

# Withholding and excessing in the letter carrier craft



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**A**rticle 12 of the National Agreement gives management the right and responsibility to withhold full-time and part-time positions for employees who may be involuntarily reassigned due to certain triggering events that require a reduction of the workforce in a certain craft and installation. This reduction in the workforce, generally referred to as “excessing,” could be due to a variety of reasons. We’ve seen this in the past for reasons such as the implementation of Delivery Point Sequence (DPS) and Flats Sequencing System (FSS) mail, plant closures and declining mail volume.

In the past few years, withholding and excessing events have been almost non-existent; however, recently we have seen a large number of withholding notices for positions in the letter carrier craft due to the excessing of clerks. These notifications have been received by almost every national business agent (NBA) in the country, and they directly affect letter carriers in those areas.

Management may not withhold more positions than are reasonably necessary to accommodate any planned excessing. Article 12.5.B.2 only authorizes management to withhold “sufficient...positions within the area for full-time and part-time flexible employees who may be involuntarily reassigned.”

There are no blanket rules that can be used to determine whether management is withholding an excessive number of positions or withholding positions for an excessive period of time. Each situation must be examined separately, based on local circumstances. Generally, this involves calculating the number of positions that will be reduced, the length of time over which the reductions will occur, and then determining if the reductions will occur faster than can be accommodated by normal attrition. Withholding positions for excessing is only justified when positions in the losing craft or installation must be reduced faster than can be accomplished through normal attrition.

In order to determine whether withholding is necessary, the union must decide whether management’s projections of the number of employees who will be excessed is reasonable. To do this, NALC created and uses a computer software program to track Article 12 withholding and excessing events. Each NBA has been tasked with collecting information concerning withholding notices in their regions for input into the Article 12 tracking system. If NALC is to be successful in tracking and ensuring contractual compliance protection for letter carriers, branches must be prepared to assist in gathering information and potentially filing grievances

on any improper withholding events. NALC recently created and distributed to the NBAs a set of grievance starters specific for challenging any improper withholding events. Branch leaders should contact their NBA for a copy of these grievance starters and any other information the NBA has received that may be relevant to their specific grievances.

**From time to time, I report to the membership the happenings of various USPS testing that affects city letter carriers.** One such test began in March 2015 in New York City to assess the feasibility of using mobile roll-in shelving units in two-ton vehicles. The Postal Service’s stated purpose of these shelving units is to provide letter carriers a quicker and safer way to load vehicles, while using technology on the Mobile Delivery Device (MDD) to provide routing for each parcel loaded on the shelves.

Since beginning in New York, the test was later moved to Boston and earlier this year was moved once again to Pittsburgh. In late June, a member of my staff and I visited the Pittsburgh test site to see how things were going and to get feedback from the letter carriers using the shelving units to perform their jobs.

In Pittsburgh, these shelving units are only being used on parcel post/collection routes. Prior to the letter carriers arriving for the day, the clerks who separate the parcels to the individual parcel post routes place the packages onto these shelving units rather than into hampers or onto nutting trucks. As the clerks place the package onto the shelf, they scan the package and then scan a barcode associated with the space on the shelf. Each shelving unit and each individual shelf (four shelves per unit) are numbered to create a location for each package. After the letter carriers arrive for the day, and after all of the parcels are sorted, they take the already-loaded shelving units and roll them into their vehicles for delivery. Any packages too large to fit on the shelves are loaded onto the floor of the vehicle.

Prior to leaving for the street, the letter carriers receive a printed manifest listing the addresses of the packages to be delivered that day, as well as the number of packages for each address. Also listed on the manifest is the location on the shelving units where the packages can be found (for example: Cart 1, Shelf 3, Space 13). This information is also available on the MDD. Carriers also receive turn-by-turn directions telling them in which order they are to deliver their parcels for the day.

**During my visit, some of the feedback I received from the carriers involved in this test was that the process could use some tweaking, especially in the area of the order in which the parcels are delivered.** As it is now, the carriers have no input as to what is the best order for their routes to be delivered. However, I spoke with USPS about this and was told the software technology that would allow delivery order to be modified should be available by the end of September. As with other tests conducted by USPS, I will continue to monitor the roll-in shelving unit test and update the membership on its progress as necessary.