



Telematics (Geotab) devices



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In recent weeks, USPS has been relying on reports to investigate the use of seat belts by carriers when operating postal vehicles. This month, I will revisit one of my past columns, which introduced the Telematics (Geotab) device currently collecting data for these reports, and I will share my thoughts on this new use of them.

Pilot testing and implementation

In 2019, USPS began testing telematics (Geotab) devices with the objective of understanding their ability to collect and report data from its fleet of vehicles. After determining the pilot successful in 2022, the Postal Service

awarded a contract to Geotab for use of its telematics technology in all postal-owned vehicles. USPS contends that using high technology reduces fuel consumption and improves overall vehicle maintenance and repairs. Installation and use of the devices began in February 2023, with all installations to be completed by July 2025.

Geotab pilot reports

During the pilot, Geotab devices were used to create the following reports: the USPS Vehicle Stop Locations Report, which relies on tracking to identify overnight parking locations of vehicles; the Maintenance/Fault Report, which provides fault name, code and count for fault issues reported by each vehicle; the Battery Drain Report, which provides a list of all vehicles reporting a battery voltage below 11 volts; the Low Oil Pressure Report, which provides a list of vehicles experiencing very low oil pressure; the In Shop More than 8 Hours Report, which identifies vehicles that spend more than eight hours at local maintenance locations; the Idling Report, which displays total time a vehicle idles, including a dollar value to fuel used during that idle based on current fuel cost; the Fuel Efficiency Scoreboard Report, which evaluates driving behavior that affects fuel efficiency; and the Backing Up While Leaving Report, which shows each time a vehicle backs up while leaving when outside of a USPS location. For more details on the telematics pilot, see my column in the June 2023 edition of *The Postal Record*.

Driver Seatbelt Exceptions Report

USPS is now using Geotab data to create a report called

the Driver Seatbelt Exceptions Report. This report identifies when a driver's seat belt is not engaged while a vehicle is being operated. Based on what I have seen the report lists the total number of instances, miles traveled, and percentage of time a vehicle is driven above 5 mph without the driver's seat belt engaged.

Regional offices have made me aware that some postal management officials have relied on this report to confirm seat belt use in place of conducting street observations. In some cases, these officials have used the report to issue disciplinary action. Geotab reports alone are not sufficient for identifying failures to wear seat belts and should not be the sole basis for any disciplinary action. Relying on the report as a substitute for conducting street observations conflicts with Section 134.22 of *Handbook M-39, Management of Delivery Services*, which states: "The manager is not to spy or use other covert techniques."

Any employee infractions are to be handled in accordance with the section in the current National Agreement that deals with these problems.

Attempts to rely on Geotab data in this manner are not much different than USPS efforts to rely solely on global positioning system (GPS) data from Mobile Delivery Devices (MDD) to discipline carriers for stationary events. Like data collected from the MDD, data from Geotab devices is not always accurate and should be investigated by union representatives whenever necessary.

I recently spoke with a branch president investigating an alleged seat belt violation who came to find that the vehicle identified in the report had not been driven during the time in question. I don't believe this unsupported allegation is an isolated occurrence.

Article 16.1 of the National Agreement states:

Section 1. Principles

In the administration of this Article, a basic principle shall be that discipline should be corrective in nature, rather than punitive. No employee may be disciplined or discharged except for just cause such as, but not limited to, insubordination, pilferage, intoxication (drugs or alcohol), incompetence, failure to perform work as requested, violation of the terms of this Agreement, or failure to observe safety rules and regulations. Any such discipline or discharge shall be subject to the grievance-arbitration procedure provided for in this Agreement, which could result in reinstatement and restitution, including back pay.

As mentioned above, postal management bears the burden of proving that just cause exists for any disciplinary action it takes against a letter carrier.

I will continue to investigate this subject and provide updates as needed. Be sure to read my article each month and visit nalc.org for updates.