

New supervisor metric does not create performance requirements



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In a recent *USPS Area and Regional Update* (June 2023) publication, Chief Retail and Delivery Officer Joshua Colin wrote a column stating that USPS had challenged its supervisors to “improve three metrics” during six different supervisor symposiums. Two of the three metrics indicated by Colin in the column relate directly to city carriers. One of these metrics was “timely movement of carriers to the street within 60 minutes (90 min for walking routes) ...”. Another expectation that Colin mentioned was for supervisors to achieve “a 50 percent reduction in stationary time.”

While training for USPS supervisors is normally a good thing, I am concerned that these blanket statements can be misleading for supervisors who could mistakenly believe that these metrics create new handbook provisions and performance standards for city carriers. I am also concerned that letter carriers could feel pressured to skip necessary tasks or work unsafely to meet these arbitrary, bogus expectations. Regardless of whatever goals, metrics or directives USPS creates for supervisors, carriers always should rely on the provisions of *Handbook M-41, City Delivery Carriers Duties and Responsibilities* for the rules regarding office and street activities.

As NALC recently posted on social media, there are no handbook provisions limiting carriers to 60 minutes of office time or, in the case of walking routes, 90 minutes of office time. Depending on the day, mail volume and route circumstances, the enforcement by management of a predetermined office time may result in violations of Article 19 of the National Agreement.

NALC addressed this false perception that all routes should have less than 60 minutes of office time or, in the case of walking routes, 90 minutes of office time in the Contract Talk article in the January edition of *The Postal Record*. I would encourage all carriers, if you haven't already, to be sure to read this article. Likewise, there are no handbook provisions related to stationary time on the street. You can read more about management's misuse of stationary time in the Contract Talk article found on page 42 of this *Postal Record*.

Over the years, management has used a variety of efficiency tools, computer programs and blanket-type policies to pressure city carriers while they are in the performance of their duties. This is nothing new. In the past, USPS has developed many programs including the Delivery Unit Volume Recording System (DUVRS), the Piece Count Recording System (PCRS), Projected Office Street Time program (POST), the Performance Engagement Tool (PET) and the Delivery Operations Information System (DOIS) to project letter carrier office and street time. Unfortunately, all of them have frequently been used in ways that violate the National Agreement.

Keep in mind, the use of any management-created system or tool that calculates a workload projection does not change the letter carrier's reporting requirements outlined in Section 131.4 of *Handbook M-41*, the supervisor's scheduling responsibilities outlined in Section 122 of *Handbook M-39, Management of Delivery Services*, or the letter carrier's and supervisor's responsibilities contained in Section 28 of *Handbook M-41*. While carriers are required to follow the instructions of management, if those instructions violate these handbook provisions, they should contact their shop steward to investigate whether a grievance should be filed.

Carriers are in the best position to determine their daily workload and to estimate how long it will take to complete their routes. Be confident in your communication with management when you are fulfilling your reporting requirements, and don't be afraid to ask for overtime or auxiliary assistance if you need it. In my April *Postal Record* article, I explained what's required and how carriers should interact with management when estimating and reporting their workload. Follow the provisions of *Handbook M-41*, request and submit a PS Form 3996, get a copy to protect yourself, and communicate with your shop steward.

For decades, city carriers have expressed concerns about undue stress and anxiety created on the workroom floor by the misuse of these types of programs and blanket postal policies. When management issues these blanket statements about performance, don't be fooled into believing these arbitrary numbers and feeling pressured to achieve management's unrealistic expectations. By using the protections of the National Agreement and following the provisions of the *M-41*, city carriers can alleviate stress, reduce friction with supervisors, and rest a little easier.