

Carrier Academy



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Perhaps the most important factor that determines whether or not a newly hired letter carrier succeeds is the quality of the training that he or she receives. While education is the first step to success in anything we do, it is especially important for letter carriers. Unlike many jobs, there is nowhere to get experience carrying mail, because no one else does what we do. Because our jobs constantly change, education continues throughout our careers. But it all begins with the initial training new letter carriers receive—the Carrier Academy.

The Carrier Academy was established in 2005 as part of the Standard Training for City Letter Carriers program. President Rolando (then director of city delivery) worked jointly with the Postal Service to create the Carrier Academy. It included a significant amount of hands-on experience and experienced letter carriers were the instructors.

After the Das award in early 2013, we saw the first sizable hiring of new letter carriers in quite some time. Around 32,000 city carrier assistants (CCAs) were hired in a short period of time. Vice President Lew Drass (also then director of city delivery) and I worked with the Postal Service to re-vamp, and re-establish in many locations, the Carrier Academy. We made several changes to accommodate the large groups being hired with the understanding that after hiring slowed, we would work together to improve the training. That's where we were early this year.

I have worked with the Postal Service on improvements and changes to the training over the last several months. We have completed a large portion of the training materials. The changes made are based on input both from Carrier Academy facilitators and from those who have attended the Academy. These changes include updating information on postal products and services and putting much of the hands-on practice back in the Carrier Academy. Recently, we have worked on potential expansion of the Academy. People learn best when they are given ample opportunity to *do*, not just to hear or to see.

One location that has taken a huge step in this direction is the Arizona district. A highly successful revised four-day Carrier Academy has been put in place in Phoenix. My counterparts from USPS headquarters and I visited this Academy in mid-June to observe it in its entirety.

The program in Arizona includes mock walking and driving routes for new letter carriers to practice delivery. Also,

on a daily basis the new letter carriers practice the daily routine of both office and street duties. We walked away very impressed with the structure that has been put in place and the commitment from all involved. We have a strong interest in including many of the components we saw in Phoenix in the new Carrier Academy that will be deployed nationally.

This summer, we plan to finalize the new Carrier Academy and deploy it as soon as possible. Changes that go beyond the classroom portion of the training program are also being discussed. I am confident that when the new program is rolled out nationally, all newly hired letter carriers will receive quality training that begins in the Carrier Academy and continues throughout their careers.

On a separate note, this month's Contract Talk covers investigatory interviews and various rights and warnings that letter carriers should be aware of if questioned by management, an Office of Inspector General (OIG) agent or postal inspector. We have included an insert in this month's *Postal Record* about Weingarten rights—an employee's right to representation during investigatory interviews. This insert is a card that may be folded and carried in a wallet. I strongly encourage every active letter carrier to keep this card with you, and if questioned, read the information on the card so that you are fully aware of and take advantage of your right to representation.



The Arizona district has been highly successful with its Carrier Academy. Pictured (l to r) are USPS Headquarters City Delivery Specialist Robert Neal, Carrier Academy Facilitator Oscar Garcia Jr. (Phoenix Branch 576), NALC Director of City Delivery Brian Renfroe, Carrier Academy Facilitator Debbie McCormick (Arizona Merged Branch 1902), Postmaster Ibeth Ramon, USPS Headquarters Labor Relations Specialist Tad Gallo and Carrier Academy Facilitator Alfredo Villa (Phoenix Branch 576).