



Flats Sequencing System (FSS) implementation

The implementation of automated flat mail (FSS) is a change that many of you have experienced, or will this year. I don't think you will see this year the kind of FSS implementation delays we've seen in the past.

The Postal Service is in the process of installing 100 FSS machines around the country. The latest schedule we received from the Postal Service indicates that all 100 machines will be running by the end of June.

So what can you expect as you go through this situation? The first thing you need to know about the initial FSS implementation/route adjustment process is that it is not done jointly.

We do have some national-level agreements that provide some protections for letter carriers, but that doesn't change the fact that the initial FSS implementation/route adjustment process is a unilateral one. I'll try to explain what I'm talking about in the limited space I have.

The full text of the controlling documents for FSS implementation is contained in the Materials Reference System (MRS) and numbered M-01643, M-01644, M-01691 and M-01697 (which are shown on the next page).

M-01643—This agreement says that once FSS is *fully implemented* (fully implemented for purposes of planning to make route adjustments means FSS mail is being received in a unit), the Postal Service has the right to estimate how much time FSS saves and make route adjustments on its own.

It goes on to say that 60 days after route adjustments are implemented for FSS, "the local parties will review the adjustments to ensure that routes are as near 8 hours as possible." This is where the local parties have a choice as to whether to proceed in a joint fashion or not. You either have a dancing partner or you don't. The experience is, the sooner you figure this out, the better. Thus far, the results of joint reviews of FSS adjustments have varied from event to event.

In some districts, the local parties have agreed to jointly review the FSS adjustments and then jointly make any other adjustments needed to bring the routes to eight hours.

In other districts, we haven't been able to reach agreement on a joint process for fixing the routes. If this hap-

pens, M-01643 allows either party to claim the routes are out of adjustment and order a traditional six-day route count and inspection. Although no documentation/qualification requirements are needed to activate your rights in this regard, care should be exercised when making a determination on each route.

M-01644—This agreement established a joint task force to study work methods for handling FSS mail. It also made clear that city letter carriers on park-and-loop or foot routes would not be required to carry more than three bundles.

M-01691—This is an 18-page document that memorializes a report from the NALC and the USPS describing each party's FSS perspectives and recommendations, as well as the conclusion of what has been jointly agreed to regarding the FSS environment.

The "Reader's Digest" version is that the NALC attempted to reach agreement on assisting the Postal Service with all aspects of FSS implementation, but the USPS wasn't interested in our help with respect to many of the areas the joint task force discussed. The conclusion of their work is shown on the first two pages of the document and reprinted as M-01697.

M-01697—This agreement begins by again making clear that city letter carriers on park-and-loop or foot routes will not be required to carry more than three bundles (including when simplified address mail is involved). It also provides that collating work has to be done *in the office* when more than three bundles are present.

It goes on to say that there are no changes to work methods for other types of delivery. This means that all bundles on curblines should be placed on the working tray with the addresses facing the driver.

What about case configurations? M-01697 verifies that case configurations in an FSS environment will be consistent with the requirements in the *M-39* and *M-41* handbooks and letter carriers will be consulted before case configuration changes are implemented.

Lastly, this agreement provides the opportunity for local parties to jointly formulate a new work method, test it, and apply to the national joint body for approval of the method. Hopefully, we can find a way to work together and come up with better ways of working FSS flats. ☒