

Q-and-A on route count and inspections

Across the country, management is conducting traditional six-day route count and inspections while we do not have a joint alternate evaluation and adjustment process in place. Without the guidelines of a joint process, management is obligated to abide by the provisions outlined in Chapter 2 of *Handbook M-39, Management of Delivery Services*, and Chapter 9 of *Handbook M-41, City Delivery Carriers Duties and Responsibilities*. These USPS handbooks are enforceable through Article 19 of the National Agreement. National settlements and memorandums pertaining to route inspections found in the Materials Reference System on the NALC website are also enforceable. As such, letter carriers and enforcers of the contract must remain vigilant in assuring management is held to its obligations when conducting these route inspections.

Whether you are new to the route inspection process or a seasoned veteran, the following questions and answers should provide you with a better understanding of the route inspection process, as well as management's obligations when conducting route inspections.

What is a route and unit review?

On at least an annual basis, management is required to conduct a route and unit review. All operations at the delivery units, including items that affect letter carriers' working conditions, should be reviewed and any unsatisfactory conditions should be corrected before a route count and inspection take place. *M-39, Section 211.1* reads:

In order to achieve and maintain an appropriate daily workload for delivery units and routes, management will make at least annual route and unit reviews consisting of an analysis of items listed in section 214, and workhours, volumes, and possible deliveries. Items listed in section 213 may also be utilized in the review. These reviews will be utilized to verify adjustments which have been taken by management, or need to be taken by management, in order to maintain efficient service.

When route and unit reviews are conducted, who is management obligated to share the results with?

Management is obligated to share the results with the local NALC president or designee and the regular carrier. This is the letter carrier's opportunity to discuss unsatisfactory issues with their managers—for example, poor condition of case labels. *M-39, 211.1* reads:

The results of the review will be shared with the local NALC President, or designee, and the regular letter carrier(s) serving the route(s) that require adjustment.

Is management required to notify the union of the selected period for mail count and route inspections?

Yes. The period selected for mail count and route inspections should be determined as far in advance as possible, and the local union should be notified of this schedule. (*M-39, 211.2*)

How many days in advance of the inspection is management required to post the scheduled mail count and route inspections?

M-39, 211.1 reads:

This notice must be posted at least 5 working days before the start of the count period. If a decision is made to inspect on days other than the scheduled date, 1 day's advance notice must be given.

What is a PS Form 1838-C?

A PS Form 1838-C, "Carrier's Count Mail – Letter Carrier Routes Worksheet," is a worksheet that details the carrier's count of mail and office time entries. Times and mail volumes are each recorded on the worksheet. Please refer to *M-39, Exhibit 222.214a (4)* for a complete detailed explanation of each line item.

What is a dry run?

A dry run is a review of count procedures provided by management to teach letter carriers the accurate completion of PS Form 1838-C. Management should review the worksheet and assist carriers in the correct method of making necessary entries. The dry run does not count toward any actual route count or inspection and the forms are not kept.

When does management conduct the dry run?

Management is required to review the count procedures with carriers within the 21-day period prior to the start of the route count and inspections. *M-39, 211.1* reads:

A review of the count procedures will be made within 21 days prior to the start of the count and route inspection to teach the carrier how to accurately complete count forms (1838-C and 1838-A) during the period of count and inspection.

May management block out vacation time to perform route inspections?

Yes. Management may block out vacation time to perform route inspections provided that the dates in question are blocked out prior to vacation selections. All advance commitments for granting annual leave must be honored except in serious emergency situations (*M-39, Section 211.4*).

May a carrier who is not on the overtime list work overtime during the days of the count week?

Yes. If necessary, overtime may be used to enable the regularly assigned carrier to complete delivery during the

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Contract Administration Unit

Brian Renfroe, Executive Vice President
Lew Drass, Vice President
Christopher Jackson, Director of City Delivery
Manuel C. Peralta Jr., Director of Safety and Health
Ron Watson, Director of Retired Members

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days of the count week (*M-39*, Section 221.137).

As a result of a national-level settlement (*M-01106*), this provision is much more limited than it may appear. This settlement makes it clear the overtime provisions of Article 8 and the associated memorandums remain in full force and effect during the week of route count and inspection except for two situations. *M-01106* reads the following:

- On the day(s) during the week of inspection when the carrier is accompanied by a route examiner, management may require a carrier not on the OTDL to work overtime on his/her own route in order to allow for completion of the inspection.
- On the other days during the week of inspection when the carrier counts mail, management may require a carrier not on the OTDL to work overtime on his/her own route for the amount of time used to count the mail.

Is there a limit on how many times management may conduct a day of inspection with a carrier during the week of inspection?

Yes. Management may schedule a day of inspection on no more than three days during the week of route count and inspection. The complete text of the memorandum of understanding Re: Multiple Days of Inspection (*M-01777*) can be found in the Materials Reference System on the NALC website.

On the day of inspection, is the carrier allowed to verify the mail count?

Yes. Carriers have the right to verify the entire mail count. The Step 4 settlement, *M-00536*, provides that carriers who request to verify management's count of mail have the right to verify the *entire* mail count.

May a carrier be required to curtail mail during the week of inspection?

There should not be any mail curtailed the day prior to the route count and inspection and no mail curtailed on the last day. (*M-39*, Section 221.134).

Mail that is distributed to the carriers up to the normal cutoff time will be delivered every day during the count (*M-39*, Section 221.136).

May management deduct time for comfort stops during a route inspection?

M-39, Section 242.341 reads: "Reasonable comfort stops will not be deducted from the carrier's actual time."

Can the route examiner set my walking pace or stop me from taking a rest stop?

M-39, Section 232.1 states:

The route examiner must:

- a. Not set the pace for the carrier, but should maintain a position to observe all delivery points and conditions.
- b. Not suggest or forbid any rest or comfort stops but should make proper notations of them.

When the week of inspection is over, is the carrier done with the inspection process?

When the week of inspection is over, the carrier is not finished with the inspection process. The week after the route count and inspection is the eighth week used for completing the 1840-B time card analysis (*M-39*, Section 242.324).

What is a consultation?

Management must consult with a carrier, with reasons, on any time adjustments done to their routes based on operational changes or if any days were excluded from the PS Form 1840-B (Carrier Time Card Analysis). If management does not have comments documenting the change, the carrier may note this absence of documentation on the 1840 (Carrier Delivery Route — Summary of Count and Inspection) or an attachment. If management does not provide the documentation within a week, the time adjustment is disallowed (*M-39*, Sections 242.345-242.346).

If management decides that relief or an addition is required, management must give carriers another consultation concerning any proposed relief or addition recommended for the route and the reasons for the adjustment. The comments and recommendations of the carrier should be recorded on the 1840 as well as if there is agreement or disagreement with the proposed adjustment. The carrier is not required to sign a statement (*M-39*, Section 243.11a).

Is management obligated to provide the carrier with PS Forms 1838 and 1840 in advance of the consultation?

A completed copy of the front of PS Form 1840 reflecting totals and averages from PS Form 1838 (Carrier's Count of Mail — Letter Carrier Routes Management Summary), day of inspection data, route examiner's comments, and analysis of office work functions and actual time recordings will be furnished to the carrier at least one day in advance of consultation. Completed copies of PS Form 1838 will be given to the carrier at least five calendar days prior to the consultation (*M-39*, Section 241.4).

What is management required to discuss at the consultations?

Consultation after route count and inspection should include but is not limited to:

- Mail volume (*M-39*, Section 232.1c)
- Evaluation of route (*M-39*, Section 232.1c)
- Any time adjustment to evaluated street time based on alleged improper practices or operational changes (*M-39*, Section 242.345)
- Any adjustment of evaluated street time based on a claim that conditions during eight-week timecard period or week of count were not normal so as to justify not including such day or days in base street time computation (*M-39*, Section 242.346)

Consultation for proposed adjustments should include but is not limited to:

- The proposed relief or addition
- The reasons for the proposed adjustment
- Whether the carrier agrees or disagrees
- The reasons the carrier agrees or disagrees
- The comments and recommendations of the carrier

For additional information and explanation on the route inspection process, please refer to *The 2012 NALC Guide to Route Inspections*, which can be found on nalc.org under "Workplace issues" on the "City Delivery" page.