

Contract Administration Unit

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Voluntary transfer process

The May 2021 Contract Talk explained the contractual provisions that apply to career employees who want to voluntarily transfer from one installation to another or to another bargaining-unit craft. This month's article will explain the process a career letter carrier should use to request a transfer, the criteria that management may consider when reviewing an employee for reassignment, and what steps should be taken if a transfer request is denied.

There are three types of voluntary transfers available to career letter carriers. The first type is when a letter carrier wants to transfer to another installation within the letter carrier craft. The second type is when a career letter carrier wants to transfer to another craft in another installation. The last type is when a letter carrier wants to transfer to another craft within his or her current installation. This last type of reassignment includes part-time regular letter carriers who want to become a full-time letter carrier within his or her current installation. While part-time regular letter carriers are part of the letter carrier craft, these reassignments are handled in the same manner as a career letter carrier transferring to another bargaining-unit craft.

All three options are available only to career letter carriers, both full and part time, as long as they have met the mandatory lock-in period as defined in Article 12 of the National Agreement. Former city carrier assistants (CCAs) who have been converted to career status must serve the appropriate lock-in period prior to requesting a transfer, regardless of the type of reassignment. This requirement is explained on page 12-51 of the 2022 *Joint Contract Administration Manual (JCAM)*, which states:

A CCA who is converted to career status is required to serve a lock-in period for transfers, just like any other newly hired career letter carrier is required to serve.

A copy of the 2022 *JCAM* is available on the NALC website at nalc.org/workplace-issues/body/2022-JCAM.pdf.

For a detailed explanation of the lock-in period, please see the May 2021 Contract Talk article, which is available on the NALC website at nalc.org/news/the-postal-record/2021/may-2021/document/CT.pdf.

When an employee wishes to reassign, the first step is to submit a request. Letter carriers wishing to reassign to another installation have two options for submitting their request: They can either submit a written request to USPS Human Resources or submit the request online using the eReassign application. Both options are available when letter carriers want to transfer to another installation, whether they want to reassign within the craft or to another bargaining-unit craft.

To access eReassign, an employee will need to first log in to LiteBlue (liteblue.usps.gov/wps/myportal) using his or her employee identification number (EIN) and password. The eReassign application includes a list of frequently asked questions that employees can access if they need additional information about the use of eReassign.

Even though employees are not required to use eReassign to submit their request, this is the best method since there would be an electronic record of the request. If an employee decides to submit a written request to Human Resources, the request will be entered into eReassign once it is received by the Postal Service. Article 12, Section 6.B of the National Agreement obligates management to acknowledge the request in writing. This section states:

Providing a written request for a voluntary transfer has been submitted, a written acknowledgment shall be given in a timely manner.

An electronic copy of the 2019-2023 National Agreement can be found on the NALC website at nalc.org/workplace-issues/body/2019-2023-National-Agreement-Bookmarked.pdf.

Employees who have submitted their requests in writing should ensure that they receive this written acknowledgement, and should keep a copy for their records. If a letter carrier does not receive this acknowledgement, or if the request is not entered into eReassign, the carrier should contact his or her shop steward or local branch officer so they can investigate the situation.

The process for submitting a request using eReassign is more extensive and includes several steps. After signing in to LiteBlue, select the "My HR" tab at the top of the home page. The link to eReassign is located on the main Human Resources page. After clicking the link to eReassign, the letter carrier will have to sign in again using his or her EIN and the same password. From the main eReassign page, employees can search for installations by city or state. The search will also show which crafts are available for transfer. If a craft does not appear in the search, then there are no jobs within that craft in the installation. The only exception pertains to the rural letter carrier craft. Career letter carriers cannot voluntarily transfer to the rural craft, so this craft will not be displayed in the search. The search function will not show the vacancies in the installation, just the crafts in the office.

There are no limits to the number of active requests an employee may request; however, each request is only active for one year from the date it is received and must be renewed before it expires. For requests submitted using eReassign, the

(continued on next page)

Voluntary transfer process (continued)

date a request is submitted is the same as the date it is received. As explained above, requests submitted in writing to HR will be entered into eReassign by the Postal Service, so the received date may be different than the submission date. Employees can renew their requests beginning 90 days before the expiration date by clicking on the “Extend Button” on the bottom of the “Request” tab. Employees should keep track of their requests and the expiration date to ensure that they do not expire, since transfer requests are considered based on the date they are submitted. You may want to set a reminder on your phone so that you do not forget the expiration date. Keep in mind, submitting a new request is not the same as extending an existing request. Failing to renew a request could cause an employee to lose an opportunity to transfer.

When letter carriers want to transfer to another craft within the installation, or if a part-time regular letter carrier wants to become a full-time letter carrier, there is only one option for submitting the request. These requests must be submitted in writing to the installation head, usually the postmaster of the city. These requests will not be entered in eReassign, so the employee should sign and date the request and keep a copy for the records in case there are any questions about when the request was submitted. Since these requests are not entered into eReassign, there is no requirement to renew them each year. Like requests to transfer to another installation, requests to reassign to another craft within the installation are considered in order, based on the date they are submitted.

Once a letter carrier is being considered for transfer, management is limited in the criteria that it can consider when determining whether to accept the employee or not. According to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Re: Transfers, the Postal Service may review the work, attendance and safety records of letter carriers being considered for reassignment. This provision, found in Section 1.D of the MOU Re: Transfers, states in pertinent part:

Managers will give full consideration to the work, attendance, and safety records of all employees who are considered for reassignment. An employee must have an acceptable work, attendance, and safety record and meet the minimum qualifications for all positions to which they request reassignment. Both the gaining and losing installation head must be fair in their evaluations. Evaluations must be valid and to the point, with unsatisfactory work records accurately documented.

The national parties’ joint understanding of this provision is found on page 12-49 of the 2022 *JCAM*:

In evaluating transfer requests managers will give full consideration to the work, attendance, and safety records of all employees who are considered for reassignment. However,

local managers may not add additional criteria for accepting transfer requests. For example, a policy of only accepting transfer requests from within the district would be a violation of the memorandum.

Evaluations must be fair, valid, and to the point, with unsatisfactory work records accurately documented. They must be based upon an examination of the totality of an employee’s individual work record. Evaluations based on the application of arbitrary standards such as a defined minimum sick leave balance do not meet this standard.

This language makes it clear that management must consider the entirety of a letter carrier’s work history based on the three criteria. The Postal Service also is barred from adding additional aspects of an employee’s work records when accepting or denying an employee for reassignment.

In the event that a letter carrier receives a letter stating that he or she was denied a transfer, the carrier should immediately contact the shop steward or local branch officer and provide them with a copy of the denial letter so that they can investigate the denial and initiate a grievance if necessary. Even though the installation head of the gaining office is the person who denied a transfer, any grievance initiated over the denial must be filed in the letter carrier’s current installation. The national parties’ joint understanding of this requirement is found on page 12-47 of the 2022 *JCAM*:

The denial of a transfer request is a grievable matter. When the denial of a transfer request is grieved, the disputed decision is by the Postmaster of another installation. Nevertheless, any grievances concerning the denial of a transfer request must be filed with the aggrieved employee’s immediate supervisor as required by Article 15.2. Arbitrators from one region have the authority to order Postmasters in another region to accept a transfer request.

When filing a grievance regarding a denial of transfer, the shop steward should request copies of all the information management used as the basis for the denial. As stated earlier, both the losing and gaining installations must make fair and accurate evaluations of the employee, so it may be necessary to interview management in both offices when investigating the violation.

Letter carriers with questions about voluntary transfers, including the process for submitting requests or how to file a grievance over a denial, should speak to their shop steward, local branch officer or the national business agent (NBA) who represents their region. Contact information for the 15 NBAs can be found on the NALC website at nalc.org/union-administration/nalc-regions.