

# Review and evaluation of route adjustments

**R**ecently, many letter carriers throughout the country went through the process of unilateral route inspections conducted by USPS management. Although inspections currently are not being conducted in the summer months, one thing to keep in mind is that the process is not over for the routes that were just evaluated and adjusted. Management is now required to review and evaluate the adjustments that were implemented to ensure that the newly adjusted routes reflect as near to eight hours of daily work as possible.

When management conducts route inspections, they are guided by the provisions of *Handbook M-39, Management of Delivery Services*, specifically Chapter 2, which outlines the necessary procedures to follow for mail counts and route inspections. This review process begins with management's analysis of certain data after the implementation of the adjustments including, but not limited to, looking at volume reports and carrier time records. The evaluation of adjustments process is outlined in section 243.611 of that chapter and reads:

After the adjustment of routes has been placed in effect, the manager must carefully study and analyze PS Form 3997 or electronic equivalent from a nationally approved computer system that provides equivalent information; PS Form 3997-B, *Operations Analysis Report*; PS Form 1813; street management records; volume recording data; and carrier's time records to see that the objective has been met, especially for those routes where extensive changes have been made.

The above section provides detailed information as to what management must review to determine whether the routes were properly adjusted after the inspection. To ensure the adjustment was accurate, management is required to review all the data. This is a very important step in any route adjustment, and at times it is not conducted. Union representatives must hold management accountable for this responsibility.

**After route adjustments are performed, the Postal Service** must also complete a new PS Form 3999 on each adjusted route to establish that the most efficient way of delivering the mail was created during the route adjustment process. Its completion also helps determine whether an additional adjustment is required to fix any issues. This directive is outlined in the following sections of Chapter 2 of *Handbook M-39*:

## **243.612**

After route adjustments are implemented or when travel patterns are changed on a motorized route, the delivery unit manager or designee must determine the new length of route by using the most practical means:

- a. Record the correct mileage and travel times on Form 3999.
- b. Record on Form 3999 the date and name of the individual who certified the new mileage for the route.

## **243.613**

When route adjustments or changes are implemented, complete a new Form 3999 to reflect the current authorized route travel pattern and schedules, etc.

If, after completion of the review, the routes are found to be out of adjustment, Section 243.682 of *Handbook M-39* requires management to make further adjustments to bring the routes to as close to eight hours per day as possible. The language reads:

If the route is found to be too heavy, relief should be granted, and conversely if found to be light, work should be added. If the carrier frequently uses overtime or receives auxiliary assistance, determine if the route is in adjustment or if the carrier is not serving it efficiently, a special inspection may be in order.

It is management's responsibility to fix any issues discovered during the review process. Achieving routes in proper adjustment requires management to follow through with the entire route count and inspection process, which includes an evaluation of the adjustments implemented. The goal of every route adjustment is clearly defined in Section 242.122 of *Handbook M-39*, which reads:

The proper adjustment of carrier routes means an equitable and feasible division of the work among all of the carrier routes assigned to the office. All regular routes should consist of as nearly 8 hours daily work as possible.

Too often, workroom floors are left in disarray as a result of a bad route adjustment causing unnecessary forced overtime, a decline in customer service and a poor labor/management climate. If, after a route count and inspection, your office is left with routes out of adjustment, then we should require management to "fix what it broke."

**All letter carriers should be aware of one simple fact:** Any adjustment must be reviewed. Letter carriers should always keep accurate information about any auxiliary assistance provided to them, copies of any PS Forms 3996 submitted and records of any instructions to clock to any code other than the ones normally used for their route. Remember, any day could play a role in the evaluation of a letter carrier's route, and just because a route adjustment has been implemented, it doesn't mean the review, evaluation and adjustment process is over.

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