



Military leave

Career letter carriers accrue up to 208 hours, or 26 days, of annual leave and up to 104 hours, or 13 days, of sick leave per 26-period leave year. In addition to annual and sick leave, career military veteran letter carriers who have continued to serve in the Reserve or National Guard may receive up to 15 days of paid military leave per fiscal year.

Sections 517.11 and 517.12 of the *Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM)* speaks to the Postal Service's support for employee military service and the definition of military leave:

517.11 Postal Service Support

The Postal Service supports employee service in the Reserve or National Guard, and no action is permitted to discourage either voluntary or involuntary participation. The Postal Service allows employees to be absent:

- To participate in drills or meetings scheduled by the National Guard or Reserve Units of the armed forces.
- To attend usual summer training periods.
- To perform any other active duty ordered by the National Guard and Reserve Units of the armed forces.

However, eligible employees are entitled to paid military leave only for such duty as and to the extent provided below.

517.12 Definition

Paid military leave is authorized absence from postal duties for hours the employee would have worked during his or her regular schedule, without loss of pay, time, or performance rating, granted to eligible employees who are members of the National Guard or reserve components of the armed forces.

Note: Non-workdays are not charged against the paid military leave allowed.

Military leave allows for letter carriers to conduct certain military obligations while receiving pay without the need to deplete their annual leave balances or the use of leave without pay (LWOP). Sections 517.131 and 517.133 of the *ELM* cover the type of duties that are and are not covered by paid military leave:

517.131 Duty Covered for Members of the Reserves and National Guard, Except D.C. National Guard

Types of duty covered as paid military leave include:

- Active duty, field, and coast defense training.
- Scheduled drills.
- Service providing military aid for law enforcement purposes.

517.132 Duty Covered for Members of the D.C. National Guard

Types of duty covered as paid military leave include:

- Parade or encampment activities of the D.C. National Guard.
- Service providing military aid for law enforcement purposes as provided in 517.43.

517.133 Duty Not Covered

Types of duty not covered as paid military leave include:

- Summer training as a member of Reserve Officer Training Corps.
- Temporary Coast Guard Reserve.
- Service with the National Guard, if ordered by the State Governors without authority of the Department of Defense, except when such service is in connection with regular annual encampment or for law enforcement purposes as specified in 517.43.
- Training with a State Guard or other state military organization that is not a part of the National Guard or that was created to take

the place of the National Guard during an emergency.

e. Weekly drills as member of D.C. National Guard.

f. Civil Air Patrol, established as a civilian auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, and similar reserve and guard auxiliary organizations.

g. Time taken on a workday to travel to the place where training is to begin, unless military training orders encompass the period of travel time required.

One key difference between military leave and most other Postal Service leave is when it is received. For example, annual leave is accrued throughout a 26- or 27-period leave year, which begins on the first day of the first complete pay period in a calendar year and ends on the day before the first day of the first complete pay period in the following calendar year. However, paid military leave is received and used during the Postal Service's fiscal year, which begins on Oct. 1 and ends on Sept. 30.

The following provisions in Section 517 of the *ELM* cover additional rules and regulations on paid military leave:

517.2 Eligibility

517.21 Eligible Employees

Career postal employees, i.e., full-time, part-time regular, and part-time flexible employees who are members of the following components of the armed forces, are eligible for paid military leave:

- The Army National Guard of the United States.
- The Army Reserve.
- The Naval Reserve.
- The Marine Corps Reserve.
- The Air National Guard of the United States.

- f. The Coast Guard Reserve.
- g. The Air Force Reserve.

517.3 Procedures

517.31 Approval

The employee is to complete a PS Form 3971 before the period of absence. Sufficient notice is required for making necessary arrangements for replacements. If the employee does not learn of the need for the absence until later, notice is to be given as soon possible. The official responsible for approving the attendance record also approves military leave.

517.32 Use of Mixed Leave

Normally the first days of a longer period of military duty are charged to military leave. If circumstances warrant it, any other scheduled workdays during the longer active duty period may be designated as military leave instead of the days at the beginning of the military duty.

517.33 Use of Leave Intermittently

Military leave may be taken intermittently.

517.34 Return From Duty

For paid military leave approval, upon return from military duty to

the Postal Service, the employee furnishes a copy of military orders or other documentation properly endorsed by appropriate military authority to show the duty was actually performed.

517.4 Military Leave Allowances

517.41 General Allowance

Eligible full-time and part-time employees receive credit for paid military leave as follows:

- a. Full-time employees other than D.C. National Guard — 15 calendar days (120 hours) each fiscal year.
- b. Part-time employees other than D.C. National Guard — 1 hour of military leave for each 26 hours in pay status (including military LWOP) in the preceding fiscal year provided:

1. Employee was in pay status a minimum of 1,040 hours in the preceding fiscal year.

Note: A part-time employee's time on military LWOP in one fiscal year counts toward meeting the 1,040 hours' requirement for the next fiscal year.

2. Employee's pay for military leave does not exceed 80 hours.

- c. D.C. National Guard — all days (no limit) of parade or encampment duty ordered under Title 49, District of Columbia Code.

An employee may carry over up to 1 year's allotted but unused (not to exceed 15 days) military leave from one fiscal year to the next.

Section 517.34 of the *ELM* states that documentation, properly endorsed by the appropriate military authority, is needed once the letter carrier returns back to work for paid military leave approval. It is also important to note that Section 517.41 allows for an employee to carry over up to one year's allotted but unused military leave from one fiscal year to the next. Employees exercising paid military leave should take both of these factors into account when considering their military leave allowances.

As always, NALC's appreciation and admiration go out to all the veterans who are a part of this union.

For more information pertaining to military service and USPS, city carriers are encouraged to read the *NALC Veterans Guide*, which can be found at nalc.org/veterans.

Veteran profile: Terrence Graves

Terrence Graves, a Eugene, OR Branch 916 letter carrier, joined the Navy in 1986 when he was 18 years old and served in the military until 2015. After his first six years of active-duty service, he continued in the reserves even as he became a letter carrier in 1992.

"I had a family, and [active-duty] military life was not suited for a family," Graves said. "You'd be gone for a long time."

While he was on active duty, he

traveled all over the world. He was assigned to the *USS Midway* in Japan, and from there he and his fellow sailors set sail to Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Italy and Germany—to name a few.

"Going through port visits was an absolute blast," he said.

As a reservist, he was deployed for active-duty service two more times—in Iraq from 2007 to 2008 and Afghanistan from 2010 to 2011. His roles included convoy security and



Terrence Graves

Veteran profile: Terrence Graves (continued)



Graves while serving in the Navy

prison guard, as well as the leadership positions of assistant officer in charge and vehicle commander, in which he was responsible for an MRAP (Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle) in Afghanistan.

“I would say as far as the combat tours to Afghanistan and Iraq, what I learned and took away from that was to take care of your brothers and sisters and your right and your left,” Graves said. “I took that back into my union.”

What drew him to becoming a letter carrier was the “stability, wearing a uniform, and looking professional to the American people,” he said. “I like the history of the Postal Service and the history of the NALC. Everything seemed like a good fit for a military veteran.”

Additionally, growing up he had always admired his letter carrier, who himself was a military veteran. “I was always impressed with that guy,” Graves said.

During his 33 years as a letter carrier, he has held several union positions. He has served as president of two NALC branches in Oregon—Coos Bay Branch 1450 for four years and Branch 916 for the last six years. Graves worked on and off as a shop steward, and he was a food drive coordinator for a couple of years.

In 2015, Graves was awarded with NALC’s Unit Citation Award along with another carrier, for performing a citizen’s arrest on a suspected package thief. He was also named Oregon’s Letter Carrier of the Year for 2025. He has been retired since December, so he has stopped carrying mail but continues to serve as branch president.

He has learned from his 39-year combined letter carrier and military career “not be afraid to stand up for others. I learned that from the military,” he said, and added, “Not everybody is equipped with the resources to fight for themselves. ... It takes a leader to fight for them, and that’s what I took from the military and applied it towards NALC leadership, too.”

Join the NALC Veterans Group

The NALC Veterans Group is designed to provide NALC members—both active and retired letter carriers—who are also military veterans the ability to connect with fellow NALC veterans and stay informed on issues of importance to letter carrier veterans. It is free to join.

Members receive a pin as a symbol of gratitude for your military service and membership in NALC.

If you are interested in joining the group, complete the sign-up card at right and mail it to the address included. A fillable version is also available at nalc.org/veterans.



You continue to serve your country—
THANK YOU!

NALC Veterans Group

Complete this form and mail it to:
NALC Veterans Group, c/o NALC,
100 Indiana Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20001-2144

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

NALC BRANCH NUMBER: _____ BRANCH OF SERVICE: _____

I BELONG TO THE FOLLOWING VETERAN GROUP(S):

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☐ OTHER: _____

Free
to join