



# 'It's alive, alive...'

**R**emember that line from “Young Frankenstein,” the movie? These days, it seems like some people appear to be reacting the same way to Carrier Optimal Routing (COR), the latest postal gift to 21st-century software. Sometimes I wonder if COR will be the central topic in a new Broadway play, “How to Screw Up a Route Without Even Trying.”

I receive complaints from all over the country about how COR is improperly being used to adjust routes. Actually, it really isn't so much the COR program that is screwing up as much as the postal brainiacs who feed crapola data into COR and the ones who abrogate their responsibility to ensure that whatever comes out of COR adheres to the collective bargaining agreement. So, let's take a look at COR 101.

The first thing to do is to review the National Settlement on COR (MRS #M-01661), which states, in part:

The Carrier Optimal Routing (COR) process is a management tool to assist with the adjustment of letter carrier routes pursuant to Chapter 2 of *Handbook M-39*. No components of the COR program or application of the COR process will be inconsistent with the route inspection, evaluation, or adjustment process found in Chapter 2 of the *M-39 Handbook*.

This means that whether the computer using COR has the most intricate mathematical formulas in the history of mankind or a Ouija board, it doesn't matter. What matters is that the end result of the route adjustment has to conform to the nth degree to the Route Adjustment Process in Chapter 2 of the *M-39 Handbook*.

**Every letter carrier should keep a copy of PS Form 1838**, the form that should be provided by the day following the day it was filled out during every day of route inspection. Letter carriers should keep those copies and bring them with them to the carrier consultation. Compare the office and street times on every day during the inspection week with the times listed on the PS Form 1840 (rte. insp. week summary) that the consultation manager should show

the letter carrier. If there are any time differences, object to those differences and request the documentation in writing on PS Form 1840 and immediately notify your shop steward of such circumstances.

Another part of the COR settlement states, in part,

To facilitate the practical application of this understanding, when transferring territory the back of the PS Form 1840 will indicate, by sector segment, any change in street credit from the actual street time used in sector-segment on PS Form 3999; including all relay, travel, allied time, etc. Any such adjustment to the carrier's actual street time must be documented and explained by appropriate comments on the reverse of PS Form 1840. Additionally, any time adjustment to the base street time, which must be selected pursuant to *M-39* Section 242.321, will be documented and explained under the comments section on the reverse of PS Form 1840. Travel To, Travel From, and Travel Within times must be validated, documented, and discussed during carrier consultation. The actual time should be taken from the Inspection PS Form 3999, unless a new pattern is created during the route adjustment process. If a new travel pattern has been created, the new times must be valid.

Experienced NALC shop stewards know to check the losing routes' (routes that have territory taken away) time credit on Forms 1838 and 3999 with the credit of such times on routes that have the same territory transferred to them. When the time credit is different on the losing route from the time credit given to the gaining route, with no satisfactory explanation on the reverse side of Form 1840, the presumption should be that the *M-39* was not followed, in violation of the National Settlement on COR. A grievance investigation should be initiated.

**Chapter 2 of the *M-39 Handbook*, Chapter 9 of the *M-41 Handbook*, and the NALC *Route Protection Program* are must-reads.** Each NALC branch has a copy of the Route Inspection Kit CD, a copy of the Contract CD and hard copies of the corrected pages for Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the NALC's *Route Protection Program*. 