

Evolving to adapt and better serve



Christopher Jackson

Letter carriers know very well how the Postal Service is constantly evolving in an effort to adapt to our ever-changing business environment and to better serve our customers. As NALC's director of city delivery, part of my duties include constantly communicating with officials at USPS Headquarters regarding the development, progress and results of the various testing and deployment of new equipment and resources for letter carriers to utilize while performing their daily duties. Letter carriers play an important role in the testing of new equipment, and they provide extremely valuable feedback for USPS to evaluate and use to find ways to improve the item

being tested.

A recent Postal Service test conducted in the Northern Virginia District has the potential to affect every letter carrier and USPS customer in the country. In late March, the Postal Service notified NALC of its intent to begin a pilot test on April 1 of a revision to PS Form 3849, Delivery Notice/Reminder/Receipt. The revisions include renaming PS Form 3849 to "We ReDeliver for You!" in an effort to better describe the form's purpose.

"Letter carriers play an important role in the testing of new equipment, and they provide extremely valuable feedback for USPS to evaluate."

In addition to the name change, PS Form 3849 was revised to reflect a simpler format as well as specific instructions for delivery personnel and customers to follow. Some other notable changes include:

- The layout is vertical rather than horizontal.
- A quick response code (QR code) was added to allow the customer to schedule redeliveries.
- Instructions are printed in a larger font, making it easier to read.
- There is a barcode on the back for employees to link the mail piece(s) to the form.
- Delivery personnel no longer are required to write the article number on the form.
- The form has a self-adhesive backing to conveniently stick it to the door or mailbox when appropriate.

During the test, city letter carriers, rural letter carriers, P.O. box clerks, and sales and service associates used the revised PS Form 3849 in the same basic manner as the current form. Those who participated in the test were then asked for their feedback, and the test results will help determine the effectiveness and ease of use of the revised form.

Other new equipment recently introduced by the Postal Service for letter carriers to use are roll-in shelving carts for the ProMaster extended capacity delivery vehicle. These carts have already been, or will be, installed in certain ProMasters throughout the country and will take the place of the current shelves mounted in those vehicles.

The Postal Service's ultimate intent is for the carts to be loaded with mail and parcels prior to rolling them into the vehicle. Once in the vehicle, they are locked into place. Currently this is not possible in most delivery units because dock heights do not match up to the floor level of these vehicles. However, USPS is currently working to develop a lift to be used in the offices where these carts have been and will be deployed.

USPS has informed me it has ordered 6,000 of these shelving carts, three each for 2,000 ProMasters. These 2,000 vehicles account for almost 16 percent of the 12,742 ProMasters previously purchased by USPS.

I have also recently received an update from USPS regarding the progress of the development of the next generation delivery vehicle (NGDV), the new right-hand drive delivery vehicle that will eventually replace the current aging fleet. Currently, five manufacturers previously selected by USPS are creating prototype vehicles that meet certain specifications required by the Postal Service. USPS officials meet monthly with these manufacturers, each of which will produce two to three configurations of a prototype vehicle to be delivered in September.

After the prototype vehicles are delivered, they will be subjected to extensive lab testing to examine their soundness and durability. They will then be sent to delivery units for field testing by city letter carriers. Test sites in Arizona, Detroit and Northern Virginia have already been selected. On a three-week rotating basis, these vehicles will be utilized in these diverse weather environments. The testing will last for six months and will focus on each prototype's comfort, usability, functionality, etc.

After the tests have been completed, a vehicle manufacturer will be selected and plans for production and delivery of the NGDV will begin. At this time, it is expected the first vehicles will begin being deployed to delivery units between January and March 2020. Letter carriers will play a crucial role in the testing and selection process of our future right-hand drive delivery vehicle.

As I continue to monitor the testing and implementation of equipment and resources that affect letter carriers, I will provide our members with updates.