

MRS updates



James D. Henry

Are you familiar with the Materials Reference System (MRS)? It is a key tool for many who are involved in the grievance-arbitration process. The MRS is a collection of contract administration materials assembled by NALC Headquarters Contract Administration Unit. The MRS Index contains summaries and, in some cases, the full text of many important national-level materials, including settlements of Step 4 grievances, national-level pre-arbitration settlements, memorandums, USPS policy statements, NALC publications and more, which help enforce the collective-bargaining agreement.

Although the appearance and layout of the MRS Index has substantially changed, compared to its 2014 publication, the new format now gives NALC Headquarters the ability to update the MRS in real time. This means that documents are frequently being added to be readily available for shop stewards, officers and more. Using the MRS will allow shop stewards to make proper arguments and have better formulated case files.

A complete list of MRS document summaries can be found at the bottom of the NALC “Resources” web page. Below are recent documents added to the MRS:

- **M-01990**—This MOU contains the agreed-upon procedures to follow when all city letter carrier assignments are permanently moved from an independent installation to a S&DC. The process outlined in this MOU does not apply when an installation is discontinued and/or consolidated, or when a station or branch is transferred or made independent in accordance with Articles 12.5.C.1, 12.5.C.2, and/or 12.5.C.3 of the National Agreement.
- **M-01991**—The process outlined in this MOU does not apply when an installation is discontinued and/or consolidated, or when a station or branch is transferred or made independent in accordance with Articles 12.5.C.1, 12.5.C.2, and/or 12.5.C.3 of the National Agreement.
- **M-01993**—This MOU regards the agreement of the national parties to allow regular workforce career employees covered by the USPS-NALC National Agreement to carry over 520 hours of accumulated annual leave from leave year 2023 to leave year 2024.
- **M-01994**—This is a letter from USPS to NALC acknowledging that the bidding procedures outlined in

Article 12.3.A of the National Agreement are renewed effective May 21, 2023. Employees will be allowed to continue bidding during the period of ongoing contract negotiations and/or in the event of an impasse.

- **M-01995**—This is a memorandum of agreement in which the national parties agree that Step B teams are prohibited from citing or quoting regular panel arbitration awards in any decision unless the award is from the installation where the grievance arose and is relevant to the subject matter at issue.

An important M-document commonly used by shop stewards is USPS Policy Letter Re: Arbitration Award Compliance (M-01517). The USPS policy letter supports contractual language in Article 15.3.A of the National Agreement. It also is directed toward management, requiring them to bargain in good faith and honor settlements made. Compliance has been a significant reason for the rise in numbers of grievances at Step B and arbitration.

Recently, NALC was made aware of management’s arguments against M-01517. Management asserts that the postal policy is neither an agreement between the parties nor a precedent-setting MOU, and it is not part of the National Agreement or *Joint Contract Administration Manual (JCAM)*. If management makes an argument similar to the aforementioned, please make sure that you respond to that argument properly and refer to M-01517 policy letter as just that, *USPS policy*.

M-01517 was signed by Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe on May 31, 2002, and states in part:

Compliance with arbitration awards and grievance settlements is not optional. No manager or supervisor has the authority to ignore or override an arbitrator’s award or a signed grievance settlement. Steps to comply with arbitration awards and grievance settlements should be taken in a timely manner to avoid the perception of non-compliance, and those steps should be documented.

Please ensure that all managers and supervisors in your area are aware of this policy and their responsibility to implement arbitration awards and grievance settlements in a timely manner.

For those of you who have been wanting to be more active in the union, do it! Being a shop steward, a dispute resolution team member, or holding any other position in the NALC is not for the faint of heart. The NALC provides you with the National Agreement, *JCAM*, MRS and other resources and tools to help you succeed as a union representative. In the words of former First Lady Michelle Obama, “Your success will be determined by your own confidence and fortitude.”