

Red Line Policy



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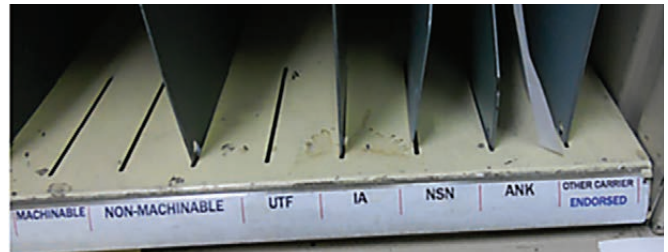
In some offices, postal management has attempted to implement a policy unilaterally changing the way letter carriers process undelivered mail when returning from the street. They call this the “Red Line Policy.” The main objective of the policy is to require carriers to process undelivered mail at a designated area of the office instead of at carrier cases. To prevent carriers from taking any mail to their cases at the end of the day, a line of red tape is placed along the office floor separating the cases from a designated mail sorting area. Carriers are not allowed to cross the red line until all mail has been

processed and sorted into designated equipment.



The Red Line Policy isn't new; however, it is inconsistent with postal handbooks, specifically *Handbook M-41, City Delivery Carriers Duties and Responsibilities* and *Handbook M-39, Management of Delivery Service*. Union representatives have successfully ended the use of the policy in many offices over the years through the grievance process. Recently, it's come to my attention that there are offices where the policy is being enforced again. In this month's column, I will review handbook provisions which detail the appropriate steps for processing undeliverable mail.

Section 24 of the *M-41* directs carriers to case undeliverable mail into specific separations. The mail



is then withdrawn, bundled and endorsed before it is taken to a designated location in the station:

24 Undeliverable as Addressed (UAA) Mail

242.1 Letter-Type Mail

242.11 Casing

242.111 Case removals to appropriate separation by size and type. Separations are COA's entry mail, machinable, and non-machinable.

242.112 Case removals to proper separation for mail pieces which are:

- Undeliverable As Addressed (forwarding order expired)
- Attempted, Not Known
- No Such Number/No Such Street
- Other Carrier Endorsed

242.12 Bundling CFS Mail

242.121 Withdraw mail in the separations.

242.122 Deposit in designated location by exit for transport to CFS.

242.2 Periodical Mail

242.21 Process in similar manner to letter-type mail which is undeliverable as addressed. Place in non-machinable separation.

242.22 Place in designated location by exit for transport to CFS.

Section 44 of the *M-41* makes it clear that the steps for processing undeliverable mail listed in Section 24 apply not only to mail identified when preparing a route for delivery, but also to undeliverable mail identified throughout the day.

44 Undelivered Mail

441 Processing Undelivered Mail

Follow procedures listed in 24 to process forwardable and undeliverable mail (1) that you didn't process before leaving the office and/or (2) that you picked up on route. After processing, place this mail in throwback case, as explained in 24.

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NACI national arbitration award (continued)

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where the parties negotiated the right of the Postal Service to separate any probationary employee during the probationary period, and such employee “shall not be permitted access to the grievance procedure in relation thereto.”...I find that a complaint by a non-probationary employee with respect to the results of such determination is a dispute related to a condition of employment that clearly falls within the definition of a grievance in Article 15.

Arbitrator Newman maintained that the Postal Service must prove it had just cause for the separation, as required by Article 16 of the National Agreement. She wrote:

Even if these separations are not, per se, disciplinary in nature, Arbitrator Das’ analysis that an involuntary separation-disqualification after the probationary period is considered a removal under ELM 365.311, which must be for cause, provides the basis for a cause analysis of the Postal Service’s removal/separation action. That provision notes that the only exceptions to such “removal” are employees who have not completed their probationary period and em-

ployees serving under a temporary appointment.

Arbitrator Newman concluded:

The Postal Service’s notice to applicants/employees that their appointments are “conditional” on them receiving a favorable NACI does not change this fact. The Postal Service is not able to unilaterally create a class of “conditional employees” to avoid the consequences of their becoming regular employees with full collective bargaining rights.

Arbitrator Newman’s award summary stated:

1. A grievance protesting the separation/removal of a non-probationary employee based upon an unfavorable NACI report is substantively arbitrable under Article 15.
2. In such arbitration, the Postal Service must prove that it had just cause for the separation/removal under the principles of Article 16.

The four postal unions and the USPS have agreed that cases held pending the outcome of this issue should be immediately processed and resolved in accordance with this decision.

Director of City Delivery

Red Line Policy (continued)

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Although case label separations are useful to carriers when processing undeliverable mail, they are not the only tool the Red Line Policy is denying carriers access to. Carriers rely on PS Form 3982s located at their cases as a reference to accurately forward mail for addressees. Under the Red Line Policy, a carrier is unable to review PS Form 3982s when processing undelivered mail at the end of the day. Section 241.3 clearly explains the form’s purpose:

241.3 Purpose and Duration of PS Form 3982

241.31 Purpose

241.311 PS Form 3982 provides a quick reference for carriers unfamiliar with customer removals from the route so the mail for these customers can be withdrawn from the case and bundled for forwarding by the CFS. (Exception: In a Delivery Point Sequence environment where customer removals may first be identified while performing street duties, they must be withdrawn and returned to the office for processing). Use of a PS Form 3982 or a locally developed policy to identify removals while performing street duties will be used.

Additionally, since the policy does not permit carriers to take any mail to their case at the end of the day, it fails to adhere to the *Handbook M-39* requirement that mail being properly held at the unit should be kept at the carrier case unless there is no space available:

117.1.K. Hold Mail

Instruct the carrier to place hold mail in a central location only when space is not available at the carrier’s case.

NALC has not been provided with notification of any proposed changes regarding these handbook provisions in accordance with Article 19 of the National Agreement; therefore, if postal management has implemented the Red Line Policy in your office, contact your local union representative and request that a grievance be filed.

Be sure to read my monthly column and visit the City Delivery page on the NALC website for all the latest news on city delivery activities.