibit 1 of these guidelines.
- If an agreement is signed, management will provide auxiliary assistance for the regular carrier in accordance with Article 9.2.C.9.b. This provision provides auxiliary assistance for the evaluated route hours or the actual carrier hours, whichever is less, in excess of 57:36.
- Replacement carriers serving routes with standard hours in excess of 58:11 in offices identified as being impacted by automation within the next three years, will automatically receive the additional time compensation identified on the following page in addition to the daily evaluated hours of the 48-K, i.e., 9:36, unless the replacement carrier works in excess of 40 actual hours per week.

Based on the categories identified in the table below, additional time for replacement carriers serving 48-K routes will automatically be added to the daily evaluated hours of the route.

Routes with standard hours between:

58:12-59:23	receive an additional	12 minutes:
59:24-60:35	receive an additional	24 minutes:
60:36-61:47	receive an additional	36 minutes:
61:48-62:59	receive an additional	48 minutes:
63:00-64:11	receive an additional	60 minutes:
64:12-65:23	receive an additional	72 minutes:

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- 65:24-66:35 receive an additional 84 minutes;
- 66:36-67:47 receive an additional 96 minutes;
- 67:48-69:59 receive an additional 108 minutes;
- 69:00-& out receive an additional 120 minutes.

—If an agreement is not signed, management must document the date, time and discussion topics, and maintain a record in the route file. Management may not hold the route at the higher evaluation without the regular carriers written concurrence and should take necessary steps to adjust the route in accordance with current policy. (See Handbook M-38, Section 352.)

Step #2

Guidelines Relative To: Article 12.3.A.6.

This provision requires that when an auxiliary route reaches an evaluation of 35 hours, it will normally be converted to regular status and be filled in accordance with existing procedures.

Modification:

MSC or division management may, with the concurrence of the rural carrier state steward, allow auxiliary routes to grow in excess of 35 hours and leave the route in an auxiliary status if the guidelines discussed in Step 1 do not provide a sufficient buffer against anticipated adjustments.

Required Procedures:

- The designated MSC or division management official responsible for rural delivery management, must discuss with the state steward (or designee), the anticipated impact of automation implementation and other issues under review, and the buffer against adjustments that may result. If, after this discussion the state steward (or designee) agrees, he/she must complete Exhibit 2 of these guidelines. Copies of the completed document must then be forwarded to the USPS and NRLCA Regional Labor Representative.
- If an agreement is not signed, management must document the date, time and discussion topics, and maintain a record in the route file. Management may not circumvent this contractual provision without the agreement of the state steward (or designee) and should, where required, take necessary steps to conduct an official mail count if necessary (see M-37, Chapter 5). Under normal circumstances, the route would be converted to regular status and posted in accordance with existing procedures. Exceptions for not posting may still be justified when an imminent territory adjustment is pending.

Step #3

Guidelines Relative To: Article 12.3.A.2.

This provision requires the posting of a vacant route within thirty (30) days, except that a sixty (60) day extension may be made where a route consolidation is pending.

Modification:

MSC or division management may, with the concurrence of the rural carrier state steward, defer the posting of any vacant rural route, if the guidelines discussed in Steps 1 and 2 do not provide a sufficient buffer against anticipated adjustments.

Required Procedures:

- The designated MSC or division management official must discuss with the state steward (or designee), the anticipated impact of automation implementation and other issues under review, and the advantage of leaving the route vacant as a buffer against adjustments that may result. If, after this discussion the state steward (or designee) agrees, he/she must complete Exhibit 3 of these guidelines. Copies of the completed document must then be forwarded to the USPS and NRLCA Regional Labor Representative.
- If an agreement is not signed, management must document the date, time and discussion topics, and maintain a record in the route file. Management may not circumvent this contractual provision without the agreement of the state steward (or designee) and should take steps to post the vacant route in accordance with Article 12.3.A.2.

Exhibit 1

My name is _____
 I am the regular rural carrier on route _____, located in _____, which currently has an evaluation of _____
 On _____, I met with management representative _____ and thoroughly discussed the advantages and disadvantages of adjusting this route in lieu of anticipated route evaluation changes which may result from automated mail processing implementation.

Based on this discussion and my understanding of the guidelines relative to this procedure, I waive my right to an adjustment at this time. In signing this agreement, I understand that I will receive auxiliary assistance as necessary in accordance with Article 9.2.C.9.b. I further understand that in the event I am unable to meet my FLSA commitment to maintain actual total work hours below 12 hours a day, 56 hours in a week or 2,080 hours for the guarantee year, or service and/or operations are adversely affected, my route will be adjusted in accordance with the provisions of Methods Handbook, M-38, Section 352.

 (Carrier Name & Route Number)

 (Name & Title of Management Representative)

Exhibit 2

My name is _____, I am the _____ State Steward (or designee) for the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association.
 On _____ I discussed with Postal Service representative _____ the advantages and disadvantages of converting auxiliary route _____, located at _____, to regular status in lieu of anticipated route evaluation changes which may result from automated mail processing implementation.

Based on this discussion and my understanding of the guidelines relative to this procedure, I agree that at this time the route will not be converted to regular status.

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State Steward
(or designee)

Director, Operations Support
(or designee)

Date: _____

cc: USPS Regional Labor Representative
NRLCA Regional Labor Representative

This Agreement is valid until May 15, 1991. At a minimum, the conditions of this route must be reviewed on a semi-annual basis and/or 30 days prior to the next mail count. When conditions are reviewed, a new agreement must be signed.

Exhibit 3

My name is _____ I am the _____ State Steward (or designee) for the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association.

On _____ I discussed with Postal Service representative _____ the advantages and disadvantages of posting _____ located at _____ which currently is vacant, in lieu of anticipated route evaluation changes which may result from automated mail processing implementation.

Based on this discussion and my understanding of the guidelines relative to this procedure, I agree that at this time the route will not be posted.

State Steward
(or designee)

Director, Operations Support
(or designee)

Date: _____

cc: USPS Regional Labor Representative
NRLCA Regional Labor Representative

This Agreement is valid until May 15, 1991. At a minimum, the conditions of this route must be reviewed on a semi-annual basis and/or 30 days prior to the next mail count. When conditions are reviewed, a new agreement must be signed.

Quality Of Work Life
Employee Involvement
QWL/EI



Management ↔ Craft
It's A Joint Effort

Retirees To Get 5.4% COLA Increase

Dramatic CPI Jump in September

As expected, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) made another dramatic increase from 386.9 in August to 390.5 in September. Since this was the last month of the third quarter, the quarter of the year upon which COLA increases are determined for retirees, the COLA increase due January 1 has been set at 5.4% for annuitants for both Civil Service annuitants and Social Security recipients. At this writing, the COLA increases appear safe in the Budget Deficit negotiations in the Congress. It is bad news that inflation continues to rise, but it is good news to retirees that the Cost-of-Living Allowances for retirees has once again been spared from the budget axe.

The news is not as good for active employees, however. As explained last month, there is always a three-month period preceding the expiration of an Agreement when there is no COLA protection. We are in the second month of that vulnerable period. Unfortunately, both months have already produced high inflation rates. We can only rely upon the current negotiations to restore those losses in equivalent salary increases. Again, the Mideast crisis which has increased energy costs is largely responsible for the rising rate of inflation.

EMA Rate To Increase 1/2 Cent Per Mile

Obviously, the Mideast crisis is playing havoc with gasoline prices. The national average for regular no-lead gasoline increased to \$1.294. This is an increase of 10.4 cents since August—and continuing to climb. This increase has now triggered an additional 1/2 cent per mile on the EMA for rural carriers who provide their own vehicle to carry the mail. The EMA increase will become effective in the pay period beginning November 3 with payment in the November 23 check.

No further increases can be expected in the EMA rate under this Agreement until the national average price reaches \$1.477. This is due to the "gap" placed in the Agreement in 1984 by the arbitrator. There was a justification for the "gap" at that time but that justification no longer exists. However, no immediate remedy is available to us, except through the current negotiations which conclude on November 20.