

**Contract Administration Unit**

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# Route inspection process

In past Contract Talk articles, we have covered management's requirement to abide by Chapter 2 of *Handbook M-39, Management of Delivery Services*, and Chapter 9 of *Handbook M-41, City Delivery Carriers Duties and Responsibilities*, when conducting route counts and inspections and any subsequent adjustments. Those articles were geared to union representatives who may have to initiate grievances over violations of these provisions. The purpose of this article is to educate you on how to protect your rights during the process.

Much of the information contained in this article can be found in the *NALC Route Inspection Pocket Handbook*, updated in 2018. This handbook is available to NALC members through NBA offices and the NALC Supply Department. Contact information for the NBA office that represents each area is available on the NALC website at [nalc.org/union-administration/nalc-regions](http://nalc.org/union-administration/nalc-regions). The NALC Supply Department is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Eastern time and can be reached by calling 202-393-4695, ext. 874.

## Before the inspection

Once you are notified that your route will be inspected, whether through a special or unit-wide inspection, you should begin preparing for the process. One of the first steps you should take is to start taking notes about your route and the delivery unit where you work. The *NALC Route Inspection Pocket Handbook* contains pages for you to use to record these notes; however, you may need to keep a separate notebook based on your route. You should continue to keep these notes throughout the entire process to ensure that you do not forget information that could assist your shop steward in the grievance process. Some questions you should ask yourself when making these notes:

- Is your route properly adjusted? Do you need overtime or auxiliary assistance on a regular basis, or do you pivot (undertime) on other routes?
- How much time does it take you to case and pull your route each day? Do not rely solely on your leave time when you work an 8-hour day. If you usually must wait for mail or parcels to be distributed, make a note of the amount of time you generally wait.
- Do you take both rest breaks on the street or is one taken in the office? Does the entire office follow the same procedure?
- How much time does it take you to deliver your route on the street? This time does not include your 30-minute lunch but should include either one or two rest breaks, depending on your answer to the question above.
- Do you have businesses closed on Saturday, affecting

the amount of time you spend delivering? Does this lead to an increase in delivery time on Monday?

- Is there any new construction on your route?
- Are there any issues that impact your line-of-travel either to and from the route or while delivering? This could include detours or train crossings.
- Do you deliver in an area with a high amount of address changes, such as a college town or vacation area?
- Do you withdraw letters and flats in the morning while casing your mail? Do you retrieve your parcels prior to leaving for the street?
- Do you complete a PS Form 3996, Carrier-Auxiliary Control when you need overtime or auxiliary assistance? Do you complete a PS Form 1571, Undelivered Mail Report, when you curtail mail in the morning or if you bring mail back in the afternoon?

## During the inspection

As the letter carrier servicing your route during the count and inspection process, you have a vital role to play in determining the outcome of any adjustments. While the Postal Service conducts the route inspection and adjustment process unilaterally, you can ensure that the data being used to adjust your route is accurate. Having accurate data will assist your shop steward in being successful if a grievance is filed over any aspect of the process.

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One of the most important pieces of information gathered during the count is contained in the PS Form 1838, Carrier's Count of Mail – Letter Carrier Routes (Mngt. Summary). This form shows the mail volumes for the route during the week of inspection as well as the amount of time spent by the carrier performing other office duties.

These other duties include time spent conducting the vehicle inspection, retrieving accountable items, withdrawing mail from distribution cases, personal needs time (five minutes per route) and any other duties that do not include casing and pulling mail. For a detailed explanation of each office duty and the minimum time credited to the route, see Section 222.214.b of *Handbook M-39* and the *NALC Route Inspection Pocket Handbook*.

The data on the PS Form 1838 is taken directly from the  
*(continued on next page)*

## Route inspection process (continued)

PS Form 1838-C, Carrier's Count of Mail–Letter Carrier Routes Worksheet. This is a handwritten form completed for each route during the six days of the count and inspection. It is very important that the information on this form be accurate, and the best way to ensure that everything is recorded is for you to fill out the form. Do not agree to allow management to fill out this form.

The carrier servicing the route during the inspection completes the PS Form 1838-C each day, except for the day of inspection, which is the day an examiner will accompany the carrier on the street. Even if you are not servicing your regular route or if you do not have a regular route, you still should complete this form. A detailed explanation of the proper way to complete the PS Form 1838-C is found in Chapter 9 of *Handbook M-41* and the *NALC Route Inspection Pocket Handbook*.

Prior to the week of inspection, management is required to conduct a dry-run training with each carrier participating in the process. This training must be given within 21 days of the first day of the inspection. During this training, you will complete a sample PS Form 1838-C, which management must review for accuracy and discuss any errors. If necessary, a second practice form may be completed. This training is your opportunity to learn the proper process for filling out the form so you can ensure it is filled out correctly and the information is accurate. If management fails to conduct this training or does not answer any questions you have, record this in your notes for the shop steward.

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A second important piece of information the Postal Service will use during the inspection process is the PS Form 3999, Inspection of Letter Carrier Route. This form is completed on the day, or days if more than one, of inspection and records the street time for your route, beginning when you move to street time in the morning and ending when you move to office time in the afternoon. This form is completed by the inspector and is in either handwritten or electronic format.

While you do not have any control over the information management enters on the form, you can still take steps to ensure that the time recorded is accurate. Just as you did before the inspection, you should take notes of anything

out of the ordinary that occurs during the inspection. Management may attempt to deduct time from your street time, and good notes will help your shop steward when grieving these deductions. Some examples include the following:

- Did the examiner say that you were on management time? You should have some management time while the examiner explains the process and no other work should be performed while on management time.
- Did you have to backtrack to deliver a mis-sequenced piece of mail? Is this something you have been instructed to do by your supervisor? Management will attempt to deduct the time you spent going back to make the delivery.
- Did you have to deviate from your line of travel? What was the reason and is this something you do on a regular basis?
- Did you spend any time speaking with a customer on the route? Did the discussion pertain to Postal Service business (e.g. Customer Connect, delivery issues, etc.)?
- Did you take any comfort stops? This does not include any rest breaks taken on street time.
- Did the examiner instruct you to deliver your route contrary to the way you normally deliver? Did he or she try to speed you up or tell you to work in an unsafe manner in order to get the route finished in less time? Did he or she attempt to cut your lunch or rest break short?

### Route evaluations and adjustments

Management is required to consult with you during the evaluation and adjustment stages of the process. They must provide information showing what data was used to evaluate your route times and again once they have adjusted your route. A detailed explanation of these consultations is found in the *NALC Route Inspection Pocket Handbook*. You should keep notes of these meetings, including the people present and what was said by each person.

If your route is scheduled for a route count and inspection, you should begin preparing for the process immediately by obtaining a copy of the *NALC Route Inspection Pocket Handbook*. More information regarding the process is available on NALC's website at [nalc.org/routeadjustments](http://nalc.org/routeadjustments). You may also want to read past Contract Talk articles, which can be read at [nalc.org/workplace-issues/resources/nalc-publications](http://nalc.org/workplace-issues/resources/nalc-publications). If you have further questions, please contact your shop steward, branch officer, or NBA.