

New technology testing



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Like most companies, the Postal Service has voiced a commitment to exploring new technologies, as well as potential enhancements and new uses for existing technology. As part of this effort, the Postal Service routinely updates the software program used on the Mobile Delivery Device (MDD) and Mobile Delivery Device Technology Refresh (MDD-TR). With these updates, USPS will take the opportunity to enhance existing processes or test new features for future use. I want to use this month's article to tell you about some new features that USPS is testing in limited areas for potential use nationwide.

PS Form 3575-Z test

Traditionally, when a customer has vacated a property without providing a change of address to the Postal Service, letter carriers would complete a written PS Form 3573-Z, Employee Generated Change of Address, to document that the customer had moved and left no forwarding address. In February, NALC received notification that USPS would be updating the MDD software on March 8 to include a PS Form 3575-Z test feature. NALC has been advised that this test concept was developed based on letter carriers' feedback and suggestions.

During the test, carriers will use the MDD/MDD-TR to enter and/or scan the information for mail being held for an address where a customer has moved and did not submit a change of address. After holding the mail for 10 days, letter carriers will complete the PS Form 3575-Z using the MDD/MDD-TR and process the mail according to the method used locally.

USPS hopes to automate the current process for completing the form and eliminate the hard-copy version to increase the accuracy of the database that handles undeliverable mail. The three-month test will be conducted in approximately 1,000 delivery units nationwide.

Customer Connect leads

The Postal Service currently has several programs in place to enable employees to submit potential business leads to help grow the USPS customer base and generate revenue. For city carriers, this program is called Customer

Connect. Traditionally, when participating in Customer Connect, city carriers would manually fill out a Customer Connect lead card and submit it to their supervisors for data input, subsequent validation, and follow-up by a member of the sales team.

In February, the Postal Service advised NALC of its intent to test future electronic submission of leads for the Customer Connect program using the MDD/MDD-TR. The software update will provide city carriers the opportunity to record new business lead information that normally would be provided on the manual lead card.

After selecting "Lead Card" on the scanner menu, the MDD will list nearby addresses based on the carrier's location. The carrier can either select the address from the list or choose to input manually if the address is not shown on screen. The MDD will allow for entry of the business name, contact name, phone number and email. The carrier will also have an opportunity to enter additional comments related to the lead submission. A confirmation screen will be presented on the device with the message: "Thank you [name] for submitting a business lead and helping to grow our business." The MDD will then submit the data, along with the carrier's Employee Identification Number (EIN) or badge ID to the Postal Service Panorama/Sales Force system.

USPS hopes that direct submission of the information to the sales team will allow a rapid response to the customer within 30 minutes of submission of the electronic lead. The test began in April and is anticipated to last until the end of June in 10 pilot sites: three in California, three in Arizona and four in Iowa.

Time clock

The Postal Service is exploring another new feature involving use of the MDD/MDD-TR for carriers to clock in and out, switch operations and record work on other routes. In a recent report from the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) dated December 2020, the OIG found that while the Postal Service had recently updated the Time and Attendance Collection System (TACS), it was not pursuing initiatives to update the physical time collection devices. According to OIG, the company that built the electronic badge reader (EBR) used by Postal Service employees to input time clock entries went out of business in August 2018.

The OIG reported that as of December, there were approximately 21,000 remaining readers in use, and that USPS management believes it will run out of serviceable units by the end of 2022. As indicated in the OIG report, the current EBR system is quickly becoming obsolete,

and the Postal Service will need to create a solution for future employee timekeeping.

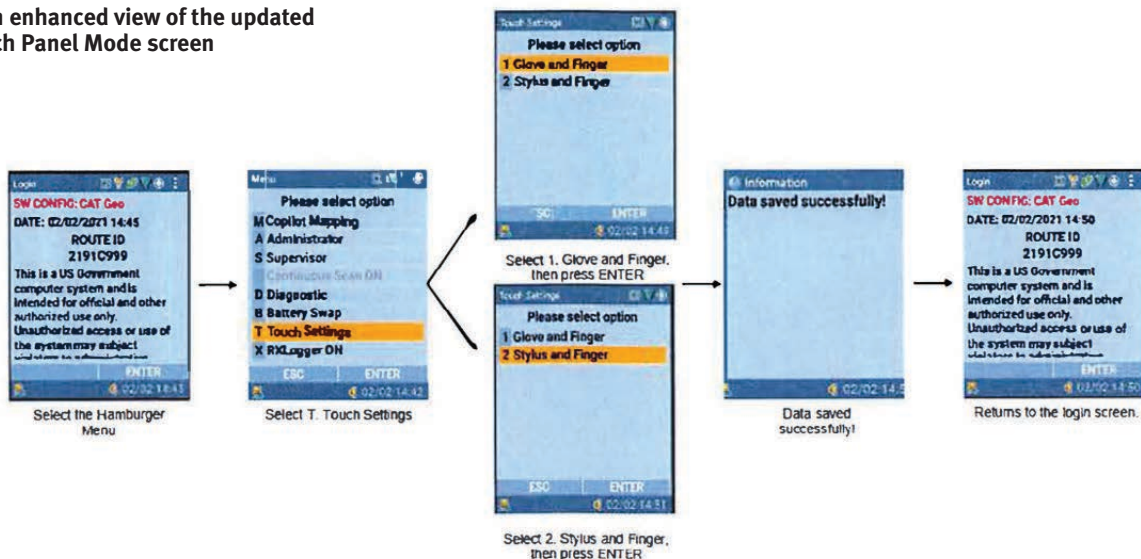
In response to the OIG report and concerns regarding the future viability of the EBR, USPS operations announced that it is in the planning stages of an enhancement to the MDD/MDD-TR, which may replace the traditional method of clocking on the EBR. Based on communication with USPS, this feature is still being formalized and is not currently active for letter carrier use. NALC will provide the membership more information on this potential feature as it becomes available. In the meantime, city carriers should continue making clock rings entries on the EBR.

Delivery point access information

In a notification received March 23, NALC was advised that the Postal Service is planning to test a new enhancement to the MDD/MDD-TR that incorporates the ability to provide building access information for select buildings. With this enhancement, the Postal Service hopes to reduce the amount of parcel redelivery and “No Access” scans by providing delivery instructions.

During the test, carriers will receive building access information such as access codes, instructions related to key keepers, or receptacle location, for select buildings in the test site. When carriers are within a 25-foot radius of the delivery point, they will receive an alert on their scanner with the access information. This testing will be conducted for approximately three months in the Arlington, VA, Main Office.

Below: An enhanced view of the updated MDD Touch Panel Mode screen



Touch panel mode (MDD-TR only)

Also from the March USPS notification, I learned that the new MDD-TR device offers different touch panel mode options to allow for the use of a bare hand, gloves or stylus on the touchscreen. These settings can be changed by the carrier according to the environmental conditions present for better functionality and ease of use of the touchscreen. The option of “Touch Panel” mode has been added under the menu options from any application screen and provides the carrier with two setting choices: “Glove and Finger” or “Stylus and Finger.”

USPS says that these settings will improve the ease of use and increase touchscreen performance by decreasing errors on data entry and creating a smoother workflow. The MDD-TR application will automatically change the setting to “Stylus and Finger” at the signature capture screen for the ease of customer use.

These are the most recent features of the MDD/MDD-TR that the Postal Service is exploring for use by city carriers. I am encouraged by these advances in technology and the evolution from the MDD to the MDD-TR. I believe that these enhancements, if implemented, could offer letter carriers additional, more convenient options for receiving or providing information related to their duties. I will update the membership on these initiatives and other changes in technology related to city delivery. Be sure to check the “City Delivery” page at nalc.org regularly for more news and updates.