

How to request overtime or auxiliary assistance and complete a PS Form 3996

For letter carriers, the morning routine of estimating your workload for the day is often difficult and can be stressful even as an experienced carrier. And sometimes, requesting overtime or auxiliary assistance can create uncomfortable interactions with management. This article will provide some advice on what to do when you need to request overtime or auxiliary assistance.

Whether you are just starting your career or are a more experienced carrier, the rules surrounding informing management of your need for overtime remain the same. You should always complete a PS Form 3996, Carrier-Auxiliary Control when you believe the route you are assigned to carry has more work than you can complete within eight hours, or you believe you cannot complete all the work assigned to you for the day within your scheduled time. You should also complete this form to track the amount of time you spend assisting or working on another route.

Below are the steps to take to notify management of your need for overtime or auxiliary assistance.

Step 1. Verbally inform your manager when you believe you can't complete your assignment in eight hours.

Sections 131.41 and 131.42 of *Handbook M-41, City Carriers Duties and Responsibilities*, which governs the job of a city letter carrier, requires you to tell the manager when you need overtime and cannot carry all the mail distributed to your route in eight hours or within your normal schedule. Once you have verbally informed management, they are required to tell you what they want you to do. Follow the

manager's instructions. If you still believe you will not be able to finish your route in eight hours, proceed to Step 2.

Step 2. Request PS Form 3996.

The next step is to request a PS Form 3996. Article 41.3.G of the *National Agreement* and Section 122.33 of *Handbook M-39, Management of Delivery Services* requires the manager to provide you with a 3996 when you request one. The *M-39* is a guide for supervisors detailing their responsibilities when dealing with city letter carriers but 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 reasons 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 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, made them aware that their instructions have not changed your belief, and have requested and been provided a PS Form 3996, proceed to Step 3.

Step 3. Fill out the form completely.

It is important to fill out the form completely. In the "reason for the request" box, you must write down why you believe 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 to why you are requesting overtime. Your reason could also be related to your street duties. Some examples could be known road construction, weather-related issues, excessive accountable mail, etc. Comments like “heavy volume” or “route overburdened” aren’t enough in this section. Often, there are other circumstances present which may 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 the Delivery Operations Information System projects for your route. The national parties have agreed that those computer-generated time projections are not the sole determinant of your daily workload. Nothing can replace the opinion of the professional letter carrier.

Step 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 that you will do your best. Then politely ask what they want you to do

United States Postal Service
Carrier - Auxiliary Control

A. Delivery Unit Hillsdale Station B. Telephone 444-3333 C. Date 2-7-13

D. Carrier's Name and Route No. L Grant Glingling E. Lunch Place and Time

F. Indicate entire or portion of the case shelves covering mail as street auxiliary assistance

1	2	3	4	5	6
				R 1/2	X

G. Keys Required? Yes No

H. Carfare Required? Yes No

I. Accountable Mail? Yes No

J. Reason For Use of Auxiliary
Two sets of sequenced mail and day after holiday and Friday business mail for closed business

K. Estimated Work

Hours	Minutes	Auxiliary Assistance	Hours	Minutes	Overtime	Hours	Minutes
1	30	Approved <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>DO</u>	1	30	Approved <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Disapproved <input type="checkbox"/>			Disapproved <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>DO</u>		

L. Management Action. Check and initial all appropriate actions.

M. Transportation (If drive-out, show parking location(s) on reverse)

Transportation Mode to and from route: Postal owned Drive-out Contract Public

N. Starts Delivery at: 550 Grove St – apt complex

Deliver 562-551 Grove St Collection boxes locations: 550 Grove St

545-548 Grove St 1 780 Bedford St

780-779 Bedford St 2

781-783 Bedford St 3

4

5

6

O. Find Relays At:

1 <u>Grove St and Bedford St intersection</u>	4
2 <u>780 Bedford St</u>	5
3	6

P. Assistance Completed By (Carrier Name and regular route number if assigned)

Office Time		Street Time				Total Auxiliary Time
Begin Time	Time Used	Begin Travel To	Begin Delivery	Begin Travel From	Travel To	
					Delivery	
End Time		End Travel To	End Delivery	End Travel From	Travel From	
					Total Street	

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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.

Step 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 thing you can do is to just say, “OK, I’ll do my best” and ask for a copy of your PS

PS Form 3996 (continued)

Form 3996. Remember, Article 41.3.G of the *National Agreement* and Section 122.33 of *Handbook M-39* also requires managers to provide you with a copy if you request it.

Finish your office work and go to the street. Do the best that 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.

Step 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 around 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 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 in 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.

If you are instructed to provide auxiliary assistance to another carrier, this section will help you when you are carrying part of another route, whether on "projected undertime" or for overtime. This assistance is called many different things around the country. Some common phrases are pivot, split, kickoff, relay, handoff, trip, push, boost and bump. Whatever it is called, management should be providing you with a PS Form 3996 indicating this additional work. There are times when you may be provided more than one 3996 upon reporting for work to assist multiple routes. Make sure you fill out the bottom of PS Form 3996 showing both your travel and delivery times for whatever assistance you are carrying. As always, if you don't believe you can complete the work in the amount of time authorized, you should notify your supervisor as soon as possible.

The 2023 *Letter Carrier Resource Guide* contains an example of the 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 guide by visiting nalc.org and choosing the *Letter Carrier Resource Guide* from the list of quicklinks at the bottom middle of the home page.

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/auxiliary assistance or with the completion of this form, please see a shop steward, branch officer, on-the-job instructor or mentor for further guidance. **PR**