

# Clock ring fraud

**L**etter carriers across the country report to work expecting to be properly paid for every hour of service they provide. For years, carriers used time cards and hyper electronic badge readers (HEBR), commonly referred to as the time clock, to record work hours by inputting various clock ring entries that identified the functions they worked under and the assignments they worked on. More recently, USPS has migrated timekeeping functions to the Mobile Delivery Device – Technical Refresh (MDD-TR) that carriers use daily. In limited circumstances, where HEBRs and MDD timekeeping functionality is unavailable, carriers may record work hours by completing a PS Form 1260, Nontransactor Card.

Carriers typically make four basic clock ring entries each day: Begin Tour (BT), which reflects the time a carrier starts working; Move (MV) to the street, which reflects the time a carrier leaves the office and travels to their delivery assignment; Move (MV) back to the office, which reflects the time a carrier returns from the street after completing their assignment; and End Tour (ET), which reflects the time a carrier has ended their day.

The Postal Service utilizes the Time and Attendance Collection System (TACS) to track work hours and compensate carriers. Postal managers and supervisors routinely review clock rings and make necessary edits to fix issues such as incomplete clock ring entries or to input missing moves to reflect a carrier's transition from one function or route to another. While the editing of clock rings in certain situations is proper, the Postal Service must ensure that all edits are accurate.

In many parts of the country, it was discovered that some postal managers and supervisors were committing fraud by intentionally and falsely editing clock rings, causing carriers to collectively lose tens of thousands of dollars in pay. In many of these instances, managers deliberately disallowed time worked by changing ET clock rings made by carriers to an earlier time when they were still working. In other cases, managers improperly added or removed leave and lunch clock rings from carrier workdays. These are just a couple of examples from the many found throughout the country. However, the common denominator among all fraudulent edits was that they ranged from minutes to hours with most instances resulting in loss of pay.

This month's column will focus on some of the USPS contractual obligations regarding accurately editing carriers clock rings and is intended to be read as a companion piece to last month's Contract Talk article, which provided a detailed explanation of the USPS time-keeping system,

employee pay stubs, the ePayroll online application and the Virtual Timecard application.

**To identify clock ring fraud, it's important to understand timekeeping procedures and the responsibilities of the parties executing them.** Sections 113.11, 114.1 and 114.2 of *Handbook F-21, Time and Attendance* provide the ultimate obligation and responsibility of the Postal Service to ensure the accuracy of letter carrier clock rings:

## **113.11 Functional Areas**

The timekeeping organization in a postal facility involves four functional areas:

a. The postmaster or installation head — is ultimately responsible for the accuracy of the entries on a timecard; ensuring that the time and attendance data are totaled correctly and properly dispatched at week's end; distributing paychecks to employees; and, maintaining an up-to-date list of persons authorized to initial timecards.

## **114.1 Supervisor Responsibilities**

For purposes of timekeeping, a supervisor is defined as the person responsible for directing an employee or group of employees in the performance of their duties. The supervisor is responsible for:

- a. Controlling employee access to timecards and badges.
- b. Making certain the employees' clock in and out according to their assigned schedules.
- c. Approving all daily clock rings, which the timekeeper has totaled, for full-time and part-time regular employees, and which deviate from the scheduled tour by more than 0.08 hours (5 minutes). (See 143.)
- d. Approving all daily clock rings that the timekeeper has totaled for part-time flexible, casual, temporary, and transitional employees.
- e. Acting on all leave requests.
- f. Acting on all requests for temporary schedule changes.
- g. Completing supporting forms as required by established procedures.
- h. Verifying and dispatching time and attendance data to the district or Eagan ASC.

## **114.2 Timekeeper Responsibilities**

The timekeeper is the person who is responsible for keeping records of the time worked and the leave requested by employees. The timekeeper could be the postmaster, supervisor, or any other person whom the installation head designates. The timekeeper is responsible for:

- a. Preparing timecards and/or other approved media for use by the employees.
- b. Computing daily and weekly totals and recording entries where required.
- c. Examining timecards and other records pertaining to hours

worked, absences, and leave balances, making correct entries on timecards and other records and verifying that data input through the timekeeping system is correct.

d. Maintaining files of forms that support time and attendance entries.

e. Assisting the supervisor in timekeeping functions as the supervisor may require.

f. Assisting in the preparation of adjustment requests.

g. Answering time and attendance inquiries.

As shown, *Handbook F-21* explains that supervisors are responsible for approving all daily clock rings. Section 432.71 of the *Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM)* details the control a supervisor has in approving work hours credited to employees:

#### 432.71 Control

Supervisors should ensure that employees do not remain on the clock unless they are specifically authorized to do so. Where employees continue to work contrary to instructions from a supervisor to clock out, the corrective action must be a procedure other than not compensating the employees for work performed.

In instances where a clock ring edit might result in disallowed work hours from time that a carrier has spent on the clock, Section 432.711 of the *ELM* requires the completion of PS Form 1017-A, Time Disallowance Record:

#### 432.711 Disallowed Time

If an employee's clock rings exceed 8.08 hours and the employee was not engaged in work or work-related activities while in the time-over-8 status, supervisors are to disallow the time on the clock that was not worked. In such a case the supervisor should prepare a written entry on PS Form 1017-A, Time Disallowance Record, as to the factual basis for his or her knowledge that the employee was not working during the period of time disallowed. Examples of time that may be properly disallowed include, but are not limited to:

a. Wash-up time — time spent by employees changing clothes and/or washing up after their tour ends that exceeds the time allotted for such purposes in applicable collective bargaining agreements.

b. Waiting time — time spent by employees while waiting to start work at the beginning of a tour when they have not been instructed or otherwise required to wait.

c. Personal time — time spent by employees, before their tour begins or after their tour ends, attending to personal matters.

d. Mealtime — time spent by employees “on the clock” during a designated meal period, provided, of course, that the employee was completely relieved of all duties and responsibilities and performed no work during this period.

Postal supervisors are obligated to notify carriers when and if any work hours are disallowed, as explained in Sec-

tion 146.251.b of *Handbook F-21*:

146.251 PS Form 1017-A, Time Disallowance Record

b. Document incidence of time disallowance on PS Form 1017-A as follows:

Block 1: Date of the incident.

Block 2: Year.

Block 3: Pay period.

Block 4: Week.

Block 5: Day.

Block 6: Total clock time in hours and hundredths.

Block 7: Total time disallowed in hours and hundredths.

Block 8: Initials of supervisor annotating the disallowance.

Block 9: The date the employee was notified of the disallowance.

Block 10: The applicable disallowance code (codes appear on the reverse of PS Form 1017-A).

Block 11: Enter remarks documenting reason for disallowance.

The act of disallowing time and completing a PS Form 1017-A is not to be done secretly. Letter carriers deserve to be compensated for all hours spent working for the Postal Service and to be made aware of any hours in dispute.

Article 41, Section 3.K of the National Agreement provides:

K. Supervisors shall not require, nor permit, employees to work off the clock.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines “work” as “to perform work or fulfill duties regularly for wages or salary.” Article 34 of the National Agreement memorializes the Postal Service’s commitment to the principle that a fair day’s work merits a fair day’s pay:

#### Article 34 Work And/Or Time Standards

A. The principle of a fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay is recognized by all parties to this Agreement.

Section 432.712 of the *ELM* further confirms this commitment:

#### 432.712 Allowed Time

Supervisors must credit employees with all time designated as worktime under the Fair Labor Standards Act. Examples of time that must be credited as worktime if the supervisor knows or has reason to believe the activities are being performed during the time, include:

a. Time spent by employees in performing duties that are part of, or related to, the employees’ principal work activity, such as pulling mail from a distribution case, collecting tools or

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## Clock ring fraud (continued)

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supplies, and adjusting rest bars.

b. Time spent continuing to work after a tour ends in order to correct an error, to prepare records, or to finish a task.

c. Time spent working during meal periods.

d. Time spent distributing work to workstations

To review clock ring edits made by postal management, union representatives should request the Employee Everything Report (EER), which is created by TACS. This report details clock ring entries input by carriers and any edits made by management.

In July 2018, the **NALC Guide to Identifying Intentional False Editing of Clock Rings** was created to inform union representatives about how to read the EER and properly identify improper clock ring edits. Additionally, the guide advises union representatives on how to file successful grievances regarding false clock ring edits, the appropriate remedies for those violations, and how to prevent future infractions. An electronic copy of this guide is available on the NALC website at [nalc.org/workplace-issues/resources](http://nalc.org/workplace-issues/resources).

To assist carriers in tracking their hours, NALC also created the **NALC Work Hour Tracker**. The tracker contains 52 pay periods worth of fillable tracking forms; a detailed instruction page that explains how to properly track hours and figure overtime for full-time regular, part-time flexible and city carrier assistant letter carriers; a USPS pay period calendar; and a time conversion table. Additionally, each pay period contains a notes page where carriers can record different things that occurred throughout that time frame. The notes page could be a valuable resource when comparing edited clock rings that have resulted in a loss of pay. Copies of the tracker are available from the national business agent (NBA) office who represents each region. Contact information for each of the 15 NBA offices is available on the NALC website at [nalc.org/union-administration/nalc-regions](http://nalc.org/union-administration/nalc-regions).

**Letter carriers work very hard for their wages, and clock ring fraud is a serious issue.** Letter carriers who believe that management has improperly made adjustments to their clock rings should contact their union representative so that they can investigate the issue and file a grievance if necessary.

## Union Plus awards scholarships (continued)

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a mathematics major. Moon was a member of the BASIS Peoria debate team, which won the open division at the Marist Ivy Street Invitational national-level tournament. He completed multiple Advanced Placement (AP) courses while in high school, scoring a 5, the highest score possible, on the AP Physics exam as a freshman.

His father began working for the Postal Service during the COVID-19 pandemic. Shortly thereafter, a situation arose in which he needed union representation. "NALC participated in the fact-finding for the incident and was my father's voice when he met with management," Moon said. "With the union's help, the problem was resolved. This is the strength of unions: Having experienced similar situations count-

less times, his NALC representatives knew what to say and what to do."

Moon's activities and honors include the National Honor Society, Tri-M Music Honor Society, Phoenix Youth Symphony, BASIS Peoria orchestra, BASIS Peoria Science Bowl, Arizona Music Educators Association All-State Orchestra, National Latin Vocabulary Exam gold medal, Math Kangaroo Arizona runner-up, QuestBridge Scholar and Mathnasium instructor.

The Union Plus Scholarship Program awards scholarships based on outstanding academic achievement, personal character, financial need, and commitment to the values of organized labor. The program is offered through the Union Plus Education Foundation.

Since starting the program in 1991, Union Plus has awarded more than \$5.9

million in educational funding to more than 4,200 union members, spouses and dependent children. Union Plus Scholarship awards are granted to students attending a two-year college, four-year college, graduate school, or recognized technical or trade school. The selection process is exceptionally competitive: 6,213 applications were received this year from 69 unions and all 50 states, the District of Columbia, three U.S. territories, and six Canadian provinces.

For information about scholarship eligibility and applications, go to [unionplus.org/scholarship](http://unionplus.org/scholarship).

In addition to the scholarship program, Union Plus provides a range of money-saving programs and services for union members and families. Go to [nalc.org/member-benefits/benefits-for-members/union-plus](http://nalc.org/member-benefits/benefits-for-members/union-plus) for details. **PR**