

Answering your questions about recent initiatives



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Recently, City Delivery has received a variety of questions from the membership about several Postal Service initiatives. I would like to use this month's article to provide answers to some of the questions asked by city carriers related to these initiatives.

Geotab Telematic device

In a December notification, USPS informed me of its intention to implement the use of Geotab Telematic fleet management devices in all postal-owned vehicles starting in February of this year. USPS explained that the devices

can read and transmit information related to engine odometer readings, vehicle speed, locations, maintenance needs and engine hours to give fleet management a better picture of a vehicle's usage.

Limited testing of the device began in the Richmond, VA, district in December of 2019. Based on information gathered, the Postal Service determined that using telematics technology not only reduces fuel consumption but also improves overall vehicle maintenance and repairs. Additionally, the device provides an audible alert to the driver based on what it believes could be harsh driving behavior. Vehicle reports or "scorecards" will be available to all vehicle operators and their management team without identifying the actual driver; the devices are paired to postal vehicles, not drivers.

Many city carriers have asked questions about the capabilities of the devices and potential safety and privacy concerns. One concern raised by carriers is about the increased risk of Long Life Vehicle (LLV) fires with the potential additional electrical demands on already strained systems. USPS states that during the testing and subsequently there was no indication of increased fire risk due to the devices. As always, carriers should be vigilant for any possible warning signs of vehicle fire and should protect themselves accordingly.

Unfortunately, there also have been reports of some misinformed management officials who have communicated to employees that the devices are recording audio and video of letter carriers. This is simply not true; the devices only measure vehicle conditions and driving behaviors. I have spoken with USPS and have been as-

sured that the devices do not record any audio or video inside the vehicle. If city carriers are being told that the devices are being used for anything other than the stated purpose, they should contact their shop steward or branch officer to investigate.

Certified mail

In late March, the Postal Service announced a change to the procedures for certified mail at mail-processing facilities. Over the years, in many locations, USPS has routinely been including certified mail

pieces in the Delivery Point Sequence (DPS) automated mail. However, in other locations certified mail was still being held out and separated from the DPS. With this recent change, USPS hopes to standardize the processing of certified mail. So, in those locations where certified mail still was being separated, the Postal Service now is including certified mail with the DPS.

With this change, it has been reported in some areas that local management has been informing letter carriers that certified mail no longer is an accountable item; this can't be further from the truth. Whether management is processing certified mail into DPS mail or separating and issuing it in the office, it still is a special services mail product and considered an accountable item. Sections 122 and 261.11 of *Handbook M-41, City Delivery Carriers Duties and Responsibilities* specify that certified mail is an accountable, special service item and how it should be treated. These sections read, in relevant parts, as follows:

122.22 Deliver and obtain date, time of event, and signature receipts for registered, certified, Priority Mail Express, insured, and other special services mail. Use scanning device where appropriate.



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261.11 Accountable items are keys, postage due, customs duty, and special services mail.

262.1 Use PS Form 3849, Delivery Notice/Reminder/Receipt, for each accountable piece and numbered insured parcel or other special services item. Usually prepare PS Form 3849 as you make delivery. However, enter the address in the Delivery section on the barcoded side of the form, for identification, in the office at the time articles are issued.

Certified mail found in the DPS mail should be handled on the street and upon returning to the office, as outlined in *M-41* Sections 335.16 and 432 below.

335.16 Certified mail mixed in with Delivery Point Sequence (DPS) mail and identified while performing street duties is to be handled in the same manner as certified mail that is issued in the office by the accountable clerk. Customers must sign for this mail on the data collection device at the delivery point. If for any reason the customer cannot sign on the collection device, PS Form 3849 must be completed at the delivery point and delivery should be attempted. Receipts are to be turned in and the collection device presented to the accountable clerk along with receipts for any other certified mail.

Registered and Certified

432.1 Give finance clerk all undeliverable articles, present the data collection device showing each item delivered, all PS Forms 3849 for items unable to be signed for on the device, and/or PS Form 3811 for each registered and certified delivery. The supervisor may print an electronically generated report showing all items signed for on the data collection device.

432.2 Complete PS Form 3821 showing the number of receipts and undeliverable articles returned to the clerk. Ensure that any accountable items found in the DPS mail are added to the total accountable pieces included on the form. If form is properly completed, clerk will sign and return it to you. This is your receipt, keep it for a 2-year period (see Exhibit 432.2).

If you are instructed to treat certified mail in violation of these provisions, notify your local steward or branch officer.

Standard work instruction

—Handling of small parcels and rolls

Another recent concern regards a recently released update to a standard work instruction (SWI) for the handling of small parcels and rolls (SPRs). The update, released in March by the Postal Service, seemed to raise questions about existing procedures and appeared to create new responsibilities for city carriers. The SWI includes sections on start times in relation to manage-

ment's Distribution Up Time (DUT), SPR sortation and distribution, the Load Truck feature, and implementation of an average load time. I want to clarify some of the items on the SWI.

Carrier start times are still determined by management in accordance with Section 122 of *Handbook M-39, Management of Delivery Services*. Proper sortation and distribution of SPRs is not the responsibility of city carriers. While city carriers sometimes are used to sorting and distributing SPRs and parcels, there are no handbook or manual requirements for city carriers when performing these activities.

The SWI also seems to imply an average vehicle load time of 22 minutes for all city routes. I want to remind city carriers that there is no set vehicle loading or unloading time. Load time is determined by the letter carrier following the *Handbook M-41* guidelines. Despite what management may tell you, the union has never agreed to any time standard for vehicle loading. This 22-minute time value was developed simply as a reference time for the route evaluation and adjustment teams to use with the Digital Street Review (DSR) program in the Technology Integrated Alternate Route Evaluation and Adjustment Process (TIAREAP). The TIAREAP guidelines document (M-01983 in NALC's Materials Reference System) specifically states that this load time average is not a delivery standard and is used only for the purpose of assisting the evaluation team in identifying potential anomalies. All city carriers know that load times can vary greatly based on routes type, mail mix and local conditions. Do not be concerned if your load time varies; just continue to be efficient and conscientious when performing your duties.

As always, city carriers should perform their duties as outlined in the *M-41* and follow the instructions of management. However, if the instructions you are given seem to violate the *M-41*, you should inform your shop steward or branch officer to investigate, and if appropriate, to file a grievance.

I hope this article helps answer some questions about these recent city delivery initiatives. Be sure to visit the City Delivery page on the NALC website for all the latest news on city delivery activities.

In closing, I want to say thank you to all letter carriers for continuing to provide the excellent, conscientious service that makes the Postal Service the most trusted federal agency.