



Meeting the Evaluation Letter – 2016 Fiscal Year

SUBJECT: Performance Appraisal/2080 Adjustment/ Article 8.2/MOU #2/DPS to the Street/M-38.228.4

National Rural Letter Carriers' Association stewards regularly receive calls regarding carrier's 'meeting their evaluations', budgeted hours, DPS to the street, percent to standard, starting times, 2080 adjustment of routes, 5 PM end time; issues that from the Association's standpoint attack the very essence of the evaluated system, that being, carrier's performing without the need for 'constant' supervision because the system allows for variations without pay consequences except for select circumstances. The evaluated system allows carriers to choose what works best for them and the union again asks 'what has changed'? Included in this letter are six items, with comments, for your review and utilization in dealing with carrier performance issues and associated actions that may take place.

A. PO 603.151.2 Performance Appraisal states:

If the weekly time required to serve the route consistently varies more than three hours, either below or in excess of the route's standard hours, managers should consider corrective action. Exceptions may be made for carriers 55 years of age or older, and carriers who have served continuously for 25 years or more, provided that their conduct and efficiency are satisfactory. When it is demonstrated that a carrier 55 or over cannot confine total working time to 48 hours per week or less, the route will be adjusted.

Is this being utilized in the management of all routes, both over and under evaluation? Is consideration given for the Service's Every Piece Every Day way of doing business now? Has dispatch been changed? This year I am including with added emphasis the contractual language on adjustment of routes due to "projected" 2080 issues and note in particular that all reviews need take into account past carrier performance in its entirety.

B. Article 9.2.C.7.b. (2) Review—During Guarantee Period

When a postmaster believes that a rural carrier will exceed 2,080 actual work hours during the guarantee period, the following procedures shall apply: The rural carrier must be advised, in writing, and a meeting arranged to discuss the action deemed to be necessary to assure that the actual hours do not exceed the 2,080 annual guarantee. At such meeting, the postmaster shall ascertain whether or not a rural carrier, not covered under C.7.a., will commit, in writing, to use sufficient annual leave to keep the actual work hours under 2,080 during the guarantee period. Normally, route adjustments or additional relief days will not be necessary in order to control actual work hours where the rural carrier has given specific commitments of annual leave and such leave usage will keep the actual work hours under 2,080 for the guarantee period. However, the postmaster may take such action as necessary to avoid actual work hours in excess of 2,080 during the guarantee period. **NOTE: Notice in writing and a meeting to discuss.**

C. Article 8.2. Work Schedules states:

Daily schedules shall be established to coincide with the daily evaluation of the route and adjusted periodically as required. The carrier's work day may vary above or below the daily evaluation of the route as mail volume fluctuates and road and weather conditions change.

Is consideration given to these elements in appraising carriers as well as the safety issues that are inherent with carriers "feeling" pressured to 'make up' time? Has management conducted a review of the carrier's actual performance over the course of a year – times do vary with the seasons?

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The present evaluated system does not provide a mechanism to account for two things, one, variations in route characteristics, (good versus poor roads; busy highways, intersections, and crossings of many types versus low traffic routes unencumbered by traffic stoppages; long versus short or no driveways for special service mail). The second is that the evaluated system has no mechanism for accounting for variations in individual employee characteristics. This is a critical issue because our craft like all others is composed of people in all age groups with a wide range of abilities. It is not unusual as we age to have more difficulty performing the same tasks that were once easy – the key is to not ‘compare’ the ‘speed merchant’ to the ‘average Joe’ and/or to the ‘aging veteran’ but to apply the tenets of Performance Appraisal contained in the Contract and associated manuals to each individual and their particular route as well as to remember that the ‘count standard’ is a snap shot at a specific time in the year and often mail volumes will vary significantly. If the carrier has no ‘past’ 2080 issues (often early projections disappear with summer leave taken), does not miss dispatch if still an issue, is able on a consistent basis to deliver in a safe, accurate, and timely manner; then performance based analysis need establish starting and leave times. Auxiliary assistance is not normally used in the rural craft other than when dealing with overburdened routes or during the Christmas Overtime period

D. MOU #2 Memorandum of Understanding between the United States Postal Service and the National Rural Letter Carriers’ Association states:

The parties recognize the existing evaluated system of compensation to be a fair, reasonable, and equitable method of payment. The parties further recognize that the evaluated system is comprised of elemental standards which may not in every instance be adequate for an individual carrier; nevertheless, the parties agree that the standards, when examined collectively, represent a fair day’s pay for rural carriers.

Where discrepancies develop in the element of the present route evaluation system, which has been in use for many years, and into the time standards of the system that has been applied to office and road duties, the Employer may undertake studies to correct such discrepancies so long as the changes are consistent with the principles of this memorandum and Article 34. *There is a study currently in progress regarding evaluated time standards due to the last arbitration award.*

E. The contract via Article 19 ‘other handbooks and manuals’ still supports the carrier’s right to case DPS mail; PO 603.226 Rural Carrier Duties and Responsibilities states:

When mail is provided to you in delivery point sequence order, casing with other letter and/or flat mail is not required. Separator cards are provided in your DPS mail to give you visual assurance that there are no obvious sweeping errors. You and your manager will determine the number of cards and intervals where they should be placed. DPS mail is taken directly to the street and handled as a separate bundle. At your option, you may choose to case DPS mail in accordance with 15, Schedules.

———There is the caveat that carrier need be able to maintain a regular schedule and the ‘casing’ of DPS is going to add office time and should be ‘accounted’ for in establishing leave times. The Association’s stance is that the carrier needs to be able to make the determination whether or not to case DPS for numerous reasons not the least of which is the fact that DPS to the street is inherently unsafe for many carriers due to both vehicle and traffic issues. Please feel free to contact me to discuss these matters at the number and address at top of this letter.

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F. The Handbook on Management of Rural Delivery Services section 228.4 provides a tool for managers to aid carriers in meeting the evaluation and/or being off the street by the 5 PM goal and with increased parcel business it is almost a necessity that rolling of the mail as stated in M-38.228.4 be utilized:

228.4 Managers should level the workload of carriers by utilizing the proper curtailment procedures for non-preferential mail. Identify and work mail in order of priority and sequence of receipt.

The union notes that there is no contractual or handbook provision in place stating that carriers MUST be off the street by 5 PM; nor is there provision stating carriers need provide a mechanism to contact management to advise them of delays in the delivery of all mail which is part of the contract and handbooks.

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