

# New initiatives for City Delivery



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**W**inter is here again—and with shorter daylight hours and later start times, carriers are once again dealing with delivering mail in the dark. Delivering mail in the dark raises safety concerns for many letter carriers. Whether or not delivery can be accomplished safely depends on a variety of circumstances. The type of delivery (curbside, park-and-loop walking, cluster boxes), surroundings, adequate light sources and familiarity with the route are some of the factors that can affect safe delivery as the sun sets and darkness occurs.

Over the years, arbitrators have ruled that darkness in and of itself is not unsafe. However, darkness can contribute to an unsafe situation.

While there is no blanket policy regarding delivery in the dark, Article 14 of the National Agreement states that management has the responsibility to provide safe working conditions, and the union should cooperate and assist management to meet this responsibility. Keeping Article 14 in mind, the parties memorialized an agreement on this issue in a joint memorandum (M-00483), which states in part:

Normally, letter carriers deliver mail during daylight hours; however, we mutually agree that there is no contractual provision which would preclude management from assigning carriers to deliver mail in other than daylight hours. We also mutually agree that the existence of safety hazard in the office in question can only be determined by applying the fact circumstances to the provisions of Article XIV.

**“While carriers should not curtail or eliminate any scheduled delivery, sometimes safety concerns will limit opportunities for safe delivery.”**

Keep in mind, there may be obstacles or unsafe conditions that could become even more dangerous with darkness. These conditions can be even more hazardous if you are assisting on a route with which you are unfamiliar. It is your responsibility to attempt delivery and assess the safety circumstances that may preclude delivery. Be aware, customers and drivers are not expecting letter carriers to be out in the dark and may not react appropriately.

If you are on a walking route and an area is not well lit, you may not be able to transverse lawns safely while fingering the mail. Section 133.2 of *Handbook M-41, City Delivery*

*Carriers Duties and Responsibilities* speaks to the carrier’s obligation to safety:

Do not finger mail when driving, or when walking up or down steps or curbs, when crossing streets, or at any time it would create a safety hazard to the carriers or to the public.

In some places, letter carriers are using their cell phones or personal headlamps to assist with lighting deficiencies. Letter carriers should not be using their personal devices to assist them with mail delivery.

**Carriers should always attempt to make delivery of all mail at every delivery point.** If you are performing park-and-loop delivery, you should approach each delivery point and determine whether lighting is sufficient to sort and deliver the mail. If you cannot make delivery, bypass the stop and continue to the next delivery point. Letter carriers should attempt to deliver at each and every possible address on their route. At the end of the relay, collect any undeliverable mail that was not safe to deliver and rubber band it together for proper processing upon return to the office.

If you are delivering curbside, you may have to turn on the dome light at each delivery point to sort the mail. Remember, you may need to let your eyes adjust to the dark again before driving to the next box to do it safely.

While carriers should not curtail or eliminate any scheduled delivery, sometimes safety concerns will limit opportunities for safe delivery. In the event you attempt and are unsuccessful in safely accessing a delivery point, carriers should always report the situation to management and complete a PS Form 1571, Undelivered Mail Report. Enter the particular circumstances related to the curtailment of mail, sign the form, attach it to the mail, and give it to the supervisor or manager on duty. Under Article 41.3.g of the National Agreement, letter carriers are entitled to a duplicate of the PS Form 1571 and should always request a copy. Usage of the PS Form 1571 protects letter carriers from disciplinary and potentially legal action. Federal law prohibits improper delay of mail and, in some instances, letter carriers have received legal citations for failing to document curtailed mail.

**It is important to remember that NALC does not endorse the unnecessary curtailment of any mail.** It is about each carrier’s safety and the protection of the mail in our charge. It is the responsibility of each carrier to measure safety and report to supervisors any unsafe conditions encountered. Likewise, it is management’s responsibility to provide a safe working environment.

With the winter solstice behind us as we progress into spring, hopefully concerns about delivering in the dark will wane. As always when delivering mail, use caution, protect yourself and remember that your safety is always the first priority.