

Military leave

Career letter carriers who are members of the military reserve components or the Army or Air National Guard may be entitled to additional leave when their service requires them to be absent from work. This category of leave, called paid military leave, enables employees to receive pay from the Postal Service while they fulfill their military obligations, rather than depleting their annual leave balances or using leave without pay.

Eligible full-time employees are granted 15 days of paid military leave per year. Eligible part-time employees are granted one hour of paid military leave for each 26 hours in a pay status in the preceding fiscal year, not exceeding 80 hours of paid leave. To qualify for this leave, part-time employees must have been in a pay status for at least 1,040 hours during the preceding fiscal year. This time in a pay status includes any time spent on leave without pay for military service. Exceptions to these limits are made for members of the Washington, DC National Guard, who are required to serve on active duty under Title 43, District of Columbia Code. In this circumstance, all days of active duty are eligible for paid military leave.

It is important to note that most leave provisions in the Postal Service apply to the USPS leave year, which begins on the first day of the first complete pay period in a calendar year and ends on the day before the first day of the first complete pay period in the following calendar year. However, paid military leave must be used during the USPS fiscal year, which begins on Oct. 1 and ends on Sept. 30 each year. Employees may carry over up to one year's allotted but unused paid military leave from one fiscal year to the next. The amount carried over may not exceed 15 days.

In general, members of the reserve and National Guard components are required to serve on active duty one week-end per month and one two-week training session per year. Employees required to serve active duty time in the military should keep their commitment requirements in mind when determining the amount of leave needed to cover their absences. Since most career letter carriers are not required to work on Sunday as part of their regular schedule, they would need a maximum of 12 days of paid military leave to cover all the absences for their once-a-month commitment. This number could be reduced for any other non-scheduled days which fall on a day the employee is absent for military duty. Any other absences would be charged as either annual leave or leave without pay. Each employee should make the determination of when to use paid military leave versus other leave types based on their own circumstances and needs.

The rules and regulations pertaining to the crediting and usage of paid military leave are found in Section 517 of the *Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM)*. A copy

of the *ELM* is available on the NALC website at nalc.org/workplace-issues/resources/usps-handbooks-and-manuals.

Section 517.31 of the *ELM* provides that, to the extent possible, when an employee is required to attend training or perform other military service, advance notice should be given using PS Form 3971, Request for or Notification of Absence.

To ensure proper recording of leave and to protect the employee's annual leave balance, letter carriers should indicate military leave in the "Type of Absence" section of the form.

Generally, an employee must be in pay status either immediately prior to the beginning of military duty or immediately after the end of military duty in order to be entitled to paid military leave with pay. However, Sections 517.32 and 517.33 of the *ELM* allow days on a longer period of military duty other than the first days of such duty to be charged to paid military leave, and permit such leave to be used intermittently.

To avoid timekeeping errors, an employee seeking to maximize his or her paid military leave for a longer absence should consider explaining the reason for the request for intermittent leave to the supervisor.

Employees wanting more information on paid military leave, as well as other benefits available to veterans, should read the NALC *Veterans Guide* available online at nalc.org/member-benefits/nalc-veterans.

Letter carriers may also contact their national business agent (NBA) to obtain more information regarding paid military leave. Contact information for the NBA who covers your region can be found at nalc.org/union-administration/nalc-regions.



Join the NALC Veterans Group

The NALC Veterans Group is designed to provide NALC members—both active and retired letter carriers—who are also military veterans the ability to connect with fellow NALC veterans and stay informed on issues of importance to letter carrier veterans. It is free to join.

Members receive a pin as a symbol of gratitude for your military service and membership in NALC.

If you are interested in joining the group, complete the sign-up card at nalc.org/veterans.