

DELIVERY POINT SEQUENCE (DPS) FLATS IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES FOR RURAL ROUTES

The U. S. Postal Service is in the process of purchasing and installing the Flats Sequencing System (FSS) at designated plants throughout the country. The FSS will allow the Postal Service to arrange flats in delivery point sequence for carrier delivery using technology and processes similar to those used to automate letters. The following represents procedures for the introduction of DPS flats on rural routes and the handling of DPS flats by rural carriers.

The 2006 National Agreement between the United States Postal Service (USPS) and the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association (NRLCA) is the source for all contractual references contained in this document. Additionally, these implementation procedures do not supersede the provisions of the National Agreement.

Preparing for the Impact of DPS Flats:

On July 28, 2008, the USPS and NRLCA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding DPS flats impact. The parties agreed to temporarily modify contractual provisions in rural delivery offices where DPS flats are scheduled for implementation and in those rural delivery offices within 50 miles of the impacted sites. These contractual modifications allow for the creation of buffer for rebuilding affected routes and provide available assignments in the event excessing rural carriers becomes necessary.

In addition, the parties signed a subsequent MOU on August 10, 2009, which provides for the adjustment and/or consolidation of routes affected by the July 28, 2008 MOU and also for the release of some withheld residual vacancies. The provisions of this MOU may lessen the amount of available buffer to be used for rebuild once DPS flats are fully implemented in an office due to the adjustment and/or consolidation of withheld residual vacancies in order to increase route evaluations.

These MOUs are not changed by these implementation procedures.

Handling Procedures for DPS Flats:

Rural carriers will not have the option of casing DPS flats except as provided in these implementation procedures. All carriers on rural routes that have assigned Employer provided vehicles and receive DPS flats will be required to take the DPS flats directly to the street. Rural carriers utilizing privately-owned vehicles for servicing the route will not be subject to this requirement.

DPS flats will be provided to rural carriers at a locally established staging area. Unless local procedures differ, rural carriers will obtain the DPS flats for their route during the loading process after they have strapped out and placed all other mail in the conveyance used for loading the vehicle.

Rural carriers will verify that DPS flats received are for the assigned route. Verification of the flats includes looking at the address of a flat toward the front of the tray, a flat in the middle of the tray and a flat toward the back of the tray. The time spent verifying the DPS flats has been calculated into the DPS flats standard and no additional time is provided.

Evaluating Routes That Receive DPS Flats:

There will be two DPS flats standards established and applied to rural routes during the mail count. The DPS flats standard will be applied to all routes that receive DPS flats and have assigned Employer provided vehicles. If DPS flats are introduced to a rural route that does not have an assigned Employer provided vehicle, the route will be evaluated during the mail count with a special DPS flats casing standard.

A rural route receiving DPS flats may be counted and evaluated using the appropriate DPS flats standard provided the route begins receiving DPS flats at least 30 calendar days prior to the beginning of the mail count. There may be circumstances when a rural route will not receive DPS flats for several days during this 30-day period. In these instances, the route will still be eligible for the mail count and evaluation using the appropriate DPS flats standard. The appropriate DPS flats standard will also be applied to the evaluation of such routes during all subsequent mail counts provided the route continues to receive DPS flats on a regular basis, which includes situations such as, receipt of DPS flats on less than six days per week, Mondays only, etc

MOU #20, *Route Adjustment Process for Delivery Point Sequence Flat Mail*, identifies the count periods under which adjustments will be made to a rural route after the route begins to receive DPS flats. A mail count will be conducted on a route receiving DPS flats and the appropriate standards will be applied in one of the following three periods:

- Any national mail count period.
- The special mail count period during the last twelve (12) working days of September. (Article 9.2.C.11.b)
- The twelve (12) working days in May immediately after Mother's Day.

Management may utilize either special mail count period to adjust the rural route after the introduction of DPS flats. However, in those cases where the route received a special mail count and the evaluation of the route did not change by 120 minutes (2 hours) or more as a result of the count; the route will not be adjusted and will not be eligible for a subsequent special mail count utilizing the introduction of DPS flats as criterion. If a route is removed from the DPS flats sort scheme and will no longer receive DPS flats and DPS flats are re-introduced at a later date; a special mail count may be conducted on the route in accordance with MOU #20 provided the route begins receiving DPS flats at least 30 calendar days prior to the beginning of the count.

During a mail count, each mail piece in the DPS flats tray (regardless of its characteristics) will be counted and recorded in Column 5, *DPS Flats*, on PS Form 4239. The end of run (EOR) report will be used as the data source to record the number of DPS flats during a mail count.

Mail Count Credits:

The DPS flats standard applies to all of the duties associated with handling DPS flats with the following exceptions:

- Loading time will include the time spent by the rural carrier traveling to the DPS flats staging area and resume after the DPS flats are placed in the conveyance and the loading process continues. The time used withdrawing DPS flats and placing the trays in the conveyance utilized for loading the vehicle is considered withdrawal time and is not included in loading time. The verification of the DPS flats is included in the DPS flats standard. In those instances when the route is not provided the withdrawal allowance, DPS flats will be provided to the carrier.
- Closed businesses – Credit will be given in Column 4, *Flats, Catalogs, Magazines, Newspapers, Rolls*, for each DPS flat when there are 3 flats or less received for the closed business. When there are 4 flats or more received for the closed business, credit for one parcel will be given in Column 6, *Parcels*. No deductions from Column 5, *DPS Flats*, will be made.

NOTE: *The credit to be provided for Closed Businesses may be modified upon determination of a permanent DPS flats standard.*

- Missent, Missorted, PO Box mail, Holds, Forwards, and Undeliverable as Addressed DPS flats brought back to the office will receive credit in Columns 1, *Random Letters*, 4, or 6, as appropriate. No deductions will be made from Column 5.
- Multi-Point errors and Missequenced errors that are identified, delivered and tracked by the carrier will receive additional credit in Columns 1, 4, or 6, as appropriate. No deductions will be made from Column 5.

Situations Following Evaluation under the DPS Flats Standard:

Until such time that the permanent DPS flats standard is established, the temporary rate of 27 pieces per minute will be used for the purpose of the calculations as outlined below. The special DPS flats casing standard of 17 pieces per minute will be applied as appropriate. Upon determination of the permanent DPS flats standard, the calculations will be updated accordingly.

Situation 1: A route has been adjusted under the special DPS flats casing standard because the route is not assigned an Employer provided vehicle. Prior to the next mail count, an Employer provided vehicle is assigned to the route. The route will be adjusted for the Employer provided vehicle as appropriate. The carrier will then be required to take DPS flats directly to the street. Additionally, the route evaluation will be adjusted to the DPS flats standard using the previous mail count data, as follows:

1. The number of DPS flats as recorded on PS Form 4241 from the latest mail count,
2. multiplied by 0.0361 minutes per piece,
3. equals the reduction in standard hours to be applied to the route through a base hour change.

Situation 2: If a carrier on a route being compensated under a DPS flats standard is required to case all or a significant portion (65 or more pieces) of its DPS flats, due to circumstances that have left all or some portion of the DPS flats in an out of sequence condition, such as trays being dropped and mail not properly re-sequenced, problems arising from the transporting of the mail, etc.; additional compensation will be provided.

NOTE: The threshold number of flats required to be cased in order to receive additional compensation will be reevaluated upon determination of the permanent DPS flats standard

The following formula is used to determine the amount of additional compensation for the situation described above:

1. a. The number of DPS flats received as indicated on the EOR report (when all DPS flats are received in an out of sequence condition) or,
 - b. the actual piece count (when 65 or more flats require casing),
2. multiplied by 0.0772 minutes per piece for routes evaluated using the DPS flats standard or 0.412 minutes per piece for routes evaluated using the special DPS flats casing standard,
3. equals additional minutes paid.

The carrier should notify their manager immediately when they receive DPS flats that require casing. If a manager is not readily accessible, the carrier should note the number of DPS flats they are required to case and report it to their manager at the first opportunity.

If, for any reason, management removes a route from the DPS flats sort scheme and the route will no longer receive DPS flats, PS Form 4003, *Official Rural Route Description*, will be prepared to adjust time allowances utilizing the number of DPS flats as recorded on PS Form 4241 from the latest mail count multiplied by either 0.0772 or 0.412 minutes per piece, as appropriate and indicated in number 2., above. The effective date of the adjustment will be the first day of the pay period in which the automated processing is discontinued.

Situation 3: If a rural route is evaluated under the DPS flats standard and the rural carrier assigned to the route delivers the route using a privately-owned vehicle (POV), the rural carrier will be given the option to collate or case the DPS flats, provided sufficient casing equipment exists. Additional compensation will be provided in accordance with the following formula:

1. The number of DPS flats received as indicated on the EOR report,
2. multiplied by 0.0361 minutes per piece,
3. equals additional minutes paid.

Situation 4: If a rural route is evaluated under the DPS flats standard and the rural carrier is required to case a second run of DPS flats, the rural carrier will be given the option to collate or case the smaller of the two runs, provided sufficient casing equipment exists. Additional compensation will be provided in accordance with the following formula:

1. The number of DPS flats received as indicated on the EOR report,
2. multiplied by 0.0361 minutes per piece,
3. equals additional minutes paid.

Additional payment up to sixty (60) minutes will be recorded on PS Form 1314, *Rural Carrier Time Certificate*, in the 8127 Time (Mins) block, for regular rural carriers. For those payments that exceed 60 minutes, complete PS Form 8127 for the number of minutes exceeding 60 and submit to the Imaging Center for processing.

Replacement carriers are paid on PS Form 1314-A, *Auxiliary Rural Carrier Time Certificate*, when required to case DPS flats in those instances described above unless their actual work hours for the week exceed 40 hours. When the actual weekly work hours exceed 40, all hours are paid (including the additional time for casing DPS flats) as per FLSA Section 7(A).

DPS Flats Review:

A standardized DPS flats formal review process will be implemented so that if a route receiving DPS flats experiences an increase or decrease in the quantity of the DPS flats volume in relationship to the total flats volume of the route as compared to the latest mail count (or adjusted base following a DPS flats formal review), the assigned carrier may make a written request for, or management may elect to schedule, a formal review of the DPS flats processing for the route.

The standardized DPS flats formal review process will include the requirement that reasonable justification be provided by the requesting carrier or management as to the need to conduct the review; and that the variance of the percentage DPS flats to total flats volume is equal to or greater than one hour (60 minutes) in order to effect a base hour change.

DPS Flats Route Rebuilds and Adjustments:

Once a rural route is evaluated using the appropriate DPS flats standard, management will adjust the route by transferring territory from other routes in the same 5 digit zone and the same office, equal to the DPS flats impact or the 43K classification, whichever is less; provided sufficient territory exists. If sufficient territory does not exist to provide the amount of rebuild described above for all the routes impacted by DPS flats within the same zone and office, management will first rebuild routes below 40:00 standard hours to 40:00 standard hours. Management will then attempt to provide an amount of rebuild less than that described above to the remaining impacted routes by distributing the outstanding buffer as equitably as possible, yielding to operational rationale and feasibility.

The DPS flats impact will be determined on the effective date of the mail count used to evaluate the routes with the application of the appropriate DPS flats standard. Additional DPS flats impact will be calculated and the route will be subject to rebuild, if sufficient territory exists, for any mail count on the route within two (2) years of the effective date of the first evaluation applying the DPS flats standard. If sufficient territory is not available to rebuild the route for the DPS flats impact at the end of the two-year period, there is no further obligation to adjust the routes.

It is expected that reasonable efforts will be made to complete all DPS flats rebuilds as soon as practicable. Additionally, DPS flats rebuilds should be completed within six (6) months from the effective date of the mail count used to determine the impact.

Management will utilize the following to determine the amount of territory available for use in adjusting routes for DPS flats rebuilds:

- Adjust overburdened routes to approximately 52:00 standard hours (43K).
- Adjust or eliminate auxiliary routes.
- Adjust any residual vacancy withheld in accordance with the July 28, 2008 MOU, as necessary to obtain the amount of rebuild, but to no less than 12:00 standard hours.
- Consider consolidation, which is defined as the combining of territories from two or more routes which results in the elimination of one or more of those routes, of:
 - Any newly vacant routes
 - Residual vacancies being withheld in accordance with the July 28, 2008 MOU
 - Any encumbered routes evaluated less than 32 hours per week.

DELIVERY POINT SEQUENCE (DPS) FLATS FORMAL REVIEW PROCEDURES

In accordance with Handbook PO-603, *Rural Carrier Duties and Responsibilities*, section 541.4, when circumstances exist that cause a rural route to experience an increase or decrease in the quantity of DPS flats volume in relationship to the total flats volume for the route as compared to the latest mail count (or the adjusted base); a formal review may be requested by the assigned rural carrier (Designation 71, 74 or 79) or scheduled by management.

Whether the assigned rural carrier requests a formal review or management has determined that it is appropriate to schedule a formal review the following procedures are required:

1. A *DPS Flats Formal Review Request/Notice* (Attachment 1) must be completed by either the assigned rural carrier or management.
 - a. The party completing this form must articulate the reason(s) that warrant the formal review of DPS flats processing. A simple statement of belief or a perception that there is an increase or decrease in the DPS flats volume in relationship to the total flats volume for the route is not, by itself, sufficient to support the request or notification. The reason(s) for the formal review request or notification must be characterized in such a way to adequately justify the need for a DPS flats formal review.

Example: Carrier states that during the mail count he/she received 4 trays of DPS flats and the equivalent of 1 tray of raw flats, on average per day for the week. Carrier also states that the route is now receiving, at the time of the request, 2 trays of DPS flats and the equivalent of 3 trays of raw flats, on average per day for the week.
 - b. A *DPS Flats Formal Review Request/Notice* that does not provide reasonable justification for the formal review request may be rejected by management. Any request rejected by management may be subject to the grievance-arbitration procedure.
 - c. The *DPS Flats Formal Review Request/Notice* includes an acknowledgement of receipt which must be annotated by either the assigned carrier or management, as appropriate. The date of receipt must be properly annotated on the form and a copy provided to the assigned carrier. If management schedules a route for a formal review and the assigned carrier is on extended leave or the route does not have an assigned carrier (Designation 71, 74 or 79), management must provide a copy of the form to the local steward or if there is no local steward, the state steward. Local management should retain the original of this form in the route file

- d. Once completed, a copy of the *DPS Flats Formal Review Request/Notice* is forwarded to the Manager, Operations Programs Support. Operations Programs Support will be responsible for ensuring that the DPS flats formal review is properly conducted in accordance with these procedures.
2. The DPS flats formal review process must begin within thirty (30) days of the receipt of the formal review request or written notification at the local office. The begin date of the formal review is determined by management.
3. No DPS flats formal reviews will be conducted during the month of December. Should any portion of the thirty (30) days within which the formal review must be conducted fall during the month of December, these days will not be counted. The count of the thirty days will resume on January 1.
4. The DPS flats formal review will consist of a twelve (12) day count of all flats received on the route. This count will be for 12 consecutive delivery days and may begin on any day of the week, provided the begin date is within thirty (30) days of receipt of the *DPS Flats Formal Review Request/Notice*.
5. The count of flats volume during the formal review will be consistent with rural mail count procedures, as follows:
 - a. **Papers, Magazines, Catalogs, Flats, Other Non-Letter-Size Mail**

All newspapers, flats, magazines, catalogs, rolls, and other non-letter-size mail that can be cased for delivery using carrier casing equipment will be included in the "raw" flats count. This includes catalogs cased with other mail or cased separately. This does not include those items specifically referenced in column 6, *Parcels*.

Flats in DPS order that are out of sequence or otherwise undeliverable when the carrier takes DPS flats directly to the street are credited as letters, flats, or parcels, as appropriate. If classified as flats, these mail pieces are included in the flats volume recorded on the review worksheet. These mail pieces are not deducted from the count of DPS flats.
 - b. **Delivery Point Sequence (DPS) Flats**

All mail that is processed on automated equipment in delivery point sequence order and provided with DPS flats.
 - c. The end of run report piece count (or future equivalent report) from the automated equipment used to process a zone's DPS flats will be utilized when recording DPS flats volume.
6. Utilize the *DPS Flats Quantity Review Worksheet (Attachment 2)* to record the flats volume for the twelve (12) day review period. The flats volume from the latest mail count or adjusted base following a DPS flats formal review is also recorded on this worksheet to complete the comparative calculation.

7. The assigned rural carrier will be provided notification of the results of the DPS flats formal review as soon as practicable following completion of the twelve-day count of mail. A copy of the *DPS Flats Quantity Review Worksheet* will be used for this purpose. This worksheet should then be placed in the route file locally.
8. No base hour change will be effected as a result of the DPS flats formal review unless the resulting variance in the percentage of DPS flats volume is equivalent to or greater than sixty (60) minutes (one (1) hour) in the rural route's evaluated hours.
9. Form 4003, *Official Rural Route Description*, will be submitted to effect any necessary base hour change resulting from a DPS flats formal review. The base hour change will be effective on the first day of the pay period in which the *DPS Flats Formal Review Request/Notice* was annotated as received.
10. Once a rural route's evaluation is changed as a result of a DPS flats formal review, the resulting route data will become the "adjusted base". This adjusted base will be used as comparison for any subsequent DPS flats formal reviews when it is believed that there is an increase or decrease in the quantity of DPS flats volume in relationship to the total flats volume until superseded by a future mail count or a base hour change resulting from another DPS flats formal review.

While the DPS flats formal review is defined as a twelve-day count of total flats volume and the resulting analysis of the quantity of DPS flats in relationship to total flats volume as compared to the latest mail count or adjusted base; this does not preclude management from ensuring that processing and delivery operations continue in the most efficient manner possible prior to, during, and after the review. To that end, management may wish to review one or more of the following items which could contribute to a potential variance in the quantity of DPS flats in relationship to the total flats volume received on a route:

1. Review the current flats processing procedures to include an assessment of any changes that may have occurred, such as sort plan modifications, scheduling differences, machine 'burn in", etc.
2. Review route information to determine if any adjustments have been made to the route that may have impacted the quantity of DPS flats received and confirm data accuracy.
3. Review distribution, transportation, or processing schedules to promote efficiency and make any adjustments as appropriate.

DPS FLATS FORMAL REVIEW REQUEST/NOTICE

In accordance with Handbook PO-603, *Rural Carrier Duties and Responsibilities*, section 541.4 and the *DPS Flats Mail Formal Review Procedures*, a formal review of DPS flats processing is being requested or scheduled for the following rural route:

Office: _____ Route # _____

JUSTIFICATION:

Clearly specify the reason(s) that support your request or notification.

Example: Average per day: Mail count = 4 trays DPS flats and the equivalent of 1 tray of raw flats (80% DPS flats). Current = 2 trays DPS flats and the equivalent of 3 trays of raw flats (40% DPS flats).

REQUEST BY RURAL CARRIER:

I am the assigned carrier (Designation 71, 74 or 79) for the rural route identified and I am requesting a formal review of DPS flats processing for the reason(s) cited above.

Assigned Carrier's Printed Name: _____

Assigned Carrier's Signature: _____

- OR -

NOTIFICATION BY MANAGEMENT:

I have determined that a formal review of DPS flats processing will be scheduled on the rural route identified for the reason(s) cited above.

Manager's Printed Name: _____

Manager's Signature: _____

I acknowledge receipt of this DPS Flats Formal Review Request/Notice on:

_____ Assigned Carrier's initials: _____
(insert date) Manager's initials: _____

This request for a DPS flats formal review is being rejected for failure to provide the required justification. This form is not annotated as received and is returned to the assigned carrier on _____.

A copy of the completed form must be immediately forwarded to:

Manager, Operations Programs Support

Copy provided to assigned rural carrier, local steward, or state steward, as appropriate.
Retain original in local office (rural route file).

**DPS FLATS QUANTITY REVIEW WORKSHEET
INSTRUCTIONS**

- 1) **12-DAY FLATS VOLUME** – Conduct a count of all flats volume received over 12 days. Record the volume daily in the DPS or residual mail columns. Total volume daily. Total all columns at the conclusion of the 12-day count. Determine the percentage of DPS flats received during the 12-day count by dividing the DPS total flats by the total flats volume.

- 2) **PREVIOUS FLATS VOLUMES** – For comparison purposes, you must enter the flats volume from the last official mail count (2-week or 4-week) conducted on the route or from the adjusted base from a previous flats formal review that resulted in a base hour change to the route evaluation. Utilize the total volume data from columns 4 and 5 from the Form 4241 for the last mail count or the adjusted base volume as noted on the prior *DPS Flats Quantity Review Worksheet*. Calculate the DPS percentage by dividing the DPS flats by the total flats volume.
MAKE ENTRIES ON ONLY ONE LINE IN THIS SECTION.

- 3) **COMPARISON** - Enter the percentage of DPS flats determined by the 12-day count from Section 1 on the "Review Percentage" line. Enter the percentage of DPS flats recorded in Section 2 on the "Percent from Mail Count/Adjusted Base" line. Subtract the "Mail Count/Adjusted Base Percentage" from the "Review Percentage." The difference will be the percent variance (+ or -) between the review and the mail count/adjusted base period.

- 4) **IMPACT ON ROUTE** – Enter the count total flats volume from Section 2 divided by two or four weeks as appropriate in the "Previous Total Flats Volume (Weekly avg)" line. **Note:** If using the adjusted base volume from Section 2, enter the numbers as recorded in this line. Then multiply the percentage difference in Section 3 by "Previous Total Flats Volume" and enter in the "Volume Variance" line. This is the flats volume associated with the variance in the percentage of DPS flats received. Multiply the "Volume Variance" by the conversion factor of 0.0772 or 0.0412 minutes per piece, as appropriate (route is/is not assigned an Employer provided vehicle) to determine the "Minutes Difference."
 - A) **REVIEW RESULTS** – If the "Minutes Difference" line in Section 4 indicates less than 60 minutes, then no action is taken on this route. Check the "does not qualify" block in Section 4A. No further action is required. If the "Minutes Difference" line in Section 4 indicates a difference of 60 minutes or more, check the "does qualify" block and proceed to Section 4B.

 - B) **ADJUSTED BASE** – If the difference indicated is 60 minutes or more, enter in the effective date of the base hour change. Calculate the new route evaluation and also enter it on the appropriate line. Finally, recalculate the adjusted base. Multiply the total flats in Section 2 by the DPS percentage in Section 1. Record that in the DPS flats volume in this section. Adjust the residual flats volume so that the total flats volume does not exceed the total flats volume as recorded in Section 2. Divide by two or four weeks as appropriate to determine the weekly average. This becomes the adjusted base that will be used if necessary for subsequent DPS flats formal reviews.

DPS FLATS QUANTITY REVIEW WORKSHEET

POST OFFICE/BRANCH

STATE, ZIP+4

AREA NAME

DISTRICT NAME

BEGIN DATE OF REVIEW

ROUTE NUMBER

GOV VEHICLE Yes No

<<< Begin date must be entered to display all data

ENTER CURRENT STANDARD "HOURS" >

MINUTES >

ADJUSTED STANDARD "HOURS" >>>>>

MINUTES >

1) 12-DAY FLATS VOLUME

	DATE:	DPS	RESIDUAL	TOTAL	
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					% DPS
TOTAL					

2) FLT VOLUME - MOST RECENT COUNT

	DPS	RESIDUAL	TOTAL	% DPS
2-WK COUNT DATA				
4-WK COUNT DATA				
ADJUSTED 'WEEKLY' BASE				

3) COMPARISON

12-DAY REVIEW PERCENTAGE	
PRIOR COUNT or ADJUSTED BASE PERCENTAGE	
PERCENT DIFFERENCE	

4) IMPACT ON ROUTE

PREVIOUS TOTAL FLATS VOLUME (Weekly Avg)	
VOLUME VARIANCE	
MINUTES DIFFERENCE	

As a result of the DPS Flats mail formal review (data above), the identified rural route:

RESULT NOTE >>>

Not a 60 min change. No Adjustment

DPS	RESIDUAL	TOTAL	% DPS

A copy of the completed worksheet must be immediately forwarded to:
Manager, Operations Programs Support
 Copy provided to assigned rural carrier or local steward, as appropriate.
 Retain original in local office (rural route file).