

How to request overtime or auxiliary assistance and complete a PS Form 3996, Carrier-Auxiliary Control

The morning routine of estimating your workload for the day is often difficult to do, even for experienced letter carriers. Whether you are just starting your career or are a more seasoned carrier, the rules remain the same when you believe that the route you are assigned to carry has more work than you can complete within eight hours, or you believe that you cannot complete all the work assigned to you for the day within your scheduled time. Below are the steps to take to notify management if this happens.

1. Verbally inform your manager if you don't think you can complete your assignment in eight hours.

Sections 131.41 and 131.42 of *Handbook M-41, City Delivery Carriers Duties and Responsibilities*, the USPS handbook that outlines the duties of a city letter carrier, require you to tell the manager when you cannot carry all the mail distributed to your route in eight hours or within your normal schedule. Once you have verbally informed management, the manager is required to tell you what he or she wants you to do. Follow the manager's instructions. If you still believe that you will not be able to finish your route in eight hours, proceed to Step 2.

2. Request PS Form 3996

The next step is to request a PS Form 3996 from your manager. Article 41.3.G of the National Agreement and Section 122.33 of *Handbook M-39, Management of Delivery Services* require the manager to provide you with a PS Form 3996 when you request one. *Handbook M-39* is a guide for supervisors detailing their responsibilities when dealing with city letter carriers, but it often

provides explanations to help city letter carriers.

No matter what your manager says to you, say the words, "I am requesting a 3996" and explain the reason(s) for your request. If you are denied the form, immediately request to see your shop steward. If your request to see your shop steward is denied, make sure that another carrier hears you say the words. Don't scream the words at the top of your lungs—just make sure someone other than you and your manager hears you.

After you have verbally informed your manager that you don't believe you can finish your route in eight hours, have made them aware that their instruction has not changed your belief, and have requested and been provided a PS Form 3996, proceed to Step 3.

3. Fill out the form completely

It is important that you fill out the form completely. In the "Reason For Use of Auxiliary" box, you must write down why you believe that you cannot complete your assignment in eight hours. If your belief is related to your mail volume or type of mail you have, you should write comments that are specific and not general as to why you are requesting overtime. Your reason also could be related to your street duties. Some examples: known road construction, weather-related issues, excessive accountable mail, etc. Comments like "heavy volume" or "route overburdened" aren't sufficient for this section.

Often, there are other circumstances that might add to (or be) the reason why you will need overtime or auxiliary assistance on a given day. Always list the circumstances that will prevent

you from finishing your assignment in eight hours on PS Form 3996 as explained above. Statements by your supervisor such as, "This is your demonstrated performance," and, "You are not making standards," are not legitimate and do not change the situation. Never let these comments get under your skin and stop you from requesting the assistance you need. Remember, your job is to do the best you can.

Sometimes managers will tell you that you don't need the requested overtime or auxiliary assistance because of what DOIS projects for your route. The national parties have agreed that computer-generated time projections are not the sole determinant of your daily workload. Nothing can replace the opinion of the professional letter carrier.

4. Keep your cool

Don't lose your cool. While this process can be frustrating, you will do nothing to help yourself by becoming angry. If your manager denies your request for overtime or assistance, tell them you will do your best. Then politely ask what they want you to do if you are not able to deliver all the mail by the time they want you back. Often, their answer will be something like, "I just told you what I want you to do," or "Deliver all the mail and be back in eight hours." Your manager has just put the ball back in your court and placed you in a situation where you can't honor their instructions.

5. Don't argue

There is no reason to argue with your manager at this point. The only thing you will accomplish by arguing with your manager is to become frustrated and angry. The smartest

**A sample
PS Form 3996**

United States Postal Service
Carrier - Auxiliary Control

A. Delivery Unit <i>Atlantic St... Station</i>		B. Telephone <i>268-3684</i>	C. Date <i>11/12/97</i>		
D. Carrier's Name and Route No. <i>J. Loma 0105</i>		E. Lunch Place and Time			
F. Indicate entire or portion of the case shelves covering mail to be given as street auxiliary assistance Consider the bottom shelf as number 1.			G. Keys Required? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
1	2	3	4		
			5		
			6		
			<i>R 112</i>		
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
H. Carfare Required? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			I. Accountable Mail? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
J. Reason For Use of Auxiliary <i>2 Sets of sequenced mail and day after holiday and Saturday business mail for closed business.</i>					
K. Estimated Work		L. Management Action. Check and initial all appropriate actions.			
Hours	Minutes	Auxiliary Assistance	Hours		
<i>1</i>	<i>30</i>	Approved <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>7.9.</i>	<i>1</i>		
		Disapproved <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>30</i>		
			Overtime		
			Approved <input type="checkbox"/>		
			Disapproved <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>7.9.</i>		
M. Transportation (If drive-out, show parking location(s) on reverse)					
Transportation Mode to and from route:		Postal owned: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Drive-out: <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Contract: <input type="checkbox"/>	Public: <input type="checkbox"/>		
N. Starts Delivery at: <i>550 Grove St., apartment house</i>		* Collect mail from all collection boxes on your part of the route, unless instructed otherwise.			
Deliver	<i>562-551 Grove St.</i>	Collection boxes locations:			
	<i>545-548 Grove St.</i>	1	<i>550 Grove St.</i>		
	<i>780-779 Bedford St.</i>	2	<i>780 Bedford St.</i>		
	<i>781-783 Bedford St.</i>	3			
		4			
		5			
		6			
O. Find Relays At:					
1	<i>Grove St. and Bedford St.</i>	4			
2	<i>780 Bedford St.</i>	5			
3		6			
P. Assistances Completed By (Carrier Name and regular route number if assigned): <i>L. Cantos 0122</i>					
Office Time		Street Time			Total Auxiliary Time <i>1:45</i>
Begin Time	Time Used	Begin Travel To	Begin Delivery	Begin Travel From	
		<i>2:45</i>	<i>2:55</i>	<i>4:20</i>	
				Travel To <i>:10</i>	
End Time		End Travel To	End Delivery	End Travel From	Delivery <i>1:25</i>
		<i>2:55</i>	<i>4:20</i>	<i>4:30</i>	Travel From <i>:10</i>
					Total Street <i>1:45</i>

PS Form 3996, November 1997

thing you can do is to just say, “OK, I’ll do my best,” and ask for a copy of your PS Form 3996. Remember, Article 41.3.G of the National Agreement and Section 122.33 of *Handbook M-39* require managers to provide you with a copy if you request it.

Finish your office work and go to the street. Do the best you can. Take your breaks where you are supposed to. Take your lunch when and where you listed it on the PS Form 3996 you filled out.

6. Don't make decisions

Letter carriers get paid to deliver mail. Managers get paid to make decisions. If you realize that you will not be able to deliver all the mail and make it back to the office by the time the manager approved, you should do everything you can to put any further decisions in the manager’s hands.

The best way to handle this situation is to call your supervisor, per local instructions. If you have no local instructions, try calling about two hours before the time you are scheduled (the time approved on PS Form 3996) to be back. Let your supervisor know where you are and how long you think it will take you to finish. Ask whether they want you to bring the mail back at the previously approved time or finish the route. Follow whatever instructions your supervisor or manager gives you.

If the supervisor or manager refuses to tell you what to do with the rest of the mail, or if you can't finish your assigned duties in the amount of time initially specified by your supervisor, you should return to the office within the allotted time and ask for further instructions.

Note: Don't ever return mail to the office and leave it without getting

instructions on what to do with the mail from a manager. Make a note of what instructions you were given and what time it was.

You should also complete a PS Form 3996 to track the amount of time you spend assisting or working on another route. If you are instructed to provide auxiliary assistance to another route, whether on “projected undertime” or for overtime, management should provide you with a PS Form 3996 indicating this additional work. There are times where you may be provided more than one 3996 to assist multiple routes. Make sure that you fill out the bottom of each PS Form 3996 showing both your travel and delivery times for whatever assistance you are carrying. This assistance is called many different things around the country. Some common phrases are pivot, split, kickoff, relay, handoff, trip, push, boost or

bump. If you don't believe that you can complete the work in the amount of time authorized, you should notify your supervisor as soon as possible.

The 2019 *Letter Carrier Resource Guide* contains an example of a PS Form 3996 and complete instructions on how to properly fill it out. Section 28 of *Handbook M-41* also explains the proper procedures for filling out the PS Form 3996. You can access the *Letter Carrier Resource Guide* by visiting nalc.org/resourceguide.

These instructions and the above-listed advice will assist you anytime you need to fill out a PS Form 3996 and submit it to your supervisor. If you need more information regarding requesting overtime or auxiliary assistance, or with the completion of this form, please see a shop steward, NALC branch officer, on-the-job instructor (OJI) or mentor for further guidance. **PR**