

**Contract Administration Unit**

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# Time-projection tools

**R**ecently, NALC received notification from USPS of a change to the Delivery Operations Information System (DOIS), a time-projection tool used in many locations by management to estimate the daily workload of city carriers. USPS informed NALC of its intent to reduce the amount of time allocated to parcel delivery from 90 to 60 seconds per parcel when DOIS estimates a route's street time. This change to DOIS does not modify any contractual rights or handbook provisions for city letter carriers.

Over the years, the Postal Service has developed various tools to estimate the daily workload of letter carriers. Misuse of these tools by front line supervisors has been the subject of multiple grievances that have risen to the national level. It is important for letter carriers and shop stewards to understand the national-level settlements pertaining to time-projection tools and how they relate to the use of these tools on the workroom floor.

While the names have changed with each newly developed tool, what has not changed are the letter carrier's responsibilities and reporting requirements outlined in *Handbook M-39, Management of Delivery Services*, and *Handbook M-41, City Delivery Carriers Duties and Responsibilities*.

In the past, NALC has challenged the use of any projection derived from the use of these tools as the sole determinant of a carrier's daily workload or as the sole basis for disciplinary actions. These issues have been resolved in several national-level settlements regarding time-projection systems. This article discusses these settlements, as well as the National Agreement and Postal Service handbook provisions relating to USPS-developed time-projection tools.

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In 1979, NALC and USPS came to an agreement—M-00394 in NALC's Materials Reference System (MRS)—concerning the use of the Delivery Unit Volume Recording System (DUVRS). DUVRS was an early tool used to project office time for letter carriers. This settlement states that

DUVRS “will not constitute the basis for disciplinary action for failure to meet minimum standards” and that the program “will not constitute the sole basis for a carrier's leaving time.”

In 2001, a national-level settlement, M-01444, was signed regarding three different projection systems. M-01444 makes clear that these three projection systems “will not constitute the sole basis for discipline” and that “no function performed by POST or DOIS, now or in the future, may violate the National Agreement.”

The agreement also quotes Section 242.332 of *Handbook M-39*, which states:

No carrier shall be disciplined for failure to meet standards, except in cases of unsatisfactory effort which must be based on documented, unacceptable conduct that led to the carrier's failure to meet office standards.

M-01444 also reinforced language agreed on in the 1985 national-level settlement M-00304, stating:

There is no set pace at which a carrier must walk and no street standard for walking.

A 2007 settlement, M-01664, protected letter carriers from management's use of DOIS time projections. The parties agreed that DOIS projections “are not the sole determinant of a carrier's leaving or return time, or daily workload. As such, the projections cannot be used as the sole basis for corrective action.” The settlement also makes clear that the use of DOIS does not change the letter carrier's or the supervisor's responsibilities and requirements found in *Handbook M-39* and *Handbook M-41*.

In 2011, NALC and USPS settled a national-level interpretive dispute over management's use of an “office efficiency tool” developed in the Greater Indiana District. This settlement, M-01769, extends the same protections contained in M-01664 to management's use of the “office efficiency tool” that was the subject of this grievance. The terms of M-01769 also are applicable to any management-office or street-time projection tool/system currently in use or similar tool/system developed in the future. The language states:

The subject office efficiency tool is a management tool for estimating a carrier's daily workload. The office efficiency tool used in the Greater Indiana District **or any similar time projection system/tool(s)** will not be used as the sole determinant for establishing office or street time projections. Accordingly, the resulting projections will not constitute the sole basis for corrective action. This agreement does not change the principle that, pursuant to Section 242.332 of *Handbook M-39*, ‘No carrier shall be disciplined for failure to meet standards, except in cases of unsatisfactory effort

# Time-projection tools (continued)

which must be based on documented, unacceptable conduct that led to the carrier's failure to meet office standards. Furthermore, as stated in the agreement for case H1N-1N-D31781, 'there is no set pace at which a carrier must walk and no street standard for walking.'

Projections are not the sole determinant of a carrier's leaving or return time, or daily workload. The use of any management created system or tool that calculates a workload projection does not change the letter carrier's reporting requirements outlined in section 131.4 of Handbook M-41, the supervisor's scheduling responsibilities outlined in section 122 of Handbook M-39, or the letter carrier's and supervisor's responsibilities contained in Section 28 of Handbook M-41. (Emphasis added.)

The letter carrier's reporting requirements referenced in M-01769 and outlined in section 131.4 of *Handbook M-41* read in relevant part as follows:

## **131.4 Reporting Requirements**

**131.41** It is your responsibility to verbally inform management when you are of the opinion that you will be unable to case all mail distributed to the route, perform other required duties, and leave on schedule or when you will be unable to complete delivery of all mail.

**131.42** Inform management of this well in advance of the scheduled leaving time and not later than immediately following the final receipt of mail. Management will instruct you what to do.

**131.43** Complete applicable items on Form 3996, Carrier-Auxiliary Control, if overtime or auxiliary assistance is authorized in the office or on the street.

**131.44** Report on Form 1571 all mail undelivered—including all mail distributed to the route but not cased and taken out for delivery. Estimate the number of pieces of mail.

**131.45** Do not curtail or eliminate any scheduled delivery or collection trip unless authorized by a manager, in which case you must record all facts on Form 1571.

**131.46** Before you leave the office, enter on Form 1571 the mail curtailed; when you return, add any mail which was not delivered and which was returned to the office. Follow any special local procedures set up to identify errors and corrective actions for mail returned because it was out of sequence.

**Section 28 of Handbook M-41 outlines the procedures** for letter carriers to fill out PS Form 3996, Carrier—Auxiliary Control, and to submit it to the supervisor when the letter carrier estimates that the daily workload cannot be completed in the allotted time. It also details the requirements of the supervisor in Item L of the form. A complete explanation of Section 28, PS Form 3996 and related USPS

supervisor responsibilities can be found in the *Letter Carrier Resource Guide* available at [nalc.org/resourceguide](http://nalc.org/resourceguide). To order a printed version of the guide, log on to the Members Only section of the NALC website, click the checkbox below the image of the guide and a copy will be mailed to your NALC address of record.

**The Performance Engagement Tool (PET) is the latest** USPS computer program used by floor supervisors to project a carrier's daily workload. As with DOIS and the "office efficiency tool" created by the Greater Indiana District, PET cannot be used as the sole determinant of a letter carriers' daily workload. NALC's *Guide to the Performance Engagement Tool (PET)* was created to help local union representatives understand how PET works and to assist in filing successful grievances related to the improper use of the PET tool. This guide is available at [nalc.org/workplace-issues/city-delivery/body/PET-Guide-Final-03202017.pdf](http://nalc.org/workplace-issues/city-delivery/body/PET-Guide-Final-03202017.pdf).

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**As indicated, any time-projection tool being used by** management cannot be used as the sole determinant of a letter carrier's daily workload projections. Letter carriers still are responsible for estimating the amount of time it will take to complete their assigned duties. Likewise, management still has a responsibility to manage that workload within the confines of the handbook language, as well as the above-referenced settlements. Shop stewards are advised to consider citing violations of these settlements in all grievances concerning management's improper use of office and street time projection tools or systems.