Ongoing talks to improve the MDD

Christopher Jackson

It's been three years now since the first deployments of the mobile delivery device (MDD) began. Since then, NALC has constantly worked with the Postal Service to search for and explore ways to best utilize the scanner's technology to provide letter carriers with as much information and functionality as possible to improve our jobs and better serve our customers.

One of the most important features of the MDD is its ability to communicate and relay data in near real time to allow customers to track their mail pieces and receive near-immediate alerts when they are delivered or attempted. Part of the tracking and alert process involves the scanning of mail that is unable to be delivered due to improper, incorrect or insufficient addressing. Letter carriers throughout the country have provided me with many suggestions about how this aspect of the scanning process could be improved, and for several months, my staff and I have been communicating their ideas with officials at USPS headquarters.

These suggestions included adding more options in a drop-down section for the "Undeliverable As Addressed" (UAA) event on the scanner. Such options (just to name a few) include the following events: Forwarded, No Such Number, No Apartment Number, No Such Street and Insufficient Street Address.

Our idea behind adding these types of events to letter carriers' scanners (such functions are already available on clerks' scanners) is to put the scan in the hands of the individuals actually attempting the delivery and to give the customer a better understanding of why their mail piece was not able to be delivered to the address provided by the sender. This could subsequently reduce the number of customer complaints and inquiries regarding the undeliverable item and, in turn, lead to a better customer experience.

Recently USPS released MDD Update 6.1 containing two changes pertaining to this issue. First, UAA has been removed as an event and replaced with "Insufficient Address." Second, a new event, "Returned to Post Office Not Attempted" (RTPO), has been added.

The Postal Service's explanation for these two changes, which was to be provided to the delivery unit workforce, is as follows:

1. Undeliverable As Addressed (UAA) has been removed as an event in the MDD and replaced with "Insufficient Address". Insufficient Address is also a Clerk/IMD event as a reason for returning a package and will remain so. For carriers utilizing an MDD the intent is for carriers, most likely CCAs, RCAs or other carriers not familiar with a route, to use this event when they are unable to affect delivery due to an incomplete, illegible or incorrect address *and* are returning the package to the delivery unit for review by another carrier familiar with the route. This carrier may know the full or correct address by the customer name. In instances when the address can be determined, the package will then be sent out for delivery again, usually the next day. This practice is fairly common, however today carriers often scan these pieces UAA which signifies and should precede a return to sender (RTS) event by a clerk. Insufficient Address will be a Stop The Clock (STC) event. In the event the address cannot be determined, the package is handled as a mark-up mail piece where usually a clerk will provide the return reason code via the IMD and prepare the package for return to the sender.

All other packages that must be returned to the sender for any reason are handled by carriers in the same manner but they will no longer make any scan. These packages are handled as a mark-up mail piece where usually a clerk will provide the return reason code via the IMD and prepare the package for return to the sender.

It is important to have the clerk scan these packages with the RTS event code on the same day that the AAU scan occurred. Carriers returning these packages from the street should hand them to a cage clerk when clearing accountables, turning in arrow keys, etc. so the clerk can process them that day. In the event the pieces cannot be scanned the same day the pieces will be processed the next business day. If done by the next business day, a credit for the missing "same day" STC will be applied and credited to the route/unit.

2. A new event has been added with this MDD release - "Returned to Post Office not Attempted" (RTPO). RTPO is not a Stop The Clock event. This event is for packages that are being returned to the office when there is no valid Stop The Clock event *and no* intent to attempt them for delivery again that day. While this is not an encouraged practice and we expect minimal usage of the event, the intent is to understand the status of the package while not creating a false STC event for our customers solely for the purpose of reducing the number of packages without an STC event. Common reasons might include a carrier bringing back a package(s) due to lateness or illness. These packages must be automatically reattempted for delivery the next day.

These changes have resulted in quite a bit of negative feed-back from letter carriers. As NALC director of city delivery, I rely on this feedback as I continue to look for ways to improve the MDD. Since this update was released, I have discussed these changes with the Postal Service. USPS has informed me that the update was just the intitial step in an evolving process to improve how we send accurate tracking information to the customers at both ends of the mail stream, and additional events can still be added as options for letter carriers to use. I will continue to discuss this update, as well as future updates, in functionality of the MDD with the proper officials at USPS headquarters. I appreciate the suggestions and feedback I have received so far from our members.