

This is our season, and we are ready to go



**Brian
Renfroe**

You have likely seen the Postal Service's recent television commercial that prominently displays the words "this is our season" and "we are ready to go." I applaud the Postal Service's recent advertising efforts including producing quality commercials like this one. The phrases "this is our season" and "we are ready to go" ring true.

As you are very well aware, peak season for the Postal Service begins in the heavier part of the fall mailing season in November and continues through the holidays in December. This really is our season.

Over the last couple of years, the workload in peak season has continued to increase due to rising

parcel volume that can be attributed to the e-commerce boom. 2014 will be among the heaviest peak seasons we have ever had, and parcel volume is expected to continue to grow rapidly for years to come.

Letter carriers take great pride in our ability to deliver for our customers anytime, but particularly during this time of year. Our jobs get harder and hours get longer this time of year. But, like we've always done, we will deliver.

We are in a better position to handle this peak season than in recent years. We are ready to go, and the following are a few reasons why.

Staffing

As a result of two memorandums of understanding, Re: Residual Vacancies – City Letter Carrier Craft (M-01824) and Re: Full-time Regular Opportunities – City Letter Carrier Craft (M-01834), more than 13,000 city carrier assistants (CCAs) and more than 5,000 part-time flexible letter carriers (PTFs) have been converted to full-time career status. These new full-time letter carriers have filled vacancies and, therefore, sharply decreased the number of vacant assignments in our craft nationwide.

A number of these 18,000 conversions to full-time status were to unassigned regular positions. In most cases, these positions were created to provide adequate full-time staffing in offices where letter carriers hold a bid assignment but are unavailable to work the assignment. Fewer vacant routes allow CCAs to be available for the additional work that comes our way during this season rather than backfilling an assignment that should be occupied by a full-time regular letter carrier.

The Postal Service also is in the process of hiring holiday carrier assistants (HCAs) to work during the month of De-

ember, as provided for in our National Agreement. These HCAs typically will assist with parcel delivery.

While there are still isolated offices where staffing remains an issue, we have made significant progress in the last year and will continue to work toward resolving staffing issues wherever necessary.

Scanners and customer service

The initial deployment of the new scanner, called the Mobile Delivery Device (MDD), is almost complete. Initial feedback from letter carriers using this device across the country has been overwhelmingly positive. The new scanner is quicker and scans barcodes with ease.

The MDD also improves visibility to customers. It communicates and relays data in near real time. This allows customers to track their mailpiece(s) and receive near-immediate alerts when they are delivered. Additional services like this combined with our reliability gives customers more reason to use the Postal Service for all their shipping needs.

The Postal Service continues to work on some of the ideas that we discussed during the development of the new device. Most of these ideas involve taking advantage of technology to provide letter carriers with as much information and functionality as possible to improve our jobs and better serve our customers.

Several of the MDD's capabilities currently are being tested or implemented, such as the sign-on-screen function for accountable mail and parcels, and two-way text messaging and alerts for letter carriers.

Vehicles

The Postal Service recently purchased around 5,000 new vehicles. Most of these vehicles were deployed in areas with a high concentration of foot routes. These locations sorely needed the additional vehicles to handle the parcel volume, especially during peak season.

While these vehicles will help in the immediate future, there is an undeniable need for new vehicles on a large scale in the near future. The Postal Service recently has gotten serious about moving forward with this project. We will continue to be involved in the design of any new vehicles.

Our main priorities in any new vehicle design are safety of letter carriers and ensuring that it meets the needs of our jobs well into the future, including ergonomics and the capacity of the vehicle.

I want to thank each and every letter carrier for your effort and dedication to serving our customers during this peak season. The pride you take in the service you provide and your commitment to our customers are the reasons for the success we have had and will have well into the future. I wish you and your family a joyful holiday season.