

Carriers rise to the challenge of accelerated volume, innovation



Christopher Jackson

In June, I reported that Sunday parcel delivery and holiday parcel delivery continue to be an overwhelming success. Well, not only does the service continue to be successful, but the number of packages letter carriers deliver each week continues to grow as well. I meet weekly with officials at USPS headquarters, and one of the topics we always discuss is the volume from the previous Sunday or holiday. Earlier this summer, letter carriers were averaging about 2.5 million Parcel Select packages delivered each Sunday and holiday, with an on-time delivery rate greater than 99.5 percent. While it's pretty difficult to improve on such a great on-

time delivery performance, I am happy to report that since the beginning of July, letter carriers now are delivering an average of almost 3.2 million Parcel Select packages each holiday and Sunday. During that same time frame, an average of more than 267,000 Priority Mail packages also were delivered on those same Sundays and holidays. That's a 33 percent increase from earlier this year.

The Postal Service's partnership with a major retailer to test same-day parcel delivery has now begun. USPS is pilot testing this service at four of the retailer's stores, located in Kennesaw, GA; Deptford, NJ; Gilbert, AZ; and Scottsdale, AZ. Addresses within a 10-mile radius from these stores are eligible for the service, which is provided Monday through Saturday. Here's how it works: Customers place orders online. The mail is collected from the stores beginning after 1 p.m., sorted at the delivery units and delivered by letter carriers before 6 p.m. Through my weekly meetings with the Postal Service, I have been informed that the test is going well, with future expansion talks already underway.

A new official reporting and recording system

In September 2014, the Postal Service conducted a demonstration for Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) representatives of an alternate approach to service measurement using carrier mobile scanning devices. The demonstration involved carriers scanning mail at collection and delivery points. From there, the test advanced to the creation of the Service Performance Measurement (SPM) program in 2015, where letter carriers actually use their mobile delivery device (MDD) to scan mail pieces at specified locations during collection and delivery.

Letter carriers are given prompts on the MDD at or before reaching a particular collection or delivery point re-

garding the location, type and number of mail pieces to be scanned. Upon reaching the designated location, employees are given instructions on the device to complete the required scanning. The test results were used by the Postal Service to determine the feasibility of replacing the External First-Class Mail (EXFC) Measurement System with the SPM program.

Recently, NALC was notified that the PRC issued an order on July 5 that approved, effective Oct. 1, the use of Internal SPM as the Postal Service's official service reporting and recording system. No longer will USPS pay an external company to measure the time it takes to process mail through the system; rather, letter carriers will perform the work and get paid for it instead.

Next-Gen vehicle project moving along

The Next Generation Delivery Vehicle (NGDV) project continues to move along. After initial field testing of the future vehicle prototypes began last fall, testing in delivery units was temporarily suspended to give the five vehicle manufacturers that produced the prototypes an opportunity to complete some modifications and upgrades to the test vehicles, and to give the Postal Service time to put the vehicles through a separate series of durability tests.

Currently, two of the prototype vehicles have fully completed durability as well as field testing, one has passed durability testing and is currently being field tested, and the other two still are undergoing durability testing. From what I have been told by USPS, the timeline to finish all testing, to select a manufacturer to produce the NGDV and to engage in final deployment of these vehicles to replace the aging LLVs is still on schedule.

While on the subject of vehicles, the Postal Service has been awarded a grant from the California Environmental Protection Agency Air Resources Board (CARB) to test and evaluate electric two-ton step vans. The grant includes the use of 15 electric, zero-emission two-ton step vehicles that USPS will take possession of between this month and March 2019. The Postal Service intends to use the vehicles, primarily on collection routes, in two locations in California for a period of one year.

Letter carriers lead the way

As I have stated many times before, letter carriers play a vital role in testing and implementing potential future services, resources, equipment, vehicles and processes. To all letter carriers, I want to thank you for the great service you provide to our customers as well as for the great service you provide the Postal Service on its testing initiatives. Your hard work, dedication and feedback are crucial to their success.