

City delivery updates



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In November, I provided an update on the development of vehicle prototypes as part of the research and development phase of the Next Generation Delivery Vehicle (NGDV) acquisition process. At that time, USPS was in the beginning stages of utilizing volunteer rural and city letter carriers to perform field testing of the NGDV prototypes in six delivery units located in Arizona, Michigan and Virginia.

The testing schedule, which began in early October, consisted of the vehicles being used in each of the six delivery units on a three-week rotating basis for six months during normal delivery operations. On Nov. 21, the Postal Service notified NALC that testing in delivery units temporarily would be suspended to give the five manufacturers an opportunity to complete some modifications and upgrades to the test vehicles. Such a break to make improvements is certainly understandable, considering it would be rare for any prototype to be perfect in its initial deployment. I'm confident these adjustments will be made in the best interests of providing quality test vehicles for letter carriers, and I look forward to testing resuming in the near future.

While I'm on the topic of vehicles, the Postal Service recently made a decision to acquire 8,000 more ProMaster Extended Capacity Delivery Vehicles. The acquisition process is scheduled to begin this month, with the vehicle contractor expected to supply 250 to 300 vehicles each week until all 8,000 are fully deployed. These new vehicles will be very helpful to letter carriers, as USPS plans to use them to replace aging minivans and LLVs on park-and-loop routes. USPS has placed into service more than 12,000 of these vehicles since the initial deployment of the ProMaster began in late 2015. Since then, the feedback NALC has received from letter carriers who use this vehicle on a daily basis has been very positive, and my hope is the letter carriers who are assigned these new vehicles will feel the same way.

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Last month, my staff and I visited the testing of a new parcel sorter machine called Automated Delivery Unit Sorter (ADUS) at the Curseen-Morris Processing and Distribution Center in Washington, DC. The testing of this machine initially began in November 2014, at Franklin Delano Roosevelt Station in New York City, and it is still in operation at that location. Recently, four more machines were deployed for testing at Chelsea Station in Boston, Paschal Station in

Philadelphia, the Main Office Carrier Annex in Fort Lauderdale, FL, and the location we visited in Washington, DC. In these offices, ADUS is used to sort parcels to individual letter carrier routes, rather than clerks manually separating the mail as they do in other delivery units.

The way the machine works is that parcels are loaded by clerks address-side-up onto a conveyor belt, and then the packages pass under an optical reader that determines which route the package should be distributed to. The packages continue down the belt and are ejected into the parcel hamper assigned to that route. After sortation is complete, letter carriers retrieve their parcel hampers and deliver their parcels as they normally do.

This sounds simple enough, but the sorting abilities of the machine are actually very complex and include the ability to separate parcels to different locations by weight and size, as the machine will weigh and measure each package during the scanning process. The sorter can handle up to 4,000 parcels per hour, and the best part is certainly the machine's ability to sort those parcels to the proper route. I am told the accuracy rate is consistently greater than 99 percent.

Recently, USPS introduced an initiative concerning vehicle loading for carriers who are unfamiliar with the route they are delivering. The Postal Service is placing the numbers 1 through 6, or loading diagrams with the numbers 1 through 6, on the inside cargo areas of delivery vehicles. These numbers are designed to represent a letter carrier's route divided into six equal sections. For example, if a route has 600 deliveries, Section 1 would represent the first 100 deliveries of the route, Section 2 the next 100 deliveries and so on for the next four sections.

The Mobile Delivery Device (MDD) handheld scanner has been updated to include a "Load Truck" menu option. Using this feature while loading involves scanning each package before placing it in the vehicle. The MDD will visually and audibly provide the section of the truck where the package should be placed for delivery throughout the day. I can see where this feature, along with the package look-ahead feature of the MDD, would help carriers unfamiliar with certain routes keep track of the packages along their assigned daily routes.

I thank all letter carriers for a job well done delivering the nation's mail throughout the Christmas rush. Your hard work and efforts do not go unnoticed. Happy New Year, everyone.