

# The CA-17: Describing your work duties and restrictions



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**W**hen a letter carrier reports an on-the-job injury, the Postal Service has an obligation to provide forms necessary to file the claim (CA-1, CA-2), receive medical treatment (CA-16) and inform the treating physician of the letter carrier's work duties (CA-17). The letter carrier's supervisor is responsible for completing some portions of each form; some are routine and some require specific knowledge of the injured worker.

The Postal Service has an obligation to make every effort to find work for compensably injured workers. That obligation can only be enforced when compensably injured workers provide sufficient medical evidence detailing which specific work duties they are capable of performing. While many doctors have their own forms for describing work restrictions, compensably injured workers should provide their doctors with a properly filled out OWCP Form CA-17, Duty Status Report.

Most doctors don't know what the daily work duties of a letter carrier are. The CA-17 was designed to provide the doctor with an accurate description of the physical work requirements of the injured letter carrier.

The CA-17 is a legal document that determines both an injured worker's medical restrictions and entitlement to wage-loss compensation benefits. When completed, the CA-17 contains sensitive medical information and is protected under the Privacy Act.

**There are two sides to the CA-17: Side A is completed** by the employee's supervisor and Side B is completed by the employee's physician. A properly completed CA-17 should give the doctor an accurate picture of a worker's daily work duties so that accurate work restrictions can be noted. Unfortunately, most supervisors have little training or experience in completing Side A, which can lead to problems for doctors, claimants and claims examiners.

Injured workers should thoroughly review Side A of the CA-17 prior to taking it to their doctor. Because the CA-17 is a legal document, any visible alterations of a completed form may be viewed as tampering and can lead to accusations of fraud. If the supervisor's section of the CA-17 is not filled out correctly, a new form should be requested. If the supervisor refuses to provide a new CA-17, a grievance should be filed.\*

Items 1 through 4 on Side A are relatively self-explanatory, requiring the supervisor to list the employee's name, date of injury, Social Security number and occupation. Item 5 requires the supervisor to accurately describe how the injury occurred and the body parts affected. Injured workers should verify that this information is correct.

Item 6 asks for the employee's work hours per day and

days per week. This should reflect the normal work hours and days of the individual employee. Regular work hours and days may be different for CCAs than it would be for career letter carriers. This is important; most workers work a regular five-day, 40-hour workweek. A doctor might assume that the injured worker has weekends off, and therefore has two days to recover from the rigors of a regular 40-hour week. The CA-17 should accurately reflect the number of workdays for a CCA consistently scheduled six or seven days a week.

Item 7 requires special consideration by the supervisor as it describes the usual work requirements of the particular employee. Item 7a. describes how much weight a carrier handles continuously and intermittently. This is often improperly filled out.

Postal regulations require that letter carriers can carry 35 pounds intermittently and 70 pounds continuously. The only time a CA-17 would list less weight is if the injured worker is working a limited-duty assignment that specifies a lower weight. If a supervisor writes less than 35 and 70 pounds for a worker not on a light-duty assignment, a new CA-17 should be requested.

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The rest of the activities listed in Item 7 should reflect the route of the specific employee. While some activities like sitting, standing and walking are straightforward, the activity of climbing may be confusing to some supervisors. Climbing should include the amount of time spent climbing up stairs and in and out of a vehicle. Sorting and delivering mail requires constant use of your hands, so activities such as grasping and fine manipulation are done throughout the day and should be listed as eight hours per day.

**It is in the best interest of the injured worker and the** Postal Service that doctors have a clear understanding of daily work duties before determining medical restrictions. Incorrect or inaccurate information can lead to job offers incompatible with the injured worker's actual abilities. Injured workers should carefully review all of the information on Side A of the CA-17 for accuracy prior to giving it to their doctor.

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\* Failure to complete the CA-17 violates Articles 3, 5, 19 and 21.4 of the National Agreement, as well as Sections 544.12, 545.52 and 545.33 of the *ELM*.