

COVID-19-related MOUs continue to provide protection for letter carriers

In September, for the third time this year, NALC and the Postal Service agreed to continue several pandemic-related memorandums of understanding (MOUs). These MOUs, found in NALC's Materials Reference System on the NALC website, include temporary expanded sick leave for dependent care (M-01910); temporary additional paid leave for city carrier assistants (CCAs) (M-01911); temporary use of the 7:01 rule (M-01913); temporary workplace changes to promote social distancing (M-01915); and temporary use of temporary carrier assistants (TCAs) (M-01916). These MOUs are extended through the end of the year.

- **M-01910** provides some relief for certain letter carriers dealing with child care needs caused by the large number of schools that have closed since the onset of the pandemic. This MOU allows career letter carriers to use sick leave for dependent care to care for a child as the result of a closed day care, school or the unavailability of the child's primary caregiver due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **M-01911** gives CCAs an additional 80 hours of paid leave to use for specific reasons in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic, since CCAs do not earn sick leave. Reasons to use this additional paid leave for CCAs include: the employee has contracted COVID-19 or has been directly exposed to someone with COVID-19; the employee is experiencing symptoms generally associated with COVID-19; and for the employee to use consistent with the MOU Re: Temporary Expanded Sick Leave for Dependent Care During COVID-19 (M-01910).



- **M-01913** institutes the use of *Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM)*, Section 432.53, City Letter Carriers (7:01 Rule). With this rule, a full-time city letter carrier who actually works more than seven hours but fewer than eight hours of a regular scheduled day will, upon his/her request, be officially excused from the completion of the eight-hour tour and still be credited with eight hours of work time for pay purposes. Any hours not worked between the seventh and eighth hour of a regular scheduled day, pursuant to *ELM* 432.53, are included in an employee's regular rate of pay, pursuant to *ELM* 443.212.g.
- **M-01914** is a letter from Postal Service Vice President, Labor

Relations Doug Tulino to the management in the field regarding agreements with NALC, leave policy and approval of requests for changes of schedule due to child care needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The letter states that in addition to allowing Sick Leave for Dependent Care, managers and supervisors should allow liberal changes of schedule in recognition of the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. To the extent operationally practicable, managers and supervisors should accommodate employees who submit PS Form 3189, Request for Temporary Schedule Change for Personal Convenience, as a result of child care issues caused by day care closures, school (pre-kindergarten through

Grade 12) closures, or the unavailability of a child's primary caregiver as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Managers and supervisors also should allow liberal sick leave usage for employees, and liberal annual and leave without pay (LWOP) usage to the extent operationally feasible, during this time period. If an employee requests leave for reasons related to COVID-19, such leave should be treated as scheduled (as opposed to unscheduled) leave. Leave taken for COVID-19 related reasons may not be cited in discipline for failing to maintain an assigned schedule under *ELM* 511.43.

- **M-01915** directs the local parties to immediately discuss potential scheduling and office setup changes such as staggered start times, scheduling letter carriers to begin tours in groups of 10 or fewer, the manner in which stand-up talks are given, locations and times, and other initiatives to maximize social distancing. The MOU also commits the parties to limiting individuals to working only in their employing facili-

ties to the extent possible. When not possible, the Postal Service agreed to a few additional precautions in the limited circumstance when a carrier is sent to another office to work. In these situations, the Postal Service agreed the following should be done: 1) The supervisor and steward in the losing office will jointly determine which carrier will go to the gaining office; 2) If there is concern from either the loaned carrier or those in the gaining office about the loaned carrier entering the facility, the mail will be placed on the dock or somewhere outside where it can be loaded without entering the building; and 3) If a loaned carrier does not bring a vehicle from the losing office, the gaining office will have appropriate cleaning supplies for the carrier to sanitize the vehicle he/she will be using.

- **M-01916** allows the Postal Service to employ TCAs as operationally necessary for the sole purpose of replacing city letter carriers absent due to COVID-19. Throughout the pandemic, letter carriers have

needed to use leave to care for themselves and their families. To limit disruptions in mail service as a result of taking this necessary leave, not only to protect letter carriers and their families but to protect the overall general public as well, the ability for the Postal Service to employ TCAs has been helpful.

NALC and the Postal Service also agreed to another temporary time-limit extension on Step B and arbitration appeals (M-01930), and agreed to give local parties the ability to develop a sign-up process for full-time employees who previously did not, or could not, place their names on either the overtime desired list or work assignment list. The latter agreement (M-01931) is due to the potential effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on staffing levels. Both of these agreements will expire on Dec. 31.

The national parties have agreed to revisit each of these issues immediately prior to the expiration of the MOUs at the end of the year to determine if further extensions are appropriate. **PR**

Great Postal Strike 50th anniversary dinner update

NALC has postponed the Great Postal Strike 50th anniversary dinner until it is safe to hold the event. The sold-out dinner had been planned for March 21 in New York City but, as the COVID-19 pandemic spread and shutdown orders were put in place, NALC postponed the event until Nov. 6. With shutdown orders still in place, and travel difficult and potentially dangerous, especially for the elderly strike participants the event was intended to honor, NALC has decided to postpone the event indefinitely until it is safe to schedule it again. Branches and attendees will be notified when the event is rescheduled. **PR**

